SOFTWARE & TECH

# Our God Chris Tomlin Piano Chords

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## Introduction: Why This Song Resonates

Few modern worship songs have achieved the global reach and congregational embrace of Chris Tomlin's "Our God." Released in 2010 on the album "Passion: Awakening," this powerful anthem of faith has become a staple in churches around the world. But beyond its theological depth and soaring melody, the song offers a unique entry point for pianists of all skill levels. Whether you are leading worship on a Sunday morning or simply playing for personal devotion, understanding the Our God Chris Tomlin piano chords can transform your playing experience. This article will walk you through the essential chord progressions, stylistic flourishes, and practical techniques needed to master this modern classic on the piano. We will explore not just the chords themselves, but also the emotional and musical architecture that makes this song so enduringly effective.

## The Harmonic Foundation of the Song

At its core, "Our God" is built on a relatively simple yet powerful chord progression that stays largely consistent throughout the verses and choruses. The song is most commonly played in the key of E major, though some versions transpose to other keys to suit different vocal ranges. The primary chords you will need to know are E, B, C# minor, and A. These four chords form the backbone of the entire song, creating a sense of movement and resolution that mirrors the lyrical themes of triumph and awe. The progression E – B – C#m – A is repeated throughout the verses with slight rhythmic variations, while the chorus shifts to a more declarative sequence: A – E – B – C#m – A – E – B. Understanding this foundational structure is the first step toward playing the song with confidence and fluency.

### The Verse Progression

The verse of "Our God" moves gently but purposefully. It begins on the tonic chord (E major) and ascends to the dominant (B major), creating a sense of anticipation. The shift to C# minor introduces a reflective, poignant quality that perfectly accompanies the lyrics "Water You turned into wine, opened the eyes of the blind." Finally, the return to A major provides a moment of brightness before the phrase resolves. When practicing the verse, pay close attention to the timing. The chords are not played at a uniform pace; there is a subtle rubato that allows the lyrics to breathe. A common beginner mistake is to rush the C# minor chord, which should be held just long enough to let the emotional weight of the line sink in. The right hand can play simple root position triads, or you can experiment with inversions to create a smoother voice leading. For example, playing B/D# instead of a root position B chord creates a seamless transition from the preceding E chord.

### The Chorus Climax

As the song moves into the chorus, the energy rises both dynamically and harmonically. The chorus chord progression is A – E – B – C#m – A – E – B, a sequence that feels both triumphant and resolute. The switch to A major at the beginning of the chorus immediately signals a shift in emotional register; it is brighter, more open, and more declarative. The return to E after A creates a classic IV – I resolution that feels satisfying and

complete. For pianists, the chorus offers an opportunity to open up the voicing. Instead of playing close-position chords, try spreading the notes across a wider range. For instance, play the A major chord as A – C# – E in the left hand while adding a melodic line in the right hand. This creates a fuller, more orchestral sound that supports the congregational singing. The B chord acts as a dominant, pushing back toward the tonic E, and should be played with a sense of forward motion. If you are accompanying a singer or a congregation, consider adding a slight crescendo through the chorus to build toward the final declaration "Our God is greater, our God is stronger."

## Techniques for an Expressive Performance

While knowing the correct chord shapes is essential, the true artistry of playing "Our God" lies in how you voice and connect those chords. Chris Tomlin's original recording features a full band, but the piano arrangement can stand alone if played with intention. One of the most effective techniques for this song is the use of arpeggiated chords in the verses. Instead of striking all three notes of a triad simultaneously, roll them from bottom to top. This creates a gentle, flowing texture that mimics the intimacy of the opening lyrics. For the chorus, you can switch to solid, block chords played with a firm but not harsh touch. The contrast between the arpeggiated verses and the solid chorus creates a dynamic arc that mirrors the song's lyrical journey from reflection to declaration. Additionally, consider adding a suspended chord at key moments. For example, replacing the B major chord with a Bsus4 chord just before the final line of the chorus adds a moment of tension that makes the resolution even more satisfying.

### Pedaling and Dynamics

The sustain pedal is your best friend when playing worship music, but it must be used judiciously. For "Our God," a good rule of thumb is to change the pedal with each chord change in the verses to avoid muddying the harmony. In the chorus, you can hold the pedal slightly longer, especially on the A and E chords, to create a wash of sound that supports the powerful lyrics. Dynamics are equally important. The verses should be played at a piano or mezzo-piano level, with a soft, introspective touch. The chorus calls for a forte or even fortissimo dynamic, particularly on the lines "And if our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?" Pay attention to the crescendo that builds through the bridge (the section that repeats "And if our God is for us"). This is the emotional peak of the song, and the piano should reflect that with increased volume, broader chord voicings, and a more aggressive use of the sustain pedal.

### Inversions and Voice Leading

Voice leading is the secret ingredient that separates a functional piano player from a truly musical one. In the context of "Our God," smooth voice leading means that the notes you play in each chord move as little as possible to the next chord. For example, when moving from E major (E – G# – B) to B major (B – D# – F#), you can keep the B note in place and move the other fingers minimally. This creates a connected, fluid sound that is pleasing to the ear. Similarly, when moving from B to C# minor, try playing C# minor in its first inversion (E – G# – C#) to keep the E and G# notes from the previous chord. These small adjustments make the progression sound less blocky and more like a seamless musical statement. Practicing the song with inversions will also help you memorize the progression more deeply, as you will be thinking in terms of intervals and relationships rather than isolated chord shapes.

## Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them

Many beginner and intermediate pianists encounter specific hurdles when learning "Our God." One of the most common is the transition between the B major chord and the C# minor chord. The finger stretch from B (root position: B – D# – F#) to C# minor (C# – E – G#) can feel awkward, especially for players with smaller hands. A practical solution is to play the B chord in its second inversion (F# – B – D#) so that your hand is already positioned near the C# minor shape. Another challenge is maintaining a steady tempo during the bridge, which

features a repeated chord pattern that can easily become rushed. The bridge uses the same four chords as the verses but with a different rhythmic feel. Practice the bridge with a metronome, starting at a slower tempo and gradually increasing to performance speed. Finally, many players struggle with singing and playing simultaneously. If you are leading worship, start by humming the melody while playing the chords. Once the coordination feels natural, add the lyrics. Break the song into small sections and master each one before attempting the entire piece.

## Adapting the Chords for Different Keys

While E major is the original key, it may not suit every singer's vocal range. Transposing the Our God Chris Tomlin piano chords to a different key is a valuable skill for any worship pianist. The most common alternative keys are D major and F major. In D major, the chord progression becomes D – A – Bm – G for the verses and G – D – A – Bm – G – D – A for the chorus. In F major, the progression shifts to F – C – Dm – Bb for the verses and Bb – F – C – Dm – Bb – F – C for the chorus. When transposing, remember that the relationships between the chords remain the same; only the starting pitch changes. The I – V – vi – IV progression (E – B – C#m – A in the original) translates to any key. Learning to think in terms of scale degrees rather than specific note names will make transposition second nature. If you play with a capo on the guitar, you may need to adjust the piano part to match the guitar's pitch. Communication with the rest of the worship team is essential to ensure everyone is playing in the same key.

## Adding Embellishments and Personal Style

Once you have mastered the basic chord progression, you can begin to add embellishments that make the song your own. One simple but effective technique is to add a grace note or a quick passing tone before a chord change. For example, before striking the A major chord in the chorus, play a quick G# as a lead-in. This creates a sense of anticipation and adds a professional polish. Another option is to incorporate a walking bass line in the left hand. Instead of playing root-position chords, play single bass notes that move stepwise between the roots of the chords. For the sequence E – B – C#m – A, the left hand could play E – F# – G# – A, connecting the chords with a melodic line. This technique works particularly well in the verses, where the arrangement is more sparse. For the chorus, you can add rhythmic comping patterns in the right hand, such as playing eighth-note chord stabs on beats 2 and 4. This creates a driving, energetic feel that supports the congregational singing. Remember that embellishments should serve the song, not distract from it. Always prioritize clarity and emotional impact over technical display.

## Conclusion: Bringing It All Together

Mastering the Our God Chris Tomlin piano chords is more than a technical exercise; it is an opportunity to connect with a song that has touched millions of lives worldwide. By understanding the harmonic foundation, employing expressive techniques, and adapting the arrangement to your context, you can play this anthem with both skill and heart. Start by mastering the basic chord progression in the key of E major, then gradually introduce inversions, arpeggios, and dynamic contrasts. Practice transitions carefully, especially between B and C# minor, and consider transposing the song to suit your vocal range or the needs of your worship team. As you grow more comfortable, allow yourself to experiment with personal embellishments and stylistic flourishes that reflect your unique musical voice. The ultimate goal is not merely to play the correct notes, but to use the piano as a vehicle for worship and connection. Whether you are playing in a small group, leading a congregation of thousands, or simply sitting at home in quiet devotion, let the chords of "Our God" remind you of the power and presence of the God they proclaim.

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