



In our church services we usually sing the modern choruses, but we always try to include at least one traditional hymn. Many of the traditional hymns were written at a time when the majority of people attended church so they were familiar with the words and ideas that were written. Some of the words

no longer have the same meaning today or are words that are not a part of our normal vocabulary; this is particularly so for many of today's non-church attenders. With this in mind I would like to have a closer look at one of the traditional hymns that is very popular today.

Amazing grace

Written by John Newton in 1772

AMAZING GRACE

Grace is often a prayer of thanks before a meal, but in this hymn it means so much more. Grace refers to the favour of God and how He gives us something that we do not deserve, something that we have not earned. The term 'Amazing grace' is a mixture of what is considered as the old-fashioned meaning for 'grace' and yet is combined with the word 'amazing'; a word that is very much up-to-date and used to mean something outstanding, wonderful, unbelievable and yes – **AMAZING**.

HOW SWEET THE SOUND



What sound??? Birds? Drums? Voices? No – The sound that is sweet is the spoken name of 'Jesus'. How strange that this first verse is all about Jesus and yet His name is not even once mentioned. I have noticed many times that when songs or hymns about the name of Jesus are sung, something special happens. It is not just the name, it is because of who Jesus is and what He did and continues to do. What did Jesus do?

THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME. I ONCE WAS LOST BUT NOW AM FOUND

Jesus died on the cross in order to say, "Sorry" to God for all the things that we do and say that are not acceptable to a holy God. Without the intervention of Jesus we are all destined for Hell when our lives on this earth come to an end, but, Jesus saved us from such a terrible fate and made it possible for us to be in the presence of God in Heaven; hence the word, 'saved'. I would say that 'wretch' is a very good description of someone who has no hope for an eternity in Heaven. Would you agree with that? We do not sing about Jesus just to make us feel good; we sing about Him because He has saved us from a horrible end and made possible something that we are not even able to begin to imagine.



OR

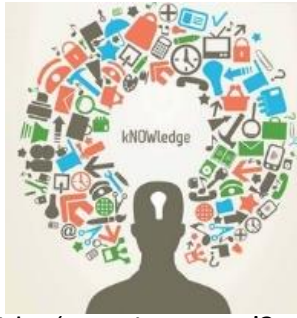


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WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE

When I gave my life to Jesus and became a 'born-again' Christian, my life was totally changed. Even though I had been attending church all of my life, it was as if I suddenly saw everything in a new light. As the words of the hymn say, 'I was blind but now I see.' I had had my physical sight and could see everything and everyone around me, but the spirit part of me did not have the same revealing spiritual insight until Jesus became no longer a name but someone very precious to me. Yes, I knew about Jesus in my head.

Yes, I had read about Him in the Bible many times over the years, but now He became a living person and I knew Him in my heart.



I knew that He had saved me from going to Hell and that when I die I will be with Him in Heaven – for ETERNITY! Is it any wonder that the hymn starts with , ‘Amazing grace’? It is God’s amazing grace that made a way for each one of us to be in His presence for ever. It is amazing grace that we are saved from an eternity away from God. It is amazing grace that did something for us that we do not deserve – even if we might be goody-goodies – and that we have not earned. The name of Jesus is not mentioned but He is most certainly the central thought at the beginning of this old hymn. The hymn may be old but what Jesus did and continues to do is bang up-to-date. The conditions are still unchanging too. His offer/gift is there for everyone but it has to be accepted to make a difference in our spirits and lives; the end result is not an automatic happening but is dependent on a choice that has to be made.

WHEN WE’VE BEEN THERE TEN THOUSAND YEARS

I particularly like the last verse of this hymn. I am not able to imagine ‘eternity’. Are you able to grasp the thought of 10,000 years plus in Heaven? We have someone in church who said that his idea of Heaven was a golf course and a chip shop! What is your idea of Heaven? One of our sons loved to ride a motor-bike and said that his idea of Heaven was being able to ride a motor-bike for years and years. (No thoughts of working of course!) When I asked him if he was looking forward to nice straight roads so that he could ride as fast as he wished, his reply was, “Oh no, roads with lots of bends and curves”!



I absolutely love singing the modern choruses. It tells us in the Bible that we will be worshipping in Heaven so that will suit me just fine! We may be a bit croaky now or sing out of tune but in Heaven we will be singing in beautiful harmony. Does that sound good? We will not be thinking about work, golf, chips or motor-bikes because our central thought will be to worship. We are told that there will be no pain, and no tears so how wonderful will that be? No need for any hospitals, doctors, chemists or undertakers. No need for any diaries or calendars. No more bills to pay.

The words of some of our traditional hymns may be old and out-dated, but the meanings and spiritual truths remain unchanged. I think of that old chorus:- ‘Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same. All may change but Jesus never, Glory to His name!

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see

When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun

We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun