



Gospel Characteristics

- Simple, clear lyrics deliver a spiritual message focusing on faith, hope, salvation, and praise.
- Rhythmic drive features steady beats encouraging clapping and toe tapping.
- Verses often have a chorus with repeated words making joining in and memorizing easier.
- Usually in a major key.
- Strong vocals with clear four-part harmony.
- Songs encourage collectiveness, community worship, and shared experience.
- Often has repeated words in the refrain which makes learning and joining in easier.



Lent Midweek Service Participant Booklet

Sing your favorite gospel songs and
learn the stories behind them!

Wednesday, March 11th



Jesus Savior Pilot Me

#755

Lyrics – Edward Hopper, 1871
Tune – John Edgar Gould, 1871

“Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me” was written in 1871 by Edward Hopper, a Presbyterian minister of the Church of Sea and Land in New York. It was written during a time when seafaring was both essential and dangerous. Inspired by the risks faced by sailors and the strong biblical imagery of the sea, Hopper crafted the hymn as a heartfelt prayer for guidance and protection using words that the sailors would be familiar with like chart, compass and the need for a competent pilot to guide them over the tempestuous seas. He drew from passages such as Jesus calming the storm, presenting Christ as a steady pilot who leads believers through the uncertainties and trials of life.

Hopper wrote it anonymously, as he did all his works. It wasn’t until the hymn first appeared in *The Sailor’s Magazine*, vol. 43, 1871, a publication devoted to ministry among seamen, that author became known. The song quickly became popular in churches, especially in coastal communities. Its imagery of waves, storms, and safe harbors spoke to both literal journeys across the ocean as well as the spiritual journey of faith. The tune most often used today was composed by John Edgar Gould, and its calm and flowing melody reflects the sense of peace and trust found in the lyrics.

One meaningful and often noted aspect of the hymn is its gentle, nurturing tone. While it addresses Jesus as Savior and Guide, the language of being carried safely across dangerous waters also suggests tender, protective care. Some have seen in this imagery as a reminder of the feminine qualities sometimes used in Scripture to describe God’s love as sheltering, guiding, and faithfully watching over His children. This balance of strength and tenderness has helped the hymn endure, offering comfort to those seeking direction, safety, and reassurance in life’s storms.



Story Behind the Verses

Not originally meant to be a hymn in a songbook, *Amazing Grace* was written as part of a New Year’s Day sermon. It was based on 1 Chronicles 17:16–17, where King David marvels at God’s grace.

Newton’s original version had six verses. Over time, however, and like many songs sung over time and around the world, it changed slightly as people sang it. When it became popular in America during the 1800s, some hymnals dropped or rearranged verses, while others added new ones.

One of the most famous added verses is the final one that begins: “*When we’ve been there ten thousand years...*”

This verse didn’t appear in the original text written by Newton. It was added later, borrowed both from another 18th-century spiritual, *Jerusalem, My Happy Home* and the Harriett Beecher Stowe 1852 novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which included Newton’s verses followed by the “thousand years” verse.

Amazing Grace

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.

Jerusalem, My Happy Home

When we’ve been there a thousand
years,
A thousand years and more,
We’ll have no less days to sing God’s
praise
Than when we first begun.

Biblical Connections

Ephesians 2:8-9

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves. It is a gift of God, not by works, so that you cannot boast.”



Amazing Grace

#779

Lyrics/Tune – John Newton, 1725

John Newton didn't start out as the kind of man you'd expect to write one of the world's most beloved hymns. Born in London in 1725, he was the son of a sea captain and a loving Christian mother. When he was only six, his mother died, and he was sent to live with relatives who didn't share her faith.

By age eleven, John was sailing with his father, growing up among sailors and drifting far from God. Later, he became involved in the slave trade, commanding ships that carried enslaved Africans.

A violent storm in 1748 changed everything. His ship was battered by waves and began to fill with water. Convinced he was about to die, he cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us!" To his amazement, the ship survived, and so did he.

After that experience, he began reading the Bible, as his mother had taught him, and slowly left behind his old ways, walking away from the slave trade. Years later, he became an Anglican minister. His preaching was simple and heartfelt, full of gratitude for the mercy he had received.

In 1772, while preparing a sermon, he wrote a poem, "Faith's Review and Expectation". "Faith's Review" meaning looking back and seeing how faith and God's grace have worked, and "Expectation" meaning looking forward with trust in God's promises and hopes of eternal life. This would eventually become known to the world as *Amazing Grace*.

In old age, Newton said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior." That indeed is the sweet sound of an amazing grace.



Song Themes

Guidance through life's storms	Trusting Christ to lead through hard times.
Trust in divine leadership	Surrendering control to Jesus' direction.
Peace in the midst of trouble	Finding calm even during fear and uncertainty.
Protection and safety	Resting in God's constant care.
Journey toward eternal home	Life as a voyage led safely to heaven.

Biblical Connections

Mark 4: 35 – 41 Jesus calms the storm

Mark 4:49 – "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

Psalm 23: 2-3 The Lord as shepherd and guide

"He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Psalm 46: 1-2 God our refuge and strength

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear..."

Matthew 8:26 Why are you afraid?

"Why are you fearful. O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm."



Eternal Father, Strong to Save

#756

Lyrics – William Whiting, 1860

Tune – John Bacchus Dykus (Melita), 1861

“Eternal Father, Strong to Save” is one of the most recognized hymns in the world, often known as the “Navy Hymn.” William Whiting, a schoolmaster in England, had a lifelong respect for the power and danger of the sea. As a young man, Whiting had nearly died in a violent storm, an experience that stayed with him and later shaped the deep reverence and urgency found in his writing.

Drawing from biblical images of God’s authority over the waters, his text is a prayer for divine protection for those who travel by sea. Each verse calls upon the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to guard sailors, ships, and all who face the uncertainty of the ocean. At a time when sea travel was essential but risky, the hymn offered comfort to families and seafarers alike.

The hymn was paired with the powerful tune “Melita,” composed by John Bacchus Dykes in 1861. His strong, steady melody gave the words a sense of strength and confidence that matched the theme of God’s control over nature. The hymn quickly gained popularity, especially within the British Royal Navy and later the United States Navy.

Over the years, “Eternal Father, Strong to Save” has been sung at naval ceremonies, memorial services, and funerals, becoming a lasting symbol of faith and protection. Its message continues to remind listeners that God’s power reaches across the oceans and watches over all who journey through life’s uncertain waters.



Song Themes

God’s power over creation	Celebrates God’s authority over all of nature.
Divine protection	A prayer asking God to guard those who face danger and uncertainty.
Trust in the Trinity	Each verse calls on the Father, Son, and Spirit for guidance and care.
Comfort in times of fear	Offers peace to those worried about loved ones far from home.
Faith in life’s journey	Reminds believers that God watches over every path, near or far.

Biblical Connections

Psalm 121: 7-8 God’s protection in peril

“The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.”

Psalm 107: 28-29 God brings us safely through danger

“Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out from their distress; He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.”

Psalm 32:8 Trusting God for direction in an unclear path

“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”