

How Great the Chasm That Lay Between Us (Living Hope)

Phil Wickham, Brian Johnson

Phil Wickham describes the writing of 'Living Hope' as a gradual process accomplished through a month-long series of text messages and voice memos exchanged with co-author Brian Johnson. Of the finished song, Wickham comments:

'God has rescued us from a place that we could never have rescued ourselves. Our future was death, but Jesus came in and brought life – a living hope – into our souls and into our lives. I love singing the truth of "Living Hope," and this song has already become an anthem at both of the churches where we lead. I hope anybody who gets to hear it not only sings along, but their hearts' cling to it as well.'

If our experience is to be one of truly singing together, here are a few suggestions for those who lead.

Hear it here

Album version:

Living Hope, Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-1fwZtKJSM>

Guitar lesson with Phil Wickham:

Phil Wickham - Tutorial Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1DF3WglizU>

A cappella choral version:

Laudate Mennonite Ensemble <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzYy33x5tg>

Scores // Lyrics // Chords

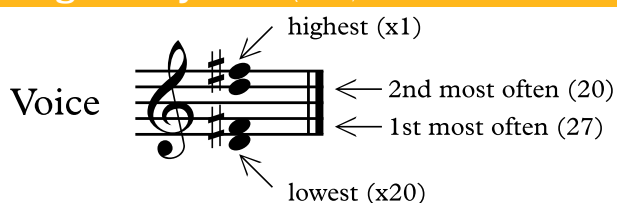
Online:

- Various, including www.musicnotes.com, www.praisecharts.com, worship.lifeway.com
Full scores, various keys available

Books:

- Spring Harvest Unlimited (2019), #17
- Spring Harvest Unleashed (2020), #18

Range & Key ✓ (wide, chorus uncomfortable in D)



Example 1: Range of the song (verses 1, 2 & chorus)

The verse and chorus are centred on different octaves. Whilst this musical distance 'paints' the words very well indeed ('How great the chasm that lay between us'), the effect of the published key (D) is to place the chorus in a realm that is, if not beyond a stretch for the higher congregational voices, somewhat uncomfortable and tiring for many, and completely unreachable for others. There is no

doubt that the transition makes for an exciting sound from a capable vocalist, but for congregational use you should locate or create a lower version. The *Renewing Worship* website recommends going down to A or Bb, but this conversely places the verse very low.[†] A Methodist congregation should be able to manage B or C. Experiment!

* As quoted by Wikipedia at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_Hope_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_Hope_(song))

[†] <https://www.renewingworshipnc.org/song-keys-for-maximum-participation/#top100>

Regularity ✓✓✓ Syncopation ✓✓✓ (none in some versions)

The Spring Harvest version is essentially a transcription of the album recording and therefore preserves the syncopated rhythm at 'into the night' (e.g. verse 1). Whilst not presenting the slightest difficulty to a musician it may be disuniting for a congregation. This seems to have been recognised by the arrangers of at least two other published versions which amend it (see below). Version A feels the most satisfying to sing, but the important thing, as ever, is to choose one version and then stay with it, throughout the song, and from week to week.

	7 Recorded version	7 Published vers. A	7 Published vers. B

Example 2: Three different published versions of bar 7, vers. A. Lifeway Worship, vers. B. Sheet Music Direct

Be aware that verse 3 introduces an extra syllable at this point: 'grave has no claim on'. With this tiny exception, all three verses fit precisely the tune and rhythms of the first.

Introduction

The first two and last two bars of the verse should be sufficient introduction, priming as they do with the tune, tempo and cue to sing. In relation to the lyrics, this would be the section which when sung is: 'How great the chasm that lay between us ... Jesus Christ, my living hope.'

Instrumentation and accompaniment

This is a flexible song which succeeds perfectly well with just solo piano, or guitar with vocals / melody instrument, but also easily scales up to include bass and drums and more. Organ or synthesizer backing can add much to the chorus and help support voices in the higher sections.

Song set medley options

Songs that could flow well from this song, or lead into it:

- Similar themes:
 - Jesus on the mountain peak (StF 259)
The final verse with its 'Jesus ... living hope' and 'Alleluia' could lead into the chorus.
 - Everyone needs compassion (StF 627)
- Similar themes and tempo:
 - Praise, my soul, the King of heaven (StF 83)
If you use a version in which line 5 is 'Alleluia! Alleluia!' (instead of 'Praise him! Praise him!') you could link the songs by repeating the last two lines of Henry Francis Lyte's hymn as a link to the chorus.