

Lift up
the *Hands*

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Lift up the Hands

Murray Wylie - Brisbane Christian Fellowship

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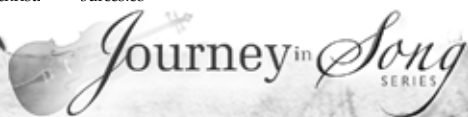
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Lift Up the Hands

MLC

Murray Wylie

Moderato (♩ = 120)

The musical score is written in G major, 4/4 time, with a tempo of Moderato (♩ = 120). It consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. The second staff continues with B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The third staff starts with G2, A2, B2, C3, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1, D1, C1. The fourth staff continues with B0, A0, G0, F#0, E0, D0, C0, B-1, A-1, G-1, F#-1, E-1, D-1, C-1. The lyrics are: "Lift up the hands which hang down and strength-en the fee-ble knees. Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. Rath-er let us praise the Lord, Rath-er let us praise the Lord, Rath-er let us praise the Lord, and we shall be healed." The dynamics are marked as *f* (forte) at the beginning and *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the second line. The chords are indicated above the notes: G, C, D, G, G7, C, G, Bm, Em, A, D, G, C, D, G, G7, C, D, G, G7, C, D, Em, C, D, C, G.

f Lift up the hands which hang down and strength-en the fee-ble knees.

5 Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.

9 *mf* Rath-er let us praise the Lord, Rath-er let us *f* praise the Lord,

13 Rath-er let us *ff* praise the Lord, and we shall be healed.

'Lift up the Hands'

By Murray Wylie

Lift up the hands which hang down

And strengthen the feeble knees

Make straight paths for your feet

Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way

Rather let us praise the Lord

Rather let us praise the Lord

Rather let us praise the Lord

And we shall be healed.

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Our first song on the Christian journey

Our first Sunday communion service for this year began with a rousing rendition of 'Lift Up the Hands'. I looked around to see participants of all ages giving themselves, as encouraged by the song leader, to the Sunday school actions. These actions (I can't remember their origin) included a stand-up 360 degree turn, on the line, 'Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way'. Thus, each person could see everyone else, and joyously recall what the song was really about. As the song leader reminded us, it's a song of 'turning', of making a proper response to the loving discipline of the Father. How should we respond in times of discipline? 'Lift up the hands which hang down', we are told by the writer of Hebrews, and 'strengthen the feeble knees'. Straighten up! Don't become discouraged or faint.

It is well over thirty years since this song came to me – long enough that I've forgotten the exact circumstances. What I do remember is that it was the first 'singable' chorus that made its way into our church repertoire. In a casual moment, I called it the twelve-twelve song, because it came from Hebrews chapter twelve, verse twelve. In a sense, this is where my own journey in song began, and it's a fitting foundation. Of course, with each season of the Lord's chastening, the significance of the message has grown for everyone in our Fellowship.

Afterwards

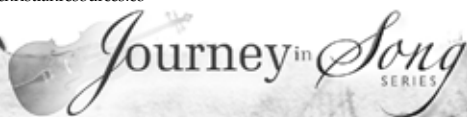
No-one is very happy about chastening at first. However, we *are* told that while discipline is painful, grievous, or sorrowful (depending on which Bible version we read), there is an ‘afterward’ to look forward to. ‘*Afterward* it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.’ Heb 12:11.

Then we read, ‘*Therefore!*’ ‘Therefore, strengthen [lift up, make straight] the hands that hang down.’ Heb 12:12. Clearly, if we make a right response to discipline, there will be *fruit* afterwards.

Further on in chapter twelve of Hebrews, we read more about the ‘afterwards’ matter. We are reminded of ‘Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal’. Heb 2:16. Then we read, ‘For you know that even *afterwards*, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears’. Heb 12:16,17. The matter becomes a serious one, and the warning is suitably firm. It’s possible that there is no ‘afterwards’. Discipline might *not* produce any fruit ‘afterwards’.

How might this happen? How did this happen with Esau? Simply, Esau ‘sold out’ in a very conclusive manner. He sold his birthright. Or, we could put it this way: he no longer valued his sonship, his inheritance. He did not behave as a son. The writer of Hebrews is using this illustration so that we make sure we *do*

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behave as sons, particularly in the way we receive discipline. If we're to be sons of the heavenly Father, we require discipline. No discipline, no sonship. It's that simple.

Grace - not falling short

Discipline produces *relationship* ('peace with all men') and *holiness*, without which we will not 'see the Lord'. Heb 12:14. This is another firm statement. This being so, we are urged not to fall short of the grace of God that is available to us. Heb 12:15. Have we realised that discipline is for the purpose of receiving the grace of God? And, equally, there is a grace from God, an ability of God, by which we *can* receive discipline, find change, and produce the fruit of holiness. This is where Esau fell short of the grace of God. Heb 12:15. There is a grace to be 'healed'. We *can* find adjustment. What do the Scripture verse and the song say? 'Rather *be* healed!' We must make *straight* paths for our feet. The Father disciplines us so that we will seek and receive grace to be healed; to be changed. We *can* pursue peace, and we can achieve holiness. In fact, if we don't, we won't 'see the Lord'.

A song of response

So the theme song of this *Journey* booklet, 'Lift up the Hands', is not just a bouncy, upbeat, positive encouragement. It turns out to be a statement of response that is quite central to the Christian life.

I recall a season of chastening when the Lord drew my attention to Hebrews chapter twelve as a whole. The song took on an even deeper meaning.

The key points stood up off the page:

- get rid of every weight; Heb 12:1 ff
- run the race with endurance
- look at Jesus Himself, who also endured chastening; Isa 53:5; Heb 5:8
- in fact, He endured extreme hostility
- and He resisted sin to the point of bloodshed
- so don't become weary and discouraged (at such small issues!)
- 'why complain?', in other words
- when the Lord chastens, He is dealing with us as sons
- don't forget the 'afterwards'
- the fruit includes a supply of the Spirit that we can pour out to others; Eph 3:16; Phil 1:19

- we have come to Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai; Heb 12:22; Gal 4:24
- that is, we can find salvation not condemnation
- an unshakeable kingdom, not a dark and fearsome message; Heb 12:28
- we can now be acceptable priests in this kingdom; Heb 12:28.

Discipline confirms our sonship. That's the overall message. It ought to make us feel secure. In fact, the Lord will allow chastening to continue until we *do* feel secure. Are we insecure about whether or not we are loved? Are we becoming self-absorbed, anxious, even depressed? We can see where the message is heading. The Father's answer in these situations is not what we might think or hope for. His answer is *discipline*. The mark and measure of His love is His discipline.

The Father is determined that we share His holiness, His divine nature. He disciplines us for our profit, for our good. Heb 12:10. No, it doesn't *seem* good. We've already concluded that. But there's only one Father, and only the one 'good' for our lives. That's why we need to remember the song. 'Lift up ... strengthen ... make straight paths.'

A spirit of discipline

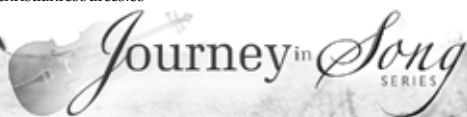
Straight paths! Discipline has a way of moving you and me up to the starting point, in terms of being accountable to be who we are. Then we can 'run the race' like a mature athlete, 'according to the rules'. Heb 12:1; 2 Tim 2:5. In other words, we can walk in the straight lines of the particular discipline that is required at various points in our lives. Who would deny that being a sound father or mother, servant or fellow-worker, is a very specific discipline.

Accordingly, the heavenly Father gives us a spirit of power and love and discipline – a sound mind. 2 Tim 1:7. Why are we trained? It is so that we will be who we are, as sons. This is the practical meaning of holiness. We need to be sanctified (holy) to be 'us'. At the moment we are being ourselves, we are able to offer to the Lord. We can offer who we are! We can present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. Rom 12:1. And if we happen to drift backwards from the point of being accountable to 'be', then His discipline is most emphatic.

Discipline produces holiness

Devoted parents would understand and accept this point in the family setting. The writer of Hebrews draws attention to the parallel between 'earthly fathers' and 'the Father of spirits'. Heb 12:9. What is the purpose of discipline? Discipline is not just for general conformity. The aim of discipline is the unique

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‘holiness’ of each individual. Identity! This is something we need to learn, in both the family and the household of God. The goal is responsible identity. That’s the practical meaning of holiness, of sanctification (the same Greek word). In that case, our heavenly Father is not so interested in our immature mistakes, our responses to temptations, and even the foolish choices we make. Rather, He is training us in righteousness, both for this age and the age to come.

Not having our own righteousness

As Paul proclaimed, we are to be found in Christ with the righteousness that comes through faith. Phil 3:9. In that case, we must be found *not having* our own righteousness which is not based in faith.

‘Not having’! There’s real meaning in these words. We are to be found in Christ with something missing. We have to cast off our own righteousness. What does this mean? We need to dismantle all our own mechanisms for producing the outcome that we want. In the case of small children, they are being trained to accept the righteousness of God, not the ‘right’ as they see it. The book of Proverbs records, ‘Every man’s way is right in his own eyes’. Prov 21:2. Anyone who has cared for a young child will know that this is true. The innate response of every individual ever born is to believe that their own way is right. Only discipline changes this view. Discipline teaches us to move our reference point. We must all be taught to relate

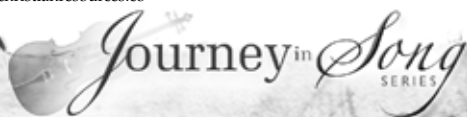
to life, with its many relationships, as it truly is, not as we see it through our own eyes. We must be delivered, progressively, from our own concept of what is right and wrong.

We know that this is particularly true with children. If they are left to themselves, without training, they will become self-absorbed, and overcome with their own measure of what is good for them. In the extreme case, an untrained child cannot cope with being contradicted, and must be constantly enticed toward acceptable behaviour.

Identity is found in offering

To make the point even more clearly, true identity is only found in giving, in offering. An individual only finds and knows himself, and is only confirmed as an individual, in the very action of being who he is toward others. Sons and daughters, for example, are only *being* so, when they are giving, devoting and offering their respectful sonship to their parents. That's why the writer of Hebrews mentions 'respect' in relation to discipline. Heb 12:9. Thinking more broadly on this matter of offering: friends are only friends in the very action of giving their lives in sacrifice to others. Parents are only parents when they 'lay up' and offer themselves for their children. 2 Cor 12:14. If we don't make this shift to become those who offer, who give themselves, then self-centred survival and fear take over our lives. Then, identity is steadily corrupted by

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fear. We don't grow and increase in fruit. We become feeble and narrow as people.

Don't faint when reprov'd

To prevent us from disintegrating, the Father applies discipline – through the circumstances of life, through the training of others, or through the destructive fruit of our own lawlessness. If we make a wrong response to this discipline, we will destroy our fundamental person even further. That's why we are urged not to esteem discipline lightly. We are not to despise discipline. We must not faint when we are rebuked – as if we are toddlers who collapse every time parents bring correction. 'Fainting', we could say, is a type of loss of consciousness. If we respond to discipline by fainting, we are forgetting that we are sons. So we must stay conscious; stay on our feet; keep our hands raised. In fact, we must turn *to* the reproof of the Lord (Prov 1:23, correct translation of the verse) and not just turn *at* His reproof. There is a vast difference here. Perhaps it's true that at times we only turn at the point when we are disciplined. Instead, however, we should turn *to* His reproof. We are to seek discipline. When we do, the Scripture exhorts, 'Turn to my reproof, behold I will pour out My Spirit on you'. Prov 1:23. What a marvellous promise!

We are loved by the Father. He knows who we are, and who we are to become. He has our full maturity in view and, if we aim to be mature, then we should seek, love, and rejoice

in chastening. We are thankful. We pursue 'peace' – which reminds us of the Old Testament peace offerings that were brought in the season of harvest. We lift our hearts as a wave offering, and give ourselves as a heave offering to the Lord, ready to reveal His righteousness. We cast off all the mechanisms of our own righteousness.

Which mountain - Sinai or Zion

How do we respond when we find ourselves receiving discipline? What do we think, and where do we look? Do we look toward the mountain from which grace comes (Zion), or to the mountain that thunders with condemnation (Sinai)? 'For you have *not* come ...', the book of Hebrews goes on to note, after talking about Esau, who never arrived at the 'afterwards' part of his training. We have not come to the mountain of fire, blackness, tempest and trembling. Heb 12:18ff. No, we have come to the mountain of the firstborn assembly.

There is a mountain, mentioned in all the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures, that symbolises the people of God, His own chosen people. This mountain is our goal, our Christian hope. We want to be found in the firstborn assembly; in the body of Christ; in the temple of God, serving as priests, with reverence and godly fear. Is that our desire? Is this to where we look when we receive discipline?

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Do we lift up our hands toward mount Zion? What is our first response? Let us understand the song clearly. We need to make straight paths for our feet.

Practically speaking

Let us speak practically. When we face discipline, we need to become very straightforward; very determined. It's amazing to watch our own responses sometimes, and to see how much we 'duck and weave'. After all, in most cases, we do not really believe, at first, that we are falling short or doing wrong. In fact, we don't look to each day to see what we are going to learn! And we don't set out each day to make a set of wrong responses. So, when we are found to be at fault, and are challenged toward a new direction, we are still a little like children who say, 'But that's what I *was* doing'.

Then we begin to justify our responses. We put a different construction on things. If we were angry and aggressive, we explain that we were just afraid and letting someone know. If we were insecure and awkward, we justify it as a natural response to strong and imposing people. We have an incredible machinery for self-justification, and a well-developed capacity for indulging in regret, offence, guilt, recrimination and self-rejection.

Finding fellowship

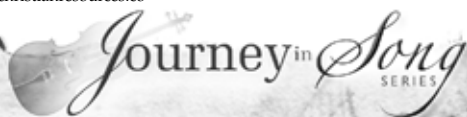
The only way to be saved is to join the fellowship of the 'Firstborn', of Christ, and pursue peace and holiness. He accepts us, and also expects us to walk in the light, in fellowship, where our faults can be easily dealt with. 1 John 1:7.

How do we do this? First, we must deeply accept that all sons will be chastened. We must accept fault, and accept our frailty with a sense of humility. Then, immediately, matters become easy! If we humbly accept our weakness, even 'take *pleasure* in weakness' – yes, even 'boast' in weakness, as did Paul – then the power of Christ 'tents' upon us (Gr. 'rests' upon us). 2 Cor 12:9,10. We enter His tabernacle and begin to function in priestly service to others. From what basis? From the basis of weakness, not from success and fleshly confidence!

When we genuinely accept weakness as the basis of priesthood, we don't worry about our performance, and we are easy about our faults. Heb 5:2. We are not seeking to reveal our own righteousness but, rather, the righteousness of Christ. We do this through faith, and by His grace. His grace is sufficient for this, and we are not to fall short of His grace.

The first and most sacred precept of the Christian faith is that we are *forgiven*. Christ has died for us all, disconnected

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us from law, sin and death, and reconciled us in the body of His flesh. He has delivered us from the law where we were held to a place of 'no transgression'. Rom 4:15. He has forgiven our trespasses, and removed the handwriting standing over against us. Col 2:14. He has done all this while we were still sinners. Rom 5:8. The aim of the gospel is to call us into this place of sonship, where we can become true sons, and be matured, through discipline, to produce the character and hope for which we were apprehended in the first place.

His chastisement for our peace

The greatest mistake we can make in the Christian life is to lose faith in the process or, to put it another way, to make a wrong response to discipline. If it was God's intention to simply confer sonship as a kind of legal status, with no actual change in our lives, then He could do so. He could have done so without the cross, and without Christ accepting all the chastisement necessary for our peace. Isa 53:5. So what does Christ's chastisement mean? It means that we are to join the cross. We are to look to the Author and Finisher of our faith, who endured all the hostility to the point of blood, as a chastisement for our peace. So we are *not* to be faint, or to lightly regard the chastisement that is mercifully laid upon us. We begin as sons, but we must not lose or sell that birthright. Most of all, we must avoid the root of bitterness that springs up in our hearts when discipline comes.

Bitterness, offence, disquiet and indifference are signs that we are not making straight paths for our feet. We are becoming lame, and are in danger of being 'turned out of the way'. Yes, indeed, the 360 degree turn on the fourth line of the song makes the point. We need to turn all the way around to a joyous response to discipline. If we do not, we may find that we are turned out of the pathway of sonship. Thankfully, we can receive grace. We can be healed as we lift up our hands, strengthen our knees, and walk in straight paths.

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