

Will (Can) the Circle Be Unbroken is a popular hymn written in 1907 by Ada Habershon with music by Charles H. Gabriel. This is a gospel revival version in the public domain, and has a slightly different tune than is commonly recorded. The text is below and the original version can be found in imslp at: [https://imslp.org/wiki/Will_the_Circle_be_Unbroken%3F_\(Gabriel,_Charles_Hutchinson\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Will_the_Circle_be_Unbroken%3F_(Gabriel,_Charles_Hutchinson))

There are loved ones in the glory
Whose dear forms you often miss.
When you close your earthly story,
Will you join them in their bliss?

Chorus:

Will the circle be unbroken, by and by, by and by?
Is a better home awaiting in the sky, in the sky?

In the joyous days of childhood
Oft they told of wondrous love
Pointed to the dying Saviour;
Now they dwell with Him above.

Chorus

You remember songs of heaven
Which you sang with childish voice.
Do you love the hymns they taught you,
Or are songs of earth your choice?

Chorus

You can picture happy gath-rings
Round the fireside long ago,
And you think of tearful partings
When they left you hear below.

Chorus

One by one their seats were emptied.
One by one they went away.
Now the family is parted.
Will it be complete one day?

Chorus

The more popular version is a reworked version, intended as a funeral hymn, and was written by A.P. Carter, then released in 1935 for the Carter Family under the name Can the Circle Be Unbroken, with different lyrics and a modified chorus. Mother Maybelle Carter performed it in 1972 and is the Maybelle referred to in the lyrics. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band also famously performs it as does Johnny Cash. These lyrics are NOT in the public domain.

NGDB with various artists: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bRJLkNqNXI>

Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLFbUbmH7To>

I was standing by my window,
On one cold and cloudy day
When I saw that hearse come rolling
For to carry my mother away

Chorus:

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, lord, by and by
There's a better home a-waiting
In the sky, lord, in the sky

I said to that undertaker
Undertaker please drive slow
For this lady you are carrying
Lord, I hate to see here go

Chorus

Oh, I followed close behind her
Tried to hold up and be brave
But I could not hide my sorrow
When they laid her in the grave

Chorus

I went back home, my home was lonesome
Missed my mother, she was gone
All of my brothers, sisters crying
What a home so sad and lone

Chorus

We sang the songs of childhood
Hymns of faith that made us strong
Ones that mother Maybelle taught us
Hear the angels sing along

Chorus (twice more)

Another version!

J. David Moore has arranged this work for SATB, SSAA and TTBB and his arrangements are currently widely performed. The text featured in his arrangements is featured in Rise Up Singing - "a best-selling group singing songbook, which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies since its release in 1988. It has helped to create a quite renaissance of group singing in North America." This was part of an effort/organization called "Rise Up and Sing: Hope + change through song." The text authors are Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter, and Marcia Taylor.

SSAA version of J. David Moore: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvmkDC4aaOI>

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, lord, by and by
There's a better home a-waitin'
if we try, Lord, if we try.

I was singing with my sisters, (brothers)
I was singing with my friends,
And we all can sing together,
'cause the circle never ends.

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, lord, by and by
There's a better home a-waitin'
if we try, Lord, if we try.

I was born down in the valley
Where the sun refuse' to shine
But I'm climbing up to the highland,
Gonna make that mountain mine!

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, lord, by and by
There's a better home a-waiting
In the sky, lord, in the sky.

(Last chorus is usually repeated once softly and then a second time loudly.)

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