



Spontaneous Worship

Mary's Song

by Karen Holland

Ephesians 5:18-20

Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

We are told to *be filled with the Spirit* and to *let the word of Christ dwell richly*, to *sing and speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*. Psalms and hymns are known melodies and words. Spiritual songs are spontaneous, Spirit breathed songs, sung and led by the Holy Spirit in the moment. They are new songs previously unknown and unsung. Do we need this kind of song in our private and corporate worship today?

A search for the keyword 'new song' on net.bible.org reveals 9 verses (Ps. 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9, 14:3).

Psalm 40:3

He has put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God; many will see it and fear and trust in the Lord.

In the above verse the meaning of the word 'new' is 'chadash' - {new, new thing, fresh}. The accompanying foot note reads:

1 sn A new song was appropriate because the Lord had intervened in the psalmist's experience in a fresh and exciting way.

Quote from Pastor Steve's Psalm Bites Psalm 40:3

"David had sung other songs, but this revelation of God's deliverance produced a fresh song of spontaneous worship. The Hebrew word for praise used here is the word tehillah. Tehillah is used each time the word praise appears with 'new song.'"

Looking at the other verses where 'new song' appears shows a pattern. A new song is appropriate because the Lord is constantly intervening in the lives of his people in fresh and exciting ways. In Psalm 96 we are commanded to sing a new song to the Lord. Accompanying footnotes read:

1 sn Psalm 96. The psalmist summons everyone to praise the Lord, the sovereign creator of the world who preserves and promotes justice in the earth.

2 sn A new song is appropriate because the Lord is constantly intervening in the world as its just king.

Spontaneous worship IS important. It indicates that the Lord is still intervening in his people's lives and the world, as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! It indicates that the relationship he has with his people is alive and fresh - *The LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King!* (Jer. 10:10).

So why isn't spontaneous worship more common in worship today? Some are afraid to allow spontaneous worship today because it appears unstructured, unordered or unprepared. There has always been a tension between order and spontaneity. Paul spoke on the need for orderly worship (1 Cor. 14) without forbidding spontaneity. Order without the possibility of spontaneity can become dull, routine, and predictable. Spontaneity is important for intimacy, it keeps relationships alive! But spontaneity with no sense of order is chaos. Our worship needs both. There is always going to be this tension between order and spontaneity.

Is spontaneous worship always unprepared? The following two examples of spontaneous worship made me take a closer look at this question. These two examples are closely linked, Hannah's song from the OT and Mary's song in the NT. Mary's song of praise, The Magnificat or "The Glorification of What God Has Done"(Luke 1:46-55) is so similar to the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) both in imagery and length that it is simply impossible for these to be merely coincidental. The table below gives the two passages side by side with some additional Old Testament passages.

Luke 1:46-55	1 Samuel 2:1-10	Old Testament Sources
46-47 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,	1 Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn (strength) is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance."	Deut 32:3 (Song of Moses) I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! Hab 3:18-19 (Habakkuk's Prayer) yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; Isaiah 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.
48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed,		1 Samuel 1:11 And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant..." Malachi 3:12 Then all the nations will call you blessed...
49-50 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.	2-3 There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Do not keep talking so proudly, or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.	Psalms 71:19 Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, you who have done great things. Who, O God, is like you? Psalms 103:17 But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him...
51-53 He has performed	4-8 The bows of the warriors are broken, but	Psalms 89:13

<p>mighty deeds with his arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.</p>	<p>those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world.</p>	<p>Your arm is endued with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.</p> <p>Job 5:11 The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.</p> <p>Proverbs 3:34 He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.</p> <p>Psalms 107:9 for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.</p>
<p>54-55 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."</p>	<p>9-10 He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."</p>	<p>2 Samuel 22:51 He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever.</p> <p>Isaiah 41:8-10 "But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, ... I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you;</p> <p>Psalms 98:2-3 The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.</p>

Some neat things to notice about these songs:

- Mary and Hannah were obviously very familiar with God's word - they had it in their heart. Mary's song was a spontaneous response to the presence of the Holy Spirit at this meeting between Mary & Elizabeth. Hannah's song was a spontaneous celebration of her son Samuel's birth. The preparation for these songs came out of continually taking in God's word and an ongoing relationship with Him.
- Both songs are prophetic. These songs praise God for his salvation which is not yet evident or complete. They are a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ as God's answer to salvation.
- These are songs of hope for all generations. They help us see the strength of God's arm in the birth of Jesus.
- They show the value of humility. God uses the humble, those that humbly place their lives at His disposal.
- These songs are a testimony to the continuing work of God. No importance is placed on the skill of the singer or on the style of the singing because the music is not the focus. Music simply serves as a vehicle for the testimony of God's work.

So it appears that key preparations for singing a new song are a humble heart filled with God's word *the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart* (Mt. 12:34) and an ongoing alive relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ *only the redeemed can learn the new song* (Rev. 14:3).

Come, *be filled with the Spirit* immerse yourself in scripture, bury His word in your heart, *let the word of Christ dwell richly* and as you become saturated with His word and Holy Spirit, don't be surprised when a new spontaneous song of praise springs forth.

Psalm 79:13

We your people, the sheep of your pasture, will continually thank you. We will show forth Your praise (celebrate you with hymns of spontaneous praise) to all generations.

Psalm 96:1-4

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.

Psalm 51:15

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise.