

This is the first of many articles that will be written by our worship leaders for the CN in an attempt to give some background to the songs we sing. Whether it's a song that has been written by one of our own worship leaders, or an old hymn, it is hoped that by hearing the stories and Scriptures that have inspired their writing, your understanding and appreciation of these songs will be enhanced, and our collective praise amplified.

*Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again.*

*Incline our hearts to Thee, O Lord.
Open our eyes to things above.
Give us an undivided heart.
And satisfy us with your love.*

*Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee all in all.*

*We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

*Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Wherever our changeful lot is cast;
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see,
Blessed when our faith can hold Thee fast.
O Jesus, ever with us stay,*

*Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed over the world Thy holy light.*

The text of this hymn was written in Latin by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Martin Luther, 400 years later, called Bernard, the best monk that ever lived, whom I admire beyond all the rest put together. Central to his convictions was the importance of experiencing Christ rather than just attaining an intellectual understanding of Him:

He is himself the Loveable [One] in his essential being, and gives himself to be the object of our love. He wills our love for him to issue in our bliss, not to be void and vain. His love both opens up the way for ours and is our love's reward. How kindly does he lead us in love's way, how generously he returns the love we give,

how sweet he is to those who wait for him! He is rich unto all that call upon him, for he can give them nothing better than himself. He gave himself to be our Righteousness, and keeps himself to be our great Reward. He sets himself to the refreshment of our souls, and spends himself to free the prisoners.

So consumed was he with the love of God, Bernard preached 86 sermons on the first two chapters of Song of Songs plus the first few verses of chapter 3! (Just think how long his Homegroup study guide to Song of Songs would've been!) The hymn *Jesus Thou Joy* is an expression of this deep yearning to be filled and sated with that for which our souls truly hunger. It is an elaboration of the great sentiment expressed so well by Augustine (354-430), the great North African bishop, You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.

A few years ago, I was reading John Piper's *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy*. In it he tells of how he uses the acronym *I.O.U.S.* to pray over the Word in his fight for joy in God. It stands for:

I = Incline! Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain.

Ps 119:36

O = Open! Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Ps 119:18

U = Unite! Unite my heart to fear your name.

Ps 86:11

S = Satisfy! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

It seemed to me to express well the same longing that Bernard articulated and the same conviction that satisfaction of these longings can be found in Christ alone. With just a little tweaking, this became the refrain I added to the text of Bernard's hymn. May we as a people continue to press on in seeking the Lord for that which is of ultimate importance, from which all else flows. Let us not grow weary of crying out to the Lord, for ourselves and for the church, that He would be our hearts' desire and satisfaction!