

Theology THAT Sticks

The Life-Changing Power
of Exceptional Hymns

Chris Anderson

FOREWORD BY AL MOHLER

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Theology That Sticks: The Life-Changing Power of Exceptional Hymns
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*For my beloved parents,
Charles and JoEllen Anderson,
with deep gratitude
for teaching me to love Christian music*

“Other than the preaching of God’s Word, the church has no more powerful teaching tool at her disposal than psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Scripture commands the people of God never to cease ‘teaching and admonishing one another’ with our music (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). Chris Anderson has a passion for sound hymnology. He has given the church some powerful, doctrinally rich songs. This volume is a thoughtful compendium of biblical reasons why the teaching of sound doctrine through hymns is so vital to the life and well-being of the church. It is an important work with no parallel that I am aware of, and it meets a pressing need for the church of our generation.”

—John MacArthur, Pastor, Grace Community Church of Sun Valley, California, Preacher on *Grace to You* Radio Broadcast, and World-Renowned Author

“If you need help moving beyond worship songs with trite tunes and sloppy theology, Chris Anderson—a seasoned pastor, experienced church musician, and excellent hymn-writer—offers tremendous help. In his clear, wise, winsome, witty, generous, thorough, insightful, practical, thought-provoking, prophetic, Trinity-centered, and church-focused book, he offers numerous examples of the most biblical, beautiful, edifying, Christ-saturated, and God-exalting songs we should sing each Sunday. Moreover, and more importantly, he grounds his observations, examples, insights, and advice directly in what the Bible teaches about congregational singing. A treasure-trove of truths! A gift to the church. A magnificent must-read.”

—Douglas Sean O’Donnell, Senior Vice President of Bible Editorial, Crossway Books, and Author of *God’s Lyrics*

“If there is one message this generation needs to hear, it is precisely the message of this book, written from the heart of an experienced pastor and gifted hymn-writer. Chris Anderson is in the great line of pastoral hymn-writers that have edified the church through sermon and song across history. His message in this book is simple: It matters what we sing! As churches, our songs should express the full menu of Christian experience, inspire us to worship our great triune God, and, above all, be full of biblical truth. Thanks, Chris, for this timely reminder!”

—Conrad Mbewe, Pastor, Kabwata Baptist Church and Founding Chancellor of African Christian University in Lusaka, Zambia

“I read *Theology That Sticks* both as a pastor and as an adjunct professor of pastoral theology. In both roles, I have found a resource that I will reach for first on the topic of worship. Chris has skillfully culled works on this topic—past and present—and has produced a winsome yet meaty work that is now my favorite. The inclusion of ‘Bonus Tracks’ in the appendix is now a cheat-sheet for me on each topic as well. Having a pastor, not an academic, write this book is a win for us. It is church history, theology, and hymnody... with the smell of sheep on it.”

—Jim Newcomer, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church of Ypsilanti, Michigan, and Adjunct Professor of Pastoral Theology

“Chris has given the church a thorough, theologically rich resource for recovering the glorious place of song in our worship gatherings. It’s a much-needed, practical, and reasoned challenge to remember what, how, and why we are called to sing.”

—Steve Green, Award-Winning Christian Recording Artist

“Chris captures so well the urgency of corporate worship. It’s an unmistakable message that’s pastoral, winsome, and direct: What we sing about God is eternally important.”

—Dan Kreider, Music Minister, Grace Immanuel Bible Church, Jupiter, Florida, and Editor of *Sing the Wonders* and *Psalms for the Church*

“*Theology That Sticks* is proof that Chris Anderson loves Christian music and theology. He has filled his book with biblical content about church music that interacts with a broad selection of theologians, musicians, and cultural commentators. Through winsome writing and well-placed questions, Chris helps his readers consider the critical nature of loving both music and theology.”

—Will Galkin, Pastor of Church Planting and Revitalization at Gospel Grace Church, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Director of Plant4theGospel

“Christians are a singing people. Our songs both express our devotion and shape us as disciples. Song selection, therefore, is a weighty task. In this warm, accessible, and persuasive book, Chris Anderson offers invaluable guidance on how to choose songs that exalt our triune God, edify His people, and contribute to evangelizing the lost. Packed with a plethora of insightful quotes and loaded with lists of hymns in every category imaginable, this volume is one I wish every pastor, church music leader, and believer would read. It gave me several new practical ideas for my weekly song-leading ministry, and more importantly, it spurred me to long more deeply for the day when all who trust in Christ will join our voices in the heavenly anthem that drowns all music but its own.”

—Matt Merker, Author, Hymn-Writer, and Director of Creative Resources and Training for Getty Music

“Hymns are a gift from the Lord to the church. What Christian hasn’t had their heart stirred by strong doctrinal lyrics set to music that befits our holy God? Our brother Chris Anderson has reminded us why the church needs worshipful music that is a deep and powerful elixir for our faith. Filled with rich quotes, anecdotes, and biblical truth, the book continuously drew my mind to the great hymns of our faith over and over as I read. Every pastor and worship minister needs to read Chris’ helpful case for true worship grounded in the Word. For some it will act as a necessary spiritual alignment, and for others it will reaffirm their commitment to biblical worship in song.”

—Richard Bargas, Executive Director, IFCA International

“I have always been amazed at how lyrics of a song will stick in my mind so much easier than memorizing verses. That’s one reason this book is so important. Scriptural, historical, theological, and practical, this book helps us all think about what we sing, how we sing it, why we sing it, and so much more. Chris brings clarity to a complicated area, provoking thought on how we can serve others well and worship God faithfully.”

—Thomas White, President, Cedarville University

“This book was needed a long time ago! Songs that we sing during our worship services carry in themselves huge power to influence souls. Songs and hymns are ideas, amplified with music. This is why you cannot overestimate the importance of a correct approach to what we sing in our churches. Chris Anderson does an excellent job presenting this issue in colorful detail, with the convincing power of the Word of God. This is why this book will be helpful not just for pastors but for everyone in the church.”

—Alexey Kolomiytsev, Pastor, Word of Grace Bible Church, Battle Ground, Washington, and Head of Word of Grace Ministries

“We have used Chris’ hymns and writings in our ministry for many years and do it with great joy. I have always appreciated his careful, deep, theological, thought-provoking style. Whether I am leading a congregation in worship, preparing an arrangement with a small group, or recording for a publication, Chris’ theologically rich texts have impacted me in a profound way. In a similar way, *Theology That Sticks* will encourage you to think, consider, and evaluate your choices of hymns used in worship with God’s people. Let us not casually approach this highly important aspect of our ministry!”

—Matt Taylor, Music Director, Bethany Baptist Church, Brevard, North Carolina, and The Wilds Christian Camp

“The spiritual health of any church can often be diagnosed by the songs it sings. Weak worship songs reflect shallow theology in the pulpit. But strong worship songs reveal sound doctrine in the preaching. Chris Anderson has provided us with a helpful resource in his book, *Theology That Sticks*, to help us navigate these often turbulent waters. Biblically based, doctrinally sound, and pastorally sensitive, this well-studied book on how our theology shapes our doxology is one I am certain that you will want to read.”

—Steven J. Lawson, President of OnePassion Ministries, Professor at The Master’s Seminary, Teaching Fellow for Ligonier Ministries, and Lead Preacher, Trinity Bible Church of Dallas, Texas

“A healthy church is always a worshiping church—a church overflowing with joyful, expressive love and a desire for authentic ministry. To that end, Chris Anderson has done the local church a great service in *Theology That Sticks*. This book should be read by every pastor and worship leader, as well as every church member and worship team member. Chris does a masterful job of articulating the value of singing our theology in gospel-centered, corporate worship; and he equips church leaders and Christians with practical steps to building a deeply theological worship ministry. These pages will help you and your church take worship more seriously, creatively, and biblically.”

—Cary Schmidt, Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Newington, Connecticut, and Author of *Stop Trying: How to Receive—Not Achieve—Your Real Identity*

“Since there are hundreds of outstanding hymns, the church should not be content to sing shallow songs that came out ten minutes ago (or ten decades ago) and that nobody will request to sing on their deathbed. Chris Anderson wisely and engagingly counsels us what to sing.”

—Andy Naselli, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament, Bethlehem College and Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a Pastor, Bethlehem Baptist Church

“In my little corner of Christianity, we’re often known more for what we’re against than what we’re for. Anderson’s book gives us something we can really be for. Each chapter is full of helpful principles the believer can thoughtfully apply and be much the better for it.”

—Ben Everson, Evangelist and A Cappella Recording Artist

“Few gifts have been more mismanaged and misunderstood by the church than God’s good gift of music. What was given by the Lord to teach, unify, and strengthen the body of Christ has all too often proven instead to be divisive, as too many have focused on preference at the expense of purpose. In *Theology That Sticks*, Chris Anderson helps the church view music through a biblical lens and recapture the joy and blessing found in congregational singing. As he shows churches how to select songs that best teach sound doctrine and edify God’s people, Chris keeps the focus of this volume on glorifying the Lord rather than catering to man’s opinions. This book will instruct the reader in a helpful way and strengthen the local congregation that puts these truths into practice.”

—Michael Staton, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Mustang, Oklahoma

“*Theology That Sticks* feels like a little hideout from the worship wars, a rock of biblical common ground for us all, a feeling of rest from conflict. I don’t know if Chris set out to do this, but he sure seems to me to have transcended the worship wars. He has listed out in his clear, effusive style a long series of biblical truths that any serious Christian can and must incorporate into worship. He has helpful application sections at the end of each chapter, too, where he talks to musicians as well as to the people in the pew. And he’s a diligent collector of pithy wisdom from other Christian voices. During my years as a church music director, my church loved Anderson’s richly doctrinal, modern hymns. I’m not at all surprised that he had all this theology sticking in his mind.”

—Mark Ward, Editor, *Bible Study Magazine*

“This is one of the best, most balanced books I have ever read on church music. Chris challenges you to think through why you sing and what you sing in church and gives practical tips for each church size. He is passionate that God be glorified and that the same care given to the preaching of God’s Word be given to the congregational worship of God through singing. A must-read for any church leader!”

—Jim Tillotson, President of Faith Baptist Bible College,
Ankeny, Iowa

“While godly worship is a wonderful end in itself, true worshipers of God eventually discover that worship produces transformative outcomes for the worshipers themselves. Enter *Theology That Sticks*, a thoughtful book bristling with biblical guidance designed to help Christians worship God with theological depth and power, in a way that both expresses and enriches the heart of the worshiper, redounding to God’s glory. Chris Anderson’s book is a timely arrival for students of Christian worship, be they worship leaders, pastors, or laypersons who desire to grow in worship. I recommend this book and trust you will be benefited by it as much as I have.”

—Milton Vincent, Pastor of Cornerstone Fellowship Bible Church,
Riverside, California, and Author of *A Gospel Primer for Christians:
Learning to See the Glories of God’s Love*

“Chris Anderson’s book *Theology That Sticks* is a compelling, irenic call to examine and improve the church’s worship and life. Music matters, particularly the hymns and songs that accurately communicate the truth of the Scriptures by their lyrics and poetic structure. Chris gives practical, positive guidance for the church’s hymnology. In a day when ‘worship wars’ entangle the church, this book flies above the fray for the benefit of all.”

—David E. Strope, Interim National Representative, General
Association of Regular Baptist Churches

“Great hymns make our theology sing. They give voice to the truth and put the truth in the voices of God’s people. I am grateful for the chorus of theologians who are giving such care and attention to the hymnody of the church. This book will be a help to all who want to seriously consider this well-deserved subject.”

—Matt Boswell, Hymn-Writer, Pastor of The Trails Church, Celina, Texas, and Assistant Professor of Christian Music and Worship, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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FOREWORD

WHAT LANGUAGE SHALL I BORROW?

R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.

I have no memory of life without hymns. Born to Christian parents, taken to worship in a faithful gospel church, and surrounded by the singing of hymns, I was never far from the great hymns of the Christian faith. I knew two books of worship. The first was the Bible, the very Word of God. The second was a hymnal, the song book of the church. Before I would read, I had learned to find my way in both the Bible and the hymnal.

In the most private area of my study, I am surrounded by a host of Bibles and hymnals at close hand. I turn to the Bibles constantly, and I turn to the hymnals often. When I was twelve, I was presented with my own personal copy of the hymnal, with my name inscribed in gold letters on the front cover. The inscription inside cited Colossians 3:16, and the apostle Paul's instruction to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

When I was a boy, the Bible and the hymnal sat on the table beside my bed. I was never confused about the difference between the Holy Scriptures, verbally inspired by God, and the hymns, written by believers in order to sing praises to God. But I knew I needed both books.

Elisabeth Elliot once spoke of the night that her husband and four other missionaries went missing, knowing in her heart that they were likely all dead. She was right, and the missionaries had been killed even as they had attempted to share the gospel. In the terror of that long night, Elisabeth Elliot said that she was kept sane by the discipline of singing the great hymns of the Christian faith in her head and in her heart.

In moments of distress, I have felt the same comfort. Somehow, the combination of tune and text enables my heart to be stilled. The words fall together as the familiar tunes carry them along.

I exult in God as Christ's people sing the great hymns of the faith in corporate worship. Something beyond measure and beyond imagination takes place when a congregation of believers unites in the singing of a worthy hymn. Biblical truth settles in our souls, joy emerges in our hearts, and a foretaste of future glory is realized in our midst. How does that happen?

God made human beings in His own image, and we are designed to sing and to be affected by music. Christ's redeemed people are commanded to encourage one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We do not merely sing alone; we sing in the glad company of God's redeemed people as we worship God, confess the faith, teach doctrine, counsel hearts, and set Christ's people toward obedience. At times, we comfort one another by reading from God's Word and by singing hymns that give us words when we would otherwise have no words.

We are musical creatures, to be sure, but we are also made to be linguistic creatures, dependent upon language. Our minds crave words, but where will we find the right words? Thankfully, the right words are given to us in the Bible. Insofar as a hymn rightly presents biblical truth, those words of truth are combined with tune and set to meter in such a way that truth marches into our hearts. When Christians sing together, that truth marches into our hearts—together.

A hymn, now cherished for centuries, asks the right question: "What language shall I borrow, to thank Thee, dearest Friend?" That hymn is "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded," which can be traced at least as far back as the sixteenth century. It was translated from Latin by the German hymn

master Paul Gerhard, set to tune by Hans Hassler, and harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach. My own church sings that glorious hymn in English.

We all borrow language. We must borrow language, and even as the first language we employ comes from the Bible, we also borrow from the hymns of the faith.

In this timely book, Chris Anderson underlines the importance of hymns in the life of the church and the urgency of singing biblical truth and sound doctrine. He exhorts the church to sing “exceptional” hymns. What makes such hymns exceptional? They are exceptionally biblical, doctrinal, congregational, beautiful, and doxological. As this timely book reminds us, there are even more criteria that point to truly exceptional hymns, and all are important.

Exceptional hymns may be old (most are) or new, but you can be sure that the most exceptionally faithful hymns are those to which the believing church turns time and again—in times of joy and in times of grief, in times of triumph and in moments of distress. In this book you will find great instruction and encouragement in the hymns. Read the book. Sing the hymns. Let your heart be glad.

In the light of day and in the shadows of the night, tune your heart to sing God’s praise. I thank God for giving us a faith to sing.

March 19, 2022

Louisville, Kentucky

“Christianity is the religion of spiritual song. It inherited a magnificent psalmody, but it has also given birth to an invaluable hymnology, as well as the art of harmony to which modern music owes the greater part of its boundless wealth. Outside Christendom, religious music has hardly shed the primitive, animistic character of rhythmic noise, and children’s songs are almost unknown. But the Christian religion found in music a congenial ally, ready to aid its progress in the individual heart, and in the world’s history. The thought of God, of Christ and His cross, of the Christian graces, and of immortal life, is entirely consonant with musical expression.

Hebrew psalmody and Christian hymnology have served as wings to bear the Gospel far and wide over the earth.... Reformation and Revival have always owed a great measure of their power to the inspiring and truth-conveying aid of music. It has feathered the gospel arrow for quick flight to the hearts of sinning, sorrowing men.”

John Harrington Edwards, *God and Music*

PART I

WHAT WE SING MATTERS

“Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!”

—PSALM 96:1

*“Christianity has always had a special love affair with music.
The Scriptures are shot through with music,
as is life in the church.”*

—MICHAEL REEVES¹

*“Take heed that what you sing with your mouths,
you believe in your hearts,
and what you believe in your hearts
you show forth in your works.”*

—FOURTH COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE, 4TH CENTURY

1. Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: 2012), 58.

INTRODUCTION

SING GREAT SONGS

“Why don’t we sing less and get on with the good stuff?”

That’s the question I got one Sunday morning from a well-meaning church member who said she wanted preaching, not music.

I could have been flattered. Instead, I told her what I believe is the truth: that singing *is* the good stuff, or at least part of it. I explained that singing exceptional hymns is life-changing. And I described singing as one of the most important things we do—as churches, as families, and as Christians.

“Why are we singing so many new songs?”

This question came from another person I pastored—one who loved congregational singing. But he wanted to sing familiar songs, not new ones. Frankly, new music worried him.

I told him that I understood his concern and explained that it’s not our goal to be either traditional or contemporary. We’re not moving left or right. We’re just moving *deeper*, intentionally singing songs that celebrate sound doctrine and present it in beautiful, moving ways. Our church wants to feast on the very best Christ-centered songs, regardless of their age or authors. And we’re doing this because we believe our church and its members will be the better for it.

Every pastor or worship leader has conversations like these. And I imagine that most Christians ponder questions like, “Why in the world are we singing *this*?!” Although the “worship wars” weary me, meaningful

conversations about music thrill me. People care about what we sing? People are taking worship seriously? *Great!*

My goal in this book is to address these and other questions. Specifically, I want to consider what Scripture says about the kinds of songs Christians should sing. And I want to provide a sort of “grid” that helps believers measure songs intentionally and objectively rather than sentimentally or randomly.

Now, decisions to sing some songs and pass over others are already being made. Every church chooses its songs for every Lord’s Day. Many Christians select a playlist when they take a road trip, go for a jog, or ask Alexa to play something. So... *How do you do it?* What factors do you consider?

Let’s think back to your last worship service with your local church. How many songs did your congregation sing? Four to six, give or take a few? That’s not a lot—especially when you consider the tens of thousands of worship songs available to us in the English language. Each time we say yes to one, we say no to all the others. I agree with Arthur E. Gregory’s statement, penned over a century ago: “There is no part of public worship which calls for more serious and intelligent consideration than the selection of hymns.”²

So I write as a pastor for fellow pastors and worship leaders. The songs we choose are vital to the health of our churches. Yet, we too often neglect this essential part of church life. In some churches, congregational singing is merely a “warm-up” for the preaching. In other churches, singing is vastly *more important* than the preaching. Music is often *the* reason people choose to attend a church—or to leave a church. And more times than not, songs are selected because of their popularity, their tune, their energy, and so on. Our singing needs help. Lig Duncan laments, “If there is an area

2. Arthur E. Gregory, *The Hymn-Book of the Modern Church* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1904), 17.

in special need of reformation in the worship of evangelical churches, it is congregational singing.”³

I’m grateful that Keith and Kristyn Getty have devoted their lives to addressing this need, not only through their music, but through their teaching and influence. They write,

Though maybe misunderstood, regularly a bone of contention, and often under-practiced, congregational singing is one of the greatest and most beautiful tools we have been given to declare God’s “excellencies,” strengthening His church and sharing His glory in the world.⁴

Agreed!

I also write as a dad for my four amazing daughters and for my fellow parents. Moms and dads, you’re passing on a spiritual and musical legacy to your children. I thank God that my parents passed on to me a love for the Lord, for the Scriptures, for the lost, for the church, and for Christian music. I want to leave my kids a heritage of great music as well. That’s why I’ve introduced them to Bach and Beethoven, to “Schindler’s List” and “Gabriel’s Oboe,” to Nat King Cole and Phil Collins, and so on. But most importantly, that’s why I’ve tried to surround them with music that points their attention to Christ. It’s fine that they have a reasonable familiarity with various aspects of secular music. But it’s *essential* to me that my daughters know great Christian music—by heart. I want them to be nourished by the songs of the saints. And, someday, I want them to teach my grandchildren great hymns, gospel songs, praise choruses, spirituals, and performance music.

3. Ligon Duncan, endorsement for Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing!: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017).
4. Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, *Sing!: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 21-22.

Collin Morris, the BBC Head of Religious Broadcasting in the 1980s, said that “hymns plant spiritual time-bombs in the mind.”⁵ Children learn truth even before they understand it—but it will surely “go off” in the future. And so I ask you, as a fellow parent: Are you filling your home with exceptional Christian music? I’d like to help you do so.

Mainly, I write as a Christian for fellow Christians. Singing is a huge part of the spiritual life of every single believer. Singing in a choir is voluntary; singing in a church—a good, Bible-preaching church—is mandatory. Great Christian music is a means of grace. It helps you grow in your faith, delight in your God, and even combat your sin. The songs we sing shape us. It’s important, then, that you carefully choose the songs that will make up the soundtrack of your Christian life. And as I’ve already noted, you’re *already* choosing your life’s songs, just maybe not as intentionally as you should. To quote the ancient crusader’s counsel to Indiana Jones, “You must choose. But choose wisely.” I want to help you do that.

Now, if I were you, I’d be asking, “What gives *this guy* the right to tell people what to sing?” In one sense, nothing. I have no inherent authority. I do care, though. I’ve thought about Christian music deeply for most of my life, and I want to do some good. So let me introduce myself.

I’m a pastor. I’m promoting missions with Biblical Ministries Worldwide now. But for the last twenty-five years, I’ve been a pastor. I started Tri-County Bible Church in Madison, Ohio, in 1997, and I pastored Killian Hill Baptist Church in Lilburn, Georgia, for nine years, from 2012 through 2021. The former started with a small core of people, and our musical abilities were limited at first. Over time, TCBC has become a great singing church, by God’s grace. KHBC has a deep bench of gifted musicians. My point is, I’ve listened to a handful of believers sing to a badly tuned piano in a dirty high school auditorium with dirtier words carved into the backs of the seats, and I’ve listened to a well-rehearsed choir leading an eager body of believers in song. To repurpose Philippians

5. Quoted in Timothy Dudley-Smith, *A Functional Art: Reflections of a Hymn Writer* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2017), 144.

4:12, “I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.” And I’ve loved it all!

I’m also a hymn-writer, publishing over fifty hymns through Church Works Media, in a variety of hymnals, and with several choral music companies.⁶ I’ve written songs like “His Robes for Mine” and “I Run to Christ” with Greg Habegger, “Reformation Hymn” with Bob Kaufflin, “You Are Always Good” with Jonathan Hamilton. I’ve been privileged to collaborate with gifted musicians like Dan Forrest, Molly Ijames, Paul Keew, Paul S. Jones, James Koerts, and Richard Nichols. Each time, my main contribution has been lyrics, not music. As far as those who have most influenced me, my hymn-writing heroes are Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Bob Kaufflin, Stuart Townend, and Keith and Kristyn Getty.

Ultimately, I’m just a music junkie. I’ve played trombone in a marching band, pep band, Dixieland band, jazz band, pit band, and several symphonic bands. I started singing in the church choir when I was in elementary school—the lone male in a sea of sopranos. I was privileged to be part of a great college choir, performing pieces like John Rutter’s *Requiem* and Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* under exceptional conductors.

As a listener, I have very eclectic tastes. I love Bach, and I like Phil Collins. I cut my teeth on music as diverse as Air Supply (I know, I know), Journey, and Run DMC. Thanks to my amazing parents, I grew up with constant exposure to hymns and gospel songs, praise choruses (thanks, Maranatha! and Integrity’s Hosanna!), children’s songs (from a songbook named Psalty and a pirate named Patch), CCM (Steve Green, Keith Green, and GLAD helped disciple me as a teen), and conservative Christian music (kudos to the Pettit and Galkin teams, The Wilds, and Majesty Music). Like I said: *eclectic*. You don’t want to play me in *Name that Tune* or *Encore*.

I share these details to dispel any notion that I’m a musical elitist or a worship watchdog. I still enjoy a wide variety of music. But hymns are my first love, and I want them to be yours as well. You will probably come to some different conclusions from mine, and that’s fine. What I really

6. My hymns and poems are listed in Appendix E.

want to do is to *provoke thought*—to help Christians and churches choose worship songs on purpose, based on biblical principles.

I'm hopeful that the book will be useful for Bible studies, Sunday School classes, and small groups. To that end, I have avoided unnecessarily specialized terminology, and I have included reflection and discussion questions called "Grace Notes" which I hope will prove helpful.

I have also made extensive (perhaps excessive?) use of quotations throughout the book. Many have spoken so well on the subject of worship music—people from different denominations, different sides of the "worship wars," different specialties, and different eras. At times, my rabbit holes had rabbit holes as I chased down biblical texts, hymn histories, and thoughts on Christian aesthetics. I learned a lot, so why not share the jewels I uncovered with those who read this book? My hope is that the many quotations and citations will provide readers with a collection of insights and sources for further study. It was inefficient to include every quotation that caught my eye in the body of the book, so I've shared some "Bonus Tracks" related to each chapter in Appendix A.

In Appendix B I've offered "Tips for Singing with Understanding" as a quick checklist for worshipping more intentionally. I've also included appendices that aim to help those with special ministry aspirations or responsibilities: "Tips for Aspiring Hymn-Writers" (Appendix C) and "Tips for Worship Leaders, Accompanists, and A/V Techies" (Appendix D).

Throughout the book I share bulleted lists of my favorite hymns on specific themes. Think of them as "sticky hymns"—worthwhile songs that have pasted themselves into my memory. I readily admit that the lists are arbitrary and inadequate. You may just skip over them. But I hope they will supply real-life models of the principles I'm discussing. For a more exhaustive and regularly updated list of exceptional hymns on specific themes, I encourage you to make regular use of a resource page from Church Works Media.

Let me give a few more clarifications. First, I'm focusing primarily on hymns, not on performance music by Christian artists. My phone is filled with music that doesn't really sing well in church. There's nothing wrong

with that, but that's not where I'm focusing my attention here. Still, most of the principles I present will apply to all Christian music, whether you're singing it in church or listening to it in your car.

Second, I'm focusing on texts much more than tunes. I value tunes, and I'm awed by those who have the musical expertise to write them well. A poor tune can sink a song, just as an excellent tune can prop up feeble lyrics. But it's the *words* that carry most of the meaning. Frankly, many conservative churches that wring their hands over guitars and drums are singing some very shallow lyrics. We can and should do better. Since lyrics are my area of expertise, that's what most of this book will address.

Finally, I've tried to write in an intentionally positive way. Everyone knows that church music is a divisive issue. This sad truth was illustrated to me when I entered "worship" as a search topic on the sermon archive site sermonaudio.com. Most of the sermons I found were calls to arms, not calls to worship. Similarly, several of the books I've read on church music are unhelpfully combative. I appreciate the writers' passion for the subject, but I'd occasionally wince at their "red meat" comments. While addressing some of the weaknesses in the songs we sing is necessary, I want to highlight what is excellent, not just critique what is lacking.

Ironically, this book was written during the COVID pandemic of 2020 and 2021. Many churches didn't meet for months at a time. Some states forbade singing in public services. Most choirs took a long sabbatical. Almost all Christians missed out on at least some services, and one of the things we missed most was singing hymns of praise to God together. My hope is that one result of our frustrating time apart will be that we value assembling and singing together more than ever. We need the church. And we need great church music.

Enough introduction! May you be moved to worship our Savior as you read about the life-changing power of hymns—*theology that sticks*.

“Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!”

—1 CHRONICLES 16:9

“We know by experience that singing has great force and vigor to move and inflame the hearts of men to invoke and praise God with a more vehement and ardent zeal. Care must always be taken that the song be neither light nor frivolous, but that it have weight and majesty.”

—JOHN CALVIN⁷

“It is not enough to say music is an expression of identity; it is part of the way identity is formed. In short, we do not simply make music, to some extent music makes us.”

—JEREMY S. BEGBIE⁸

7. John Calvin, preface to *The Genevan Psalter*, 1565.

8. Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 46.

CHAPTER 1

THE STICKING POWER OF CHRISTIAN MUSIC

I don't like music. I love it.

Music is one of God's great gifts to humanity. Scripture tells us that God sings (Zephaniah 3:17). And because we're made in God's image, we sing too. Part of the *imago Dei*—the image of God in people—is that we're hardwired to love the creativity, artistry, and emotion of music.

Especially in the twenty-first century, music is the soundtrack of everyday life. I'm rarely in the car, the study, or even the dining room without some background music playing. Music makes normal life better. Need convincing? Google the countless sports highlights that become comically awesome when you add Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" to them. Or, conversely, watch the last scene of *Star Wars* with John Williams' brilliant music removed. It's comically awkward and flat. Life is better with music.

THE MARVEL OF MUSIC

Part of the power of music is its staggering breadth. Although we have just twelve basic notes in the Western scale, they are capable of astoundingly diverse sounds, moods, and messages. For an illustration of music's majestic breadth, think of a symphony, where woodwinds, brass, strings,

and percussion all join forces for one great purpose. Within each of those groups, you have sounds as distinct as a piccolo and a bassoon, a trumpet and a tuba, a violin and an enormous string bass, a xylophone and timpani. Yet, they merge to make mesmerizing music!

If symphonic music isn't your thing (and I can't imagine why it wouldn't be!), imagine a bluegrass group if you'd like. Look at the diversity of a banjo, a mandolin, a string bass, a harmonica, a violin (er, a *fiddle*), a pair of spoons, and maybe even a washboard. (Thank you, *Hee Haw*, for boyhood lessons.) All of these instruments and household items converge to play a single song—separately, but together. Amazing! Through melody and harmony, rhythm and tempo, musicians are able to contribute widely varying parts to a much greater whole.

That's all grand. But add words? BAM! Everything becomes even *more* powerful. A love song—or a break-up song—can stir deep emotions of devotion or loss. A patriotic song can stir different, even stronger emotions. (American readers: Can you make it through Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" or Epcot's "Golden Dream" without tears? If so, *what is wrong with you?!*)

THE UNIQUE POWER OF SACRED MUSIC

Yes, music is powerful. But there's no music so powerful as music that focuses on the very Source of music—our Creator. Music about God doesn't just tickle the ear or stir the heart; it searches the soul. Powerfully. Deeply. And broadly.

Allen P. Ross captures the power of religious music well:

The use of music in worship is a natural extension of its force in life. It elevates the singers above their mundane experiences by heightening the tone and expression of their speech and thereby increases the

celebration. It also intensifies the pathos of prayers and laments, serving as a powerfully therapeutic way of dealing with the dark riddles of life.⁹

Sacred music can be *triumphant*, like “Crown Him with Many Crowns.” What’s better than singing that on Easter Sunday? The text is mirrored and magnified by the tune, moving upward, step by step, until its glorious climax!

Sacred music can be *contemplative*, like “Before the Throne of God Above” or “It Is Well with My Soul.” I’ll not forget gathering with a group of believers around the bed of our friend Linda as she neared the end of her battle with cancer. She didn’t want a sermon—she wanted us to *sing*, so a group of around thirty of her fellow church members met in her home and worshiped with her. Linda barely had the strength to sing along, but she tried. And when, at her request, we sang “It Is Well,” she signed it, using every bit of her energy to lift her brittle hands in praise. My teen daughters wept, and we all learned unforgettable life lessons about faith, unconditional praise, and great hymns. Memorized truth—theology that sticks—gave Linda a song to sing in praise and faith as she walked through the valley of the shadow of death. Books don’t do that. Jokes don’t do that. Even pop songs don’t do that. But hymns do.

James Montgomery Boice expressed the power of sacred music with an enthusiasm that he could barely contain: “Music is a gift from God that allows us to express our deepest heart responses to God and his truth in meaningful and memorable ways. It is a case of our hearts joining with our minds to say, ‘Yes! Yes! Yes!’ to the truths we are embracing.”¹⁰

I love that. I agree. “Yes! Yes! Yes!” And Boice was a *Presbyterian!*

9. Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 254.
10. Quoted in Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music: Issues in Church Music Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 112.

WE NEED TO SING EXCEPTIONAL MUSIC

Because sacred music has such tremendous power, we need to use songs that are exceptional. Seek the best and leave the rest. Dump the dross. Chuck the chaff. Does that sound too negative? Calvin M. Johansson writes, “The fact is that for two thousand years church music has been carefully screened.”¹¹ It was a good thing for hymns to have to make it through an editorial sieve before getting into hymnals. We live in a world in which people are obsessively careful about what they put into their mouths. Fine. But what about what comes *out* of your mouth? What about what enters your ears, and thereby, your permanent memory?

As I already noted, there are *thousands* of songs available to churches and individuals. Saying yes to one is saying no to every other one. It stands to reason, then, that you should choose what’s best. The goal of this book is to help define “what’s best”—to provide a biblical and practical grid for selecting *great* songs to sing together as a church and to serenade yourself with on your commute.

It’s actually pretty simple. Identify the best songs and sing them. That’s it. (I once went off-script when I presented this information at a conference workshop and just said, “*Don’t sing dumb stuff!*” Alas, that would have made a great book title.)

Why do I believe this issue is nothing less than urgent for the modern church? That’s easy. *We need to sing great hymns because hymns teach people how to think about God.* The songs you sing in church *teach*—for better or for worse. Some teach doctrinal truth. Some teach doctrinal error. Some teach that we value nostalgia. Some teach that we value tradition. Some, I’m convinced, teach that we value carousels and polkas. But they teach, nevertheless. As the Gettys warn, “A good melody with unhelpful words is a powerful and deadly combination.”¹²

11. Calvin M. Johansson, *Music & Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 154.

12. Getty and Getty, 137.

HYMNS ARE RHYMING, RHYTHMIC THEOLOGY

Now remember, I'm a preacher. I value preaching as a powerful means of communicating divine truth. It's a fatal error for churches to emphasize music over preaching. But let's be honest: Songs often stay with us long after sermons are forgotten. Wait; scratch that. I said *often*. Songs *always* stay with us long after sermons are forgotten. Stop rolling your eyes, pastors. It's true!

Luther, the mighty preacher and the champion of the Reformation, knew this well. He knew and used the power of the preached Word. But He also valued the power of the sung Word. Vilmos Vajta explains: "To [Luther] the way of the gospel led through the ear more than the eye. That is why he valued poetry and music so highly, and the hymns which would sing the gospel into the hearts of the common people."¹³ Yes. Hymns "sing the gospel into our hearts."

Another giant from church history demonstrates the sticking power of music. John Wesley preached all over Great Britain and the American colonies during the Great Awakening, taking the gospel to millions of hearers during his itinerant ministry—all before the era of motorcars and microphones. John Wesley is one of the most influential preachers in the history of the English-speaking church.

Now, I'd like you to quote some of your favorite lines from John Wesley's sermons. No googling.

Go ahead. I'll wait.

I'm guessing that those of you who don't have a Ph.D. in church history which included writing a dissertation on the sermons of John Wesley probably came up with precisely nothing.

Now...

13. Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 185.

John Wesley had a kid brother named Chuck. Well, *Charles*—Charles Wesley.¹⁴ Charles preached sermons, and the world has forgotten them. Ah, but he also *wrote hymns*. So let's run the same test. Quote some of your favorite lines from Charles Wesley's songs. No googling.

I'll give you a moment.

Ok, so maybe you still came up with nothing. But that's because you haven't memorized the *authors* of songs. But many of you will recognize the following lyrics:

*And can it be that I should gain / An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain? / For me, who Him to
death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be / That Thou, my God, should die for me?*

*Arise, my soul, arise, / Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice, / In my behalf appears;
Before the throne my Surety stands, / Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.*

*He breaks the power of canceled sin, / He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean; / His blood availed for me.*

14. Hymnologist Robert Guy McCutchan considered Charles Wesley to be “the greatest writer of hymns the world has ever known.” *Hymns in the Lives of Men* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), 21. Church historian Douglas A. Sweeney similarly calls him “the greatest writer of hymns in all of history.” *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 39.

*Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia! / Sons of men and angels
say, Alleluia!*

*Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia! / Sing, ye heavens, and
earth reply, Alleluia!*

*Christ, by highest heav'n adored, / Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come / Offspring of a Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, / Hail the incarnate Deity.
Pleased as man with men to dwell, / Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, / "Glory to the newborn King!"*

Many of you could sing all the stanzas of all of those songs. So, why do you remember song lyrics more easily than sermons—and perhaps even more than Bible verses? Because they utilize rhyme, rhythm, and meter. And because they are joined to music, which captures your attention all the more—both the left brain and the right, if you will. John Frame writes, “Music... enhances God’s word by making it more vivid and memorable, by driving it into our very hearts.”¹⁵

Do you get the point? *Songs teach*. That’s why I refer to hymns as *rhyming, rhythmic theology*.¹⁶ We sing what we believe—allegedly, at least. But songs also *stick*.

I grew up in Pueblo, Colorado. The summer days of my childhood were spent outside—all day, every day. My brothers and I would play football in vacant lots, race through fields, and ride our bikes through the

15. John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth: A Refreshing Study of the Principles and Practice of Biblical Worship* (Phillipsburg, PA: P&R Publishing, 1996), 113.
16. Douglas Bond writes, “Watts’ hymns, not surprisingly, have been called rhymed sermons.” *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013), 46. Albert Bailey similarly calls hymns “rhymed theology.” *The Gospel in Hymns* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), xx. I also like Alistair Begg’s reference to hymns as “biblical theology in memorable melodic form.” Foreword to Sinclair Ferguson, *In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel-Centered Life* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007), 2.

prairies on the edge of town. Without fail, we'd come home with a collection of burrs and briars all over us. Some would be stuck in our pants and socks. They weren't painful, just annoyingly persistent. Others *did* hurt. They'd especially latch onto our shoelaces, and we'd have to pull them out with all the caution of a brain surgeon. As every kid and parent knows, burrs and briars *stick*.

Hymns are like that. We hear them in church a few times, and they're with us for the rest of our lives. They stick with us because they're creative and evocative, poignant and passionate. In a word, hymns, done well, are *beautiful*. There is power in poetry. And so, Carl Trueman warns us to take hymns seriously:

Careful attention to the selection of hymns and praise songs is important. People learn from everything that happens in a worship service, not just the sermon. Indeed, there are probably many Christians who imbibe more of their theology, for good or ill, from what they sing than from what they hear taught.¹⁷

That's significant. The hymns we sing *show* our theology. But they do much more. The hymns we sing *shape* our theology. That's why Luther focused so intently on the music of the church. He knew that catchy melodies and clever rhymes would allow even illiterate Christians to take home sound theology, changing their lives, their homes, and their world.

My contention is that we need to raise the bar. We can't just sing songs because they have a catchy tune or a sick beat. We can't just do low-quality covers of the low-content songs we hear on Christian radio. We need to get serious about the songs we sing.

R. Kent Hughes, a faithful and passionate preacher of the Scriptures, recognizes that songs stick and that they deserve careful attention:

17. Carl R. Trueman, "The Trinity and Prayer" in *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*, ed. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 239.

The very act of singing God's Word, or singing scriptural truth about God, is intrinsically edifying because music is so easily remembered.... Because music is so naturally affective, great care must be taken to assure its biblical fidelity. Too often today the church serves up affective sentiments without much care for the discipline of the Word.¹⁸

There are many churches that would never tolerate doctrinal deviations in their statements of faith. They would revolt if they heard heresy from their pulpits. Rightly so! But many of those same churches tolerate a lot of nonsense and blather in their songs. Apparently heresy gets a pass if it is surrounded by a pipe organ or guitar riffs.

In his exceptional book on biblical worship, Allen P. Ross urges more intentionality:

Even though churches have hymns and songs as a regular part of their services, praise through music needs constant if not urgent attention. Music must meet the same requirements as other forms of praise: it is to be biblically accurate, spiritually uplifting, honoring to God, and edifying to the congregation.¹⁹

Our songs must be held to the same standards as our sermons. As we've noted, church members don't memorize their church's statement of faith or their pastor's sermons. But there are many who could belt out pseudo-spiritual songs about rain, rivers, oceans, and the like. (What's the attraction to nebulous quasi-religious songs about water?!) Our songs matter. We need to choose the best songs and do so on purpose.

That brings me to the proposition—the point of this book.

18. R. Kent Hughes, "Free Church Worship" in *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 167.

19. Ross, 441-42.

CHRISTIANS MUST SELECT WORSHIP SONGS INTENTIONALLY, USING A BIBLICAL GRID

In the following chapters we'll learn to look for songs that are *biblical, doctrinal, Christian, Trinitarian, congregational, unifying, inspired, diverse, emotive, beautiful, experiential, and doxological*.

Music is amazing. And hymns are moving and memorable theology. They stick. So let's talk about how to choose them on purpose.

GRACE NOTES FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

- Do you consider the choice of congregational hymns to be a pastoral concern, alongside preaching? Or do you pass it off to someone else? Why?
- How much time and thought do you give to the songs you teach your church? Enough?

GRACE NOTES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN'S TEACHERS

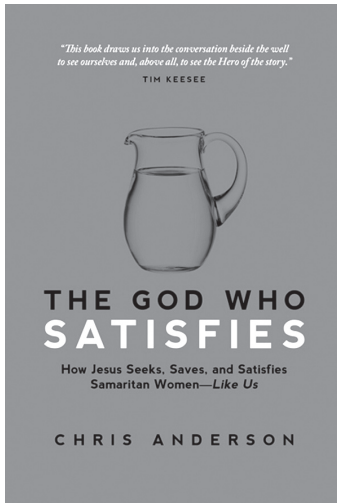
- Would it be concerning to you if your children knew pop hits verbatim but couldn't sing in church if they didn't have words in front of them?
- How can you make life-changing Christian music more influential in your home?

GRACE NOTES FOR EVERYBODY

- If the concepts in this chapter were new to you, are you willing to make adjustments in order to fill your mind with better music?
- Do you engage attentively and joyfully when your church gathers to worship?
- Will you pray now and ask the Lord to use this book to stir your heart and improve your approach to worship, for your own growth and for God's glory?

OTHER RESOURCES FROM

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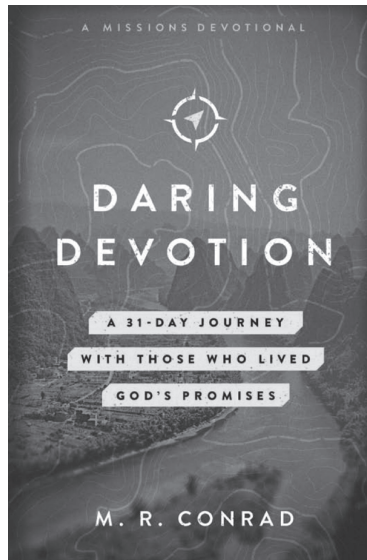


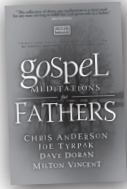
“In this little book, a gifted poet transitions to prose. I have known Chris Anderson for over two decades, first as a student and then as a fellow laborer in the work of the Kingdom. This book’s focus on the Samaritan woman is full of Christ and the glorious gospel of grace. Written in an easy-to-read, popular style full of real-life illustrations, the book effectively links helpful background facts and precisely-stated theological truths to experiential application. It is a book that can be used for evangelism as well as for warming the believer’s heart to renewed gratitude for what Christ has abundantly supplied.”

—**Michael P. V. Barrett**, dean and professor at
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary
and author of *Complete in Him*

“Here is a book I would love to put into the hands of young adults in my church so that they see that men and women who have left their mark on the mission field were like us in every way, except in their devotion to the God who called them. We need to get rid of our lackluster Christianity in order to fulfill our individual callings, too. This book might be a brief 31-day journey, but M. R. Conrad has packed it with spiritual dynamite. Read it prayerfully. It might change your life—forever!”

—**Conrad Mbewe**, pastor of Kabwata Baptist Church and Founding Chancellor of the African Christian University in Lusaka, Zambia

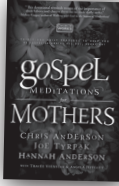




Gospel Meditations for Fathers

“This collection of thirty-one meditations is a must-read for any man striving to fulfill his God-given role as a father. Since each reading is both biblical and practical, it equips the reader to lead family members to greater love to Christ and to God’s Word. As parents to four and grandparents to fifteen, Patricia and I recommend this as a fresh resource.”

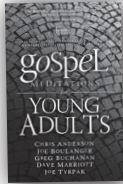
—John MacArthur



Gospel Meditations for Mothers

“In the midst of busy days and sleepless nights, moms need the encouragement that only the gospel can give. *Gospel Meditations for Mothers* offers powerful biblical truth and guidance that reminds moms of the importance of their labors and cheers them on in their daily tasks. Whether you’re parenting a toddler or a teen, these gospel-focused reflections will minister to your heart as you care for your children.”

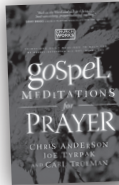
—Melissa Kruger



Gospel Meditations for Young Adults

“*Gospel Meditations for Young Adults* is a breath of fresh air for young Christians and for all of us who are raising, discipling, mentoring, or just concerned about them and their spiritual growth and wellbeing. The devotionals are biblical, pastoral, succinct, readable, relevant, and relatable. More importantly, the focus is cross-centered and theological without being forced or trite. This would be a great tool to use in parenting, personal discipleship, group study, or even pastoral counseling.”

—Voddie Baucham



Gospel Meditations for Prayer

“Brief and biblical, these meditations are full of sharp edges. They lead us to pray as cross-bearing disciples of Christ. Yet Anderson, Tyrbak, and Trueman comfort us with Christ’s perfect grace for fallen people. So *Gospel Meditations for Prayer* is an encouraging book, but one designed to stretch you.”

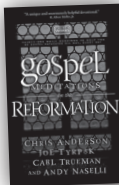
—Joel Beeke



Gospel Meditations for Christmas

“Too often Christmas speeds past us in a blur of busyness and stress, with only the briefest time and the shallowest thoughts given to the Christ that’s meant to be at the heart of it all. Give yourself a Christmas to remember by using this profound devotional to pause, ponder, and praise our wonderful Savior.”

—David Murray



Gospel Meditations on the Reformation

“Theologically rich, thoughtful, and historically rooted devotionals are a rare treat. This volume, which unfolds the theological commitments and pastoral heart of the Reformers, is a unique and enormously helpful devotional.”

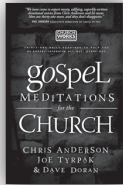
—R. Albert Mohler, Jr.



Gospel Meditations for Women

“Wrestling with guilt and frustration, far too many Christian women are living below the privileges of their spiritual inheritance. The solution is not found in any strengthened resolve of duty, but rather in having souls settled in the blessed liberty of Christ through the sweet enjoyment of the gospel. A union of sound doctrine and practical teaching, *Gospel Meditations for Women* beautifully highlights those unbinding messages of grace that so powerfully ignite joyful passion for Christ and holy living. What an invaluable resource!”

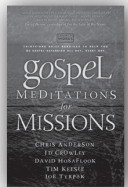
—*Holly Stratton*



Gospel Meditations for the Church

“We have come to expect meaty, edifying, superbly written devotional entries from Chris Anderson and his team. Here are thirty-one more, and they don’t disappoint.”

—*Phil Johnson*



Gospel Meditations for Missions

“Can we do missions without meditating on the gospel? Of course not. Yet, how many well-meaning, mission-minded saints go off into the harvest having failed to prepare their own hearts with due consideration of the good news? Too many I fear. *Gospel Meditations for Missions* helps us slow down to consider what is of first importance that we might hold this treasure more fully in our clay hearts.”

—*Thabiti Anyabwile*



Gospel Meditations for the Hurting

“These meditations are Word-centered prescriptions that blow away the meaningless Christian platitudes often used to mask unanswerable pain. Until that day when Christ Himself wipes away all tears from our eyes, the Scriptures provide strength, help, and hope in this broken world. Let this book guide you to Christ, the only sure and lasting refuge.”

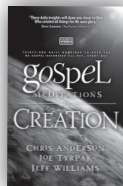
—*Tim Keese*



Gospel Meditations for Men

“Chris and Joe have co-authored a delightful and helpful little book of daily meditations. This is not one of those trendy Reformed ‘the Bible says all men have to act like John Wayne or cavemen with better table manners’ kind of productions. Many of the devotions are simply gospel expositions, and those which have a male-specific orientation are on topics like lust, where male psychology is important.”

—*Carl Trueman*



Gospel Meditations on Creation

“Grounded in the truth of Scripture, aimed at the heart, and applied to life, these thirty-one reflections will be sure to strengthen your faith. Pithy, yet profound; brief, yet biblical; these daily insights will draw you closer to Him Who created all things for His own glory.”

—*Steve Lawson*

“Why don’t we sing less and get on with the good stuff?”

“Why are we singing so many new songs?”

“Why in the world are we singing *this*?!”

In *Theology That Sticks*, pastor, hymn-writer (“His Robes for Mine”), and all-around music junkie **Chris Anderson** addresses these kinds of questions with humor, warmth, and an open Bible. *Theology That Sticks* is intentionally positive, providing extensive research, well-reasoned teaching, and small-group discussion questions to help churches and Christians embrace the life-changing practice of biblical singing! With a 12-part grid to help believers measure songs objectively, this book considers what Scripture says about the kinds of songs Christians should sing.

As evidenced by its enthusiastic endorsements, this book will help you choose songs on purpose, grow in your faith, delight in your God, and even combat your sin. May you be moved to worship our Savior as you read about the life-changing power of hymns—*theology that sticks*.

“A thoughtful compendium of biblical reasons why the teaching of sound doctrine through hymns is so vital to the life and well-being of the church.”

—**John MacArthur**, *Writer and Pastor of Grace Community Church, California*

“The message in this book is simple: It matters what we sing!”

—**Conrad Mbewe**, *Pastor and Founder of African Christian University*

“This volume is one I wish every pastor, church music leader, and believer would read. It gave me several new practical ideas for my weekly song-leading ministry, and more importantly, it spurred me to long more deeply for the day when all who trust in Christ will join our voices in the heavenly anthem that drowns all music but its own.”

—**Matt Merker**, *Author, Hymn-Writer, and Director of Creative Resources and Training for Getty Music*



Chris Anderson served as a pastor for twenty-five years—first as a church planter in Ohio and then as lead pastor in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. He now serves as Vice President of Global Opportunities for Biblical Ministries Worldwide. Chris is the author of two books—*The God Who Satisfies* and *Panosian: A Story of God’s Gracious Providence*, a contributing author and editor for Church Works Media’s popular *Gospel Meditations* devotional series, and a well-known hymn-writer of over fifty song lyrics. Chris and his wife Lori have four beautiful and godly daughters and a fantastic son-in-law.



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