

Singing: A fitting response

Rebekah Buitter

The Christian is placed in many different circumstances while on this earth. Some are characterized by hardships and trials, and others are full of joy and peace. How should the Christian respond? Throughout the Bible there are numerous times where God's people sang in response to their various circumstances. Singing in response to God's ordering of our lives is not only appropriate, but it should characterize God's people (Eph. 5:18–20). Instead of the ugly sounds of complaint or entitlement coming out of our mouths, there should be beautiful lyrics and melodies that demonstrate that in every situation we acknowledge, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Rev. 4:11).

God commands his people to sing to him and about him. "Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works" (Ps. 105:2). We are also commanded to sing joyfully when we come to worship God: "Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing" (Ps. 100:2). We are commanded to "sing unto the LORD a new song" (Ps. 98:1). Our

singing should be a genuine, fresh expression of our hearts before God as the reality of God's mercy and faithfulness overwhelms our souls once again. "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22–23).

Scripture also teaches us to sing along with musical instruments. There are many references in the Psalms that connect singing with musical instruments. Psalm 92:3 says, "Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound." Psalm 98:5–6 says, "Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King." Psalm 108:2–3 says, "Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations." When the ark was placed in the most holy place, the sound of the trumpets and the singers were as one voice in praising and thanking the Lord (2 Chron. 5:13).

Scripture's songs contain a wide range of content. Psalm 92:1–2 says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." Psalm 96:2 says to "Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day." Psalm 101:1 says, "I will sing of mercy and judgment." Moses, Deborah, and David sang about God's wondrous works in their songs of victory over their enemies. Moses wrote a song that was a witness against the children of Israel for being a stubborn, stiff-necked people despite all that God had done for them. David sang a song of mourning when Saul and Jonathan died. He wrote a song of thanksgiving when the ark was brought into Jerusalem. Isaiah sang a parable comparing Judah to a vineyard. Ezekiel sang many songs of judgment on the wicked. In general, singing is appropriate for retelling the story of our redemption so future generations do not forget the works of God (Pss. 78; 105; 106; 136).

A common theme in these songs is that they were sung by the congregation of Israel, or by a group of people. This is because God's

people are a body of many members, the church. God intends that we express this truth by coming together and praising him along with other members of the body. Singing together is a wonderful expression of the unity that we have with fellow saints. We are to "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). We are also to bear one another's burdens. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). Singing should be a common mode of exhorting, encouraging, comforting, and rejoicing with one another as pilgrims in this weary life. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

This month we will focus on studying songs that are recorded in Scripture outside of the Psalms. We will consider the surrounding circumstances and the fitting response through song. Through our study, may we also find reason to sing in every circumstance of life.

Rebekah is a wife and mother in the home. She attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, CA, with her family

Date	Read	Study	Psalter
Jan 8	Ex. 15:1-21	What is the reason for singing, and what aspect of God does the song focus on?	205 (st. 8-13)
Jan 9	Num. 21	How has God provided refreshment along your pilgrim journey?	115
Jan 10	Deut. 31:16-30	Why is God instructing Moses to write this song? What is its purpose?	213 (st. 1-5)
Jan 11	Deut. 32:1-44	What is the primary name used to refer to God in this song? What truth does it reveal about him?	213 (st. 6-15)
Jan 12	Judges 5	How do verses 2 and 9 show God worked a change of heart in the men of Israel?	126
Jan 13	1 Sam. 18:1-18	What does this song and the surrounding context show about David's character?	271
Jan 14	2 Sam. 1	How does this song show David's integrity when hearing about Saul's death?	281
Jan 15	2 Sam. 22	How is David able to be confident in his righteousness?	35
Jan 16	1 Chron. 16:1-36	What does the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem have to do with God's covenant faithfulness?	289 (st. 1, 3-5, 18)
Jan 17	2 Chron. 5	What attributes of God are extolled as the ark is brought into the most holy place?	378
Jan 18	2 Chron. 20	How can singing be a powerful weapon in fighting against our spiritual enemies?	298
Jan 19	2 Chron. 35; Jer. 22:10-12	Why was Josiah's death so sad? Why does God tell Jeremiah not to weep for Josiah, but for his son Shallum instead?	253 (st. 1-5)
Jan 20	Isa. 5:1-7	What is the plot twist in this song? How is it a picture of Judah?	291 (st. 1-4)
Jan 21	Isa. 25-26:6	What comfort can you take away from this song and the preceding context?	152
Jan 22	Isa. 27:1-6	Contrast this "vineyard song" with Isaiah 5:1-2. What is God promising here?	2
Jan 23	Ezek. 19	What is Ezekiel mourning in this song of lamentation?	122 (st. 1-4)
Jan 24	Ezek. 26	Why will God judge the city of Tyrus? And what is the response of the surrounding nations (vv. 16-17)?	92 (st. 1-2, 4-7)

Jan 25	Ezek. 27	In Ezekiel's song of lamentation for Tyrus, what do we learn about the city? Why is its downfall so terrible?	245
Jan 26	Ezek. 28:12-19	How does this song develop the reason for Tyrus' destruction?	18 (st. 1-5, 8-9)
Jan 27	Ezek. 29:1-3, 9; Ezek. 32:1-19	What was Egypt's sin? And what was God's goal in punishing them?	93
Jan 28	Amos 5	What is wrong with Israel in the song (v. 2), and what is the remedy in the verses following?	90 (st. 1, 3, 5-7)
Jan 29	Hab. 3	In this prayer/song, what is Habakkuk's beautiful confession in anticipation of the coming judgment on Judah?	100
Jan 30	Luke 1:26-55	How does Mary respond to Elisabeth's blessing?	The Song of Mary
Jan 31	Luke 1:68-80	What was the oath that God swore to Abraham that was being fulfilled?	425 (st. 4-6)
Feb 1	Luke 2:1-20; Ps. 103:20-22	Why is singing a fitting response to the birth of the Savior?	243 (st. 1-6, 9, 15)
Feb 2	Luke 2:25-35	For whom is this salvation, which Simeon has seen with his own eyes?	49
Feb 3	Matt. 26:17-30; Ps. 118	As Jesus faced the cross, how would singing this hymn have encouraged him? What example is that for us when we face overwhelming trials?	320
Feb 4	Acts 16:16-40; Acts 5:41	How were Paul and Silas able to sing praises to God under such circumstances?	186
Feb 5	Rev. 5	What makes the Lamb worthy to open the book?	399
Feb 6	Rev. 14:1-13; Ps. 96:1-3; Ps. 98:1-3	Who sings this new song, and what is the occasion for singing this song?	261
Feb 7	Rev. 15	How should we respond to the pouring out of God's wrath on the wicked?	267