

WHAT SONGS SHOULD WE SING?

EXODUS 15



How do we decide what songs to sing in worship? That's a question that's divided many churches. Some songs focus only on positives. Others focus primarily on our feelings. And some focus primarily on the Christian life. How do we decide what to sing? Moses's song in Exodus 15 helps us by giving us three biblical criteria for worship songs.

- **SING SONGS THAT PRAISE GOD'S JUDGMENTS (3-10)**
- **SING SONGS THAT PRAISE GOD'S CHARACTER (11-12)**
- **SING SONGS THAT PRAISE GOD'S SALVATION (13-21)**

LEARNING

SING SONGS THAT PRAISE GOD'S JUDGMENTS (3-10)

After the Red Sea salvation, Moses stirred up himself and the Israelites to sing praise to God. **I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him (1-2).**

And what does Moses sing about first? He sings about God's judgments. He praises him for his just judgments (3-5), his awesome judgments (6-8), his easy judgments (9-10a), and his irreversible judgments (10b).

**GOD'S JUDGMENTS SHOULD PRODUCE
COMMENDATION NOT CONDEMNATION.**

"Is that not too negative for a song?" This is just his starting point.

SING SONGS THAT PRAISE GOD'S CHARACTER (11-12)

Moses next praises the character of God. **Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them** (11-12). God is incomparably majestic, holy, awesome, glorious, and wonderful.

INCREASE YOUR FEELINGS IN SONG
BY INCREASING THEOLOGY IN YOUR SONGS.

"We're to sing about judgment and theology, I get that. What about salvation?" That's where Moses goes next.

SING SONGS THAT PRAISE GOD'S SALVATION (13-21)

Having praised God's judgments and character, Moses then turns to God's salvation. God lovingly redeems his people (13a), guides his people (13b), protects his people (14-16), and communes with his people (17-18).

Listen to some of these beautiful words with New Testament ears: **You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode....You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The Lord will reign forever and ever** (13-18). Salvation lyrics are brighter when sung against the dark background of judgment and louder when built on the strong foundation of God's character.

THIS IS MY STORY, THIS IS MY SONG,
PRAISING MY SAVIOR ALL THE DAY LONG.

LOVING

Moses has given us clear criteria to guide us in how to express our love to God in song. It's a beautiful balance of God's judgment, God's character, and God's salvation, with each amplifying the other. The Psalms further support and demonstrate this criteria. The best songs in Christian history have also been guided by these criteria, right up to the present day:

*In Christ alone, Who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live*

LIVING

Sing balanced, God-centered, God-exalting songs to please God and do good to our souls.
