

One of the Best Ways to Get the Gospel Down Deep in Your Heart

This week, churches from all over the Every Nation world will begin 2018 with a week of prayer, fasting and consecration. If you are fasting and praying with us this week, I would encourage you to download our 2018 Every Nation devotional guide on the book of Ephesians, entitled, "In Christ." Along with the guide, you can also watch our short five-minute devotional videos for each day of the fast.

One of my favorite features of the new devotional guide is that each lesson ends with an old hymn that echoes the particular truth that we studied in Ephesians. For example, today's reading was Ephesians 2, with a particular emphasis on Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast."

The hymn that was paired with this lesson is "Come Thou Fount," written by Robert Robinson in 1758. I love the entire hymn but the third verse, in particular, beautifully articulates our daily reliance on God's grace:

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor/ daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,/ bind my wandering heart to thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it/ prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;/ seal it for thy courts above.*

Whether or not you are familiar with this hymn (and the others in the devotional guide), I would strongly encourage you to

learn and sing these hymns during the fast. Sing them in the car on your way home from work. Sing them with your family. Sing them at your church prayer meeting (if you are in charge of the set list).

One of the best ways to get the truth of the gospel deep into our hearts is to have it constantly on our lips. There is something about the repetition of truth-filled words—something about the sound of beautiful music—that God uses to form us into His image.

Maybe this is why, in Ephesians 5:19, when Paul is encouraging the church in Ephesus to “be imitators of God” and to “walk in love,” he commands them to sing and “speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

So as we enter this week of prayer, fasting and consecration, my prayer is that we would not only focus with what goes into our mouth (food)—but that we would focus on what comes out of our mouth (songs of worship). Fasting is certainly about the stomach and learning to deny ourselves. But it’s about more than that. Ultimately, fasting is about the heart and learning to love Jesus. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .