



Lent Midweek Service Participant Booklet

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

Wednesday, March 4th



I'll Fly Away

See Insert

Lyrics/Tune – Albert Brumley, 1929

Albert E. Brumley, was born in Spiro, Oklahoma. Growing up in a rural and church-centered community, his early experiences with gospel music deeply influenced his songwriting but had nothing to do with his most famous work.

While doing the back-breaking work of picking cotton, he would hum a popular tune of the day, “If I Had the Wings of An Angel” and dream of flying away from the back breaking drudgery of the cotton fields. It was as simple as that, or at least it was to start. Though he would go on to write over 800 hymns during his lifetime, it was there, in the cotton fields of Oklahoma during the depression, that musical history was made.

As a young man of 17, Brumley attended the Hartford Musical Institute in Hartford AK. He then went on to teach at a singing school in Powell, MO where he met and married Goldie Edith Schell. It was Goldie that encouraged him to submit “I’ll Fly Away” and other songs for publication. And as they say, the rest is as they say, history. (Thank you, Goldie.)

Though not initially written to have any spiritual emphasis, over time, the hymn’s uplifting lyrics have resonated deeply with those seeking solace in their faith. Brumley himself regarded “I’ll Fly Away” as a song that captures the essence of Christian hope.

Written during the Great Depression, its message of hope and deliverance resonated with many people facing difficult times. "I'll Fly Away" fits well with the Southern gospel tradition, with its spiritual themes, upbeat rhythms, repeated words and phrases, and easy harmonies.

Brumley himself regarded “I’ll Fly Away” as a song that captures the essence of the Christian hope. Maybe that’s why this may be the most recorded gospel song of all time!



Song Themes

Hoping for heaven	A deep desire to be with God and live in eternity.
Freedom from life's burdens	Hope to leave pain and struggle behind.
Earth as a temporary home	A reminder that this life is not our final home.
Joyful anticipation	A spirit of happiness about the promise of heaven.
Victory over death	Faith that death leads to eternal life.

Biblical Connections

Romans 8:18 - "Just a few more weary days and then..."

"The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed..."

Psalm 90:102 - "To a home on God's celestial shore..."

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations..."

Revelation 21:3-4 - "To a land where joys shall never end..."

"He will wipe every tear...no more death or pain..."

Isaiah 40:31 - "I'll fly away..."

"...they shall mount up with wings like eagles..."

Thessalonians 4:16-17 - "I'll fly away"

"The dead in Christ will rise...we will be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air."



On Eagle's Wings

#787

Lyrics/Tune – Michael Joncas, 1978

“On Eagle’s Wings” is a well-loved modern hymn and quite popular in both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. At the time the song was written, Joncas was a seminarian studying for the Catholic priesthood in Minnesota. He was asked by a friend to compose a song for the funeral of his father, who had lived a faithful and humble life. Wanting to offer comfort and hope to the grieving family, Joncas turned to Scripture for inspiration, especially Psalm 91 and Exodus 19:4, which speak of God’s protection and care.

As he reflected on these passages, Joncas was moved by the image of God lifting His people up and carrying them to safety, just as an eagle carries its young. Joncas wrote the song as a message of reassurance, reminding listeners that even in sorrow, God remains close, guiding and protecting us through every trial. The lyrics emphasize trust in God’s promises and the peace that comes from knowing He is always present.

The hymn was first performed at that funeral, where it deeply touched those in attendance. Not long after, it began to spread beyond the local community. Its gentle melody and powerful message of comfort made it especially meaningful during times of grief, loss, and uncertainty. Over the years, *“On Eagle’s Wings”* became a staple in churches across many denominations and its appeal has expanded to being sung at funerals, weddings, memorial services, and moments of prayer.

The song has been reworked over time. Joncas noted, “I don’t think that if I had known that beginning the first verse with *“You-hoo”* would cause such mirth I would ever have used that translation.”



Song Themes

God's protection	Trust that God watches over and keeps His people safe.
Comfort in times of loss	A reminder that God is close during grief and sorrow.
Being lifted by faith	The image of God carrying His people through hardship.
Trust in God's promises	Confidence that God will provide refuge and strength.
Peace in God's presence	A sense of calm and security found in relying on him.

Biblical Connections

Psalm 91 – Stanzas

Open your hymnal to the front and see Psalm 91

Exodus 19:4 – Refrain

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.”

Psalm 139: 9-10 – No matter how far you go; God is always there

“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

Isaiah 49:16 – Hold you in God's hands

“See, I have engraved you in the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.”



My Life Flows on in Endless Song

#763

Lyrics – Anon (Pauline T., Anna Bartlett Warner, etc.)

Tune – Robert Lowry, 1869

“My Life Flows On in Endless Song,” is most often known by the refrain “How Can I Keep from Singing?”. The song was first published in 1869 by Robert Lowry, a Baptist minister and composer who contributed greatly to American gospel music. Though Lowry provided the tune, and helped bring the song into print, the true origin of the words remains somewhat uncertain, adding to its quiet mystery.

The hymn was born in the years following the Civil War, a time when many Americans were searching for comfort, healing, and renewed hope. Its message speaks to the idea that, even in times of sorrow, there is a deep, steady joy that comes from trusting in God. The lyrics describe an inner song that continues through life’s trials, reminding believers that they are never alone.

Rather than focusing on a single Bible story or personal event, the hymn is written in the first person and expresses a personal testimony of faith. It reflects the peace that comes from knowing that Christ’s presence remains constant through every season of life. Over time, it has been sung in churches across many denominations and has become a symbol of enduring hope, faith, and quiet strength that carries on through all circumstances.



Song Themes

Unending praise	A heart that continues to worship through every season of life.
Peace in trouble	Finding calm and strength even when life feels uncertain.
Lasting hope	Faith that carries us through sorrow and lifts our spirits.
God is near	Comfort in knowing that God is always present.
Unshakable faith	A deep joy that remains strong no matter the circumstances.

Biblical Connections

Psalm 34:1 – “My life flows on in endless song”

“I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

John 14:27 – “Through all the tumult and the strife”

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, give I to you.”

**Matthew 28:20 – “Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?”**

“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

**Romans 15:13 – “No storm can shake my inmost calm while to
that Rock I’m clinging”**

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”



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.