

SINGING

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” (Psalms 100:1-2)

Evidently God wants us to come into his presence with singing. Singing is obviously important to God! Even before David wrote psalms or killed Goliath he had learned by experience the spiritual power of godly music. When an evil spirit came upon king Saul, for example, his attendants said to him: **“See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our Lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you and you will feel better” (1 Sam. 16:15-16).** David, as you know, was the one that Saul selected to play the harp. **“David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, ‘Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.’ Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.” (1 Sam. 16:21-23)**

Before proceeding let us consider how an “evil spirit” could come “from God”? The answer is found in the book of Job. In the days of Job, when the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan was also there (Job 2:1). When God allowed Satan to leave His presence and attack Job, he was “an evil spirit” and he came from the presence of God.” The angels of God, of course, are not evil spirits. They do not harm the children of God but are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). The angels of God love godly music! Godly music would never drive them away!

The point of this lesson is that Satan is evil and that he can be driven away by godly music. David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). As a lonely shepherd David had plenty of time to sing and practice on the harp. As a shepherd David faced constant danger from lions and bears (1 Sam. 17:34-37). His praise with godly music not only helped him survive as a shepherd, but also enabled him to drive away evil spirits from King Saul. David learned these lessons before he killed Goliath. David knew by experience that when he played godly music for King Saul, “the evil spirit would leave him”. But he also knew that attacking Goliath “in the name of the Lord Almighty” was the key to victory. Before David killed Goliath he announced: **“All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.” (1 Sam. 17:47)**

David not only spent a life time singing before the Lord, but wrote down many of his songs for others to sing. He is credited with writing 75 of the 150 psalms.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

There is obviously a spiritual dimension to every confrontation we have with evil. **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Eph. 6:12)** That’s why when David played godly music the evil spirit would leave Saul. When we come into the presence of the Lord with singing we too are involved in spiritual warfare that can drive Satan away.

Remember when Elisha was asked to inquire of the Lord before a battle with the Moabites, he said: **“bring me a harpist. While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha.”** (2 Ki. 3:15) There was a reason why Elisah asked for a harpist. It was this godly music that prompted God to reveal to Elisha how to defeat the Moabites. (2 Ki. 3:16-27).

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi, with their feet fastened in the stocks, they were singing. Their praise to God brought swift results. Please note: **“About midnight Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose.”** (Acts 16:25-26) It was not a coincidence that just after they sang, there was an earthquake. It was not a coincidence that after they sang the jailer and his entire family were baptized into Christ on that very night! (Acts 16:33) Truly singing hymns are spiritual weapons that can lead to spiritual victory (Acts 16:27-40).

Remember: **“Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”** (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

When Jehoshaphat was under attack by the men of Ammon and Moab he received help from God by means of praise: **“After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever’ As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped.”** (2 Chron. 20:21-24)

Yes! God truly inhabits the praises of his people (Ps. 22:3). This why the Bible places such an emphasis on praise! Here are a few of many other Scriptures to consider!

- **“These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the LORD after the ark came to rest there. They ministered with music before the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, until Solomon built the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. They performed their duties according to the regulations laid down for them.”** (1 Chron. 6:31-32)
- **“David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals.”** (1 Chron. 25:1)
- **“All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang:“He is good; his love endures forever.” Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.”** (2 Chron. 5:12-14)

- **“The musicians, the descendants of Asaph, were in the places prescribed by David, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the king’s seer. The gatekeepers at each gate did not need to leave their posts, because their fellow Levites made the preparations for them.” (2 Chron. 35:15)**
- Psalms 120-134 are called the “songs of ascent”. The temple in Jerusalem was where the people of God worshiped. Jerusalem is on a mountain 2,474 feet above sea level. The Jewish pilgrims sang these psalms as they climbed the mountain thus they are called the “psalms of ascent.”
- When Ezra went to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple he took with him 200 men and women singers (Ezra 2:65).
- Nehemiah dedicated the walls of Jerusalem with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres (Neh. 12:27).
- After eating the last supper, and before going to the Mount of Olives to pray, Jesus sang a hymn with his disciples (Matt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26).
- The Scriptures teach: **“Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” (Ps. 150:1-6)**
- Praise music is a spiritual weapon that helps us to defeat the devil!

SONGS OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE

- **“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” (Ps. 107:1)**
- It was common for the people of God to sing songs of gratitude in appreciation for special blessing from God.
- After God delivered his people out of Egyptian bondage, for example, Moses sang a song of gratitude (Ex. 15:1-18). **“Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and the rider he has hurled into the sea.’” (Ex 15:20-21)**
- It is important to note that in heaven, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image, will hold harps given to them by God and sing the song of Moses (Rev. 15:1-4).
- The Israelites sang a song of praise when God gave them water (Nu. 21:16-18).
- God had Moses write down a song of praise and teach it to the Israelites (Deut. 31:19).
- Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise when God gave them victory over the Canaanites (Jud. 5:1-31).
- When David killed Goliath the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing, dancing, and joyful songs, tambourines, and lutes (1 Sam. 18:6).
- David sang a song of praise when God delivered him from Saul (2 Sam. 22:1-51).
- Solomon composed 1,005 songs (1 Ki. 4:32). Surely these were songs that glorified God!
- One entire book of the Bible is the Song of Solomon.
- The prodigal son was welcomed home with music and dancing (Lk. 15:25).
- The Virgin Mary sang a song of praise when she was greeted by Elizabeth (Lk. 1:46-55).
- Zachariah sang a song of praise when his son John the Baptist was born (Lk. 1:67-79).

- In heaven the 144,000 redeemed of the earth will be singing before the throne of God (Rev. 14:1-5).
- The Bible is literally filled with songs!

WE CAN TEACH AND ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER WITH SONGS

Things are much easier to remember when they are put to music. Little children, for example, can easily learn the names of the 12 apostles when they are put to music. While we will not reproduce the melody, here are the words to this children's song:

Jesus called them one by one – Peter, Andrew, James and John.
Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew next and Thomas too.
James the son of Alphaeus, Simon also Thaddeus.
Twelve disciples Judas made, Jesus was by him betrayed.

At the same time children learn from songs, elderly people who are suffering from dementia can often remember the very songs they learned in childhood.

Music helps everyone to remember! This is important fact to remember when teaching new converts. The family of J. Russell Morse has been on the mission field in Asia since 1921. When they translate the Bible into a new language they also translate songs, hymns, and spiritual songs at the same time. New converts will often be able to sing a song from memory before they can quote a Scripture from memory.

Be careful, however, what you sing! The devil also uses music for evil purposes. The word of God commands: **“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph 4:29).** Many popular songs are not wholesome and do not glorify God. We must also be careful what kind of music we sing and what kind of music we listen to. **“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:17).**

Pagan worship is also accompanied by music. King Nebuchadnezzar, as you know, erected an image of gold 90 feet high and commanded everyone to bow down and worship that image when they heard the sound of the “horn, flute, zither lyre, harp, and all kinds of music” (Dan.3:7). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego courageously chose to be thrown in a fiery furnace rather than take part in pagan worship.

When Paul was in prison in Rome he wrote to the Ephesians and said: **“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 5:15-20)** When Paul was in Ephesus, in only two years everyone in Asia both Jews and Greeks, had heard the word of God (Acts 19:10). Since they didn’t have a printing press, singing psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit was one good way to teach the word of God.

At the same time Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he also wrote to the Colossians: **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”** (Col. 3:15-17)

Yes! **“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.”**