

# Worship *and* Song *and* Praise



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Ps. 32:1–5; 1 Chron. 51:1–6, 17; 1 Chron. 16:8–36; Rev. 4:9–11; 5:9–13; Phil. 4:8.*

**Memory Text:** “O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth” (*Psalms 96:1*).

**K**ing David's life is recorded in the Bible for many reasons: not only does an important part of Israelite history center on his life and reign, but we can learn many spiritual lessons from both his good deeds and his bad.

This week we will start out using some examples from David and his life in order to delve more into the question of worship: what it means, how we should do it, and what it should do for us. For in David we can see many examples of worship and song and praise. These things were a crucial part of his life and of his experience with the Lord.

Thus it must be with us, as well, especially if we constantly remember that the first angel's message is a call to worship. What does it mean “to worship”? How do we do it? Why do we do it? What role does music play in worship? What distinguishes true worship from false worship?

These are all themes that we will address in various ways this quarter as we heed the call: “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (*Ps. 95:6, 7*).

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 6.*

## Between Saul and David

**Read** the following glimpses into David's life before he became king: 1 Samuel 16:6–13, 17:45–47, 18:14, 24:10, 26:9, 30:6–8. What does this tell us about David?

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God chose Saul as the first king of Israel because he matched the description requested by the people. But when God chose David to be the next king of Israel, He reminded Samuel that the Lord looks on the heart (*1 Sam. 16:7*).

David was far from perfect. In fact, some would argue that David's later moral lapses were much more serious than Saul's sins. Yet, the Lord rejected Saul but forgave even David's worst mistakes, allowing him to continue being king. What made the difference?

**See** Psalms 32:1–5, 51:1–6. What crucial concept is found in these texts that is so central to faith?

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God is in the heart business. He not only reads the heart—the center of thought, inner attitudes, and motives—but He can touch and change hearts that are open to Him. David's heart yielded to the conviction of sin. He repented, and he patiently accepted the consequences of his sins. In contrast, whatever outward confessions Saul made, it was clear that his heart was not surrendered to the Lord. "Yet the Lord, having placed on Saul the responsibility of the kingdom, did not leave him to himself. He caused the Holy Spirit to rest upon Saul to reveal to him his own weakness and his need of divine grace; and had Saul relied upon God, God would have been with him. So long as his will was controlled by the will of God, so long as he yielded to the discipline of His Spirit, God could crown his efforts with success. But when Saul chose to act independently of God, the Lord could no longer be his guide, and was forced to set him aside."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 636.

**Ask yourself, how does what goes on inside your heart differ from what people see of you on the outside? What does your answer say to you about yourself?**

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## *The Lesson in Brief*

▶ **Key Text:** *Psalm 96:1*

▶ **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Review the themes of worship present in David's psalms, as well as in the songs of Revelation.

**Feel:** Cultivate a sense of penitence in order to be filled with the joy of Christ's deliverance.

**Do:** Offer praise and glory to God and recount what He has done for us.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: A New Song**

- A** For what acts of deliverance did David have to praise God?
- B** Though David had sinned greatly, what was the difference between his sin and Saul's in last week's lesson?
- C** Why is it important to sing about what God has done for us? What do we have to sing about that draws us near to heaven and the singing that happens there?

**II. Feel: Contrition and Praise**

- A** How did David's brokenness and sorrow over his sin lead to praise songs?
- B** Why is it important for us to make the same progression from expressions of penitence to rejoicing over Christ's deliverance?

**III. Do: Worthy Is the Lamb**

- A** What songs do you use to recount what God has done for you, and why?
- B** How and when do you express praise through song? How can you make song a more important and personal part of your worship experience, both in your private devotions and in church worship?

▶ **Summary:** Song is an important medium whereby we express our contrition and need, recount God's goodness, and offer Him glory and praise.

## A Broken Heart, a Broken Spirit

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (*Ps. 51:17, NKJV*). Think about these words of David, but in the context of worship. (After all, in ancient Israel, worship centered around the sacrifice.) Realize, too, that the word translated as “contrite” comes from a Hebrew word that means “crushed.” What is the Lord saying to us here? How are we to understand this idea along with the idea that there should be joy in our worship? Why are these two contrasting concepts not necessarily contradictory?

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As Christians, we take it as a given (or at least we should) that all of humanity is fallen, sinful, degraded. This degradation and sinfulness includes each one of us, individually. Think of the contrast between that which you know you could be and what you are; the contrast between the kind of thoughts that you think and the kind you know that you should think; the contrast between what you do and what you should do, between what you do not do and what you know that you should. As Christians, with the biblical standard of Jesus before us, the personal realization of our true nature can be especially devastating. It is from here that our broken spirit and crushed and broken hearts come. If those professing to be Christians do not see this, they are truly blind; most likely they have not had a conversion experience or have lost it.

Yet, the joy comes from knowing that, despite our fallen state, God loves us so much that Christ came and died, offering Himself for us that His perfect life, His perfect holiness and His perfect character become credited to us by faith. Again, the theme of the “everlasting gospel” (*Rev. 14:6*) appears. Our worship should center not just on our own sinfulness but on God’s amazing solution to it: the Cross. Of course, we need that broken and crushed heart, but we always need to position that sad reality against the background of what God has done for us in Christ. In fact, the realization of how bad we are leads to joy, because we know that, despite our state, we can have eternal life anyway, and that because of Jesus, God will not count our transgressions against us. This is a truth that must always be at the center of all worship experiences, whether corporate or private.

## *Learning Cycle*

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### ► **STEP 1—Motivate**

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** David used music as an important means to explore God’s spiritual truths and as a way of sharing with God such emotions as loneliness, betrayal, and sorrow for sin. He also used it to praise, celebrate, and recognize God’s assurances in return.

**Just for Teachers:** Encourage your class members to relate to the power of music in evoking a worshipful atmosphere. Explore its role in teaching spiritual lessons by asking the students to discuss personal experiences with music in worship.

**Opening Activity:** Peter Rutenberg, director of the Los Angeles Chamber Singers, writes about the benefits of music: “Research over the last few decades has increasingly shown that music, and in particular the singing and playing of music, helps the brain develop much more fully and extensively, especially in our early years. Music makes us brighter, more intelligent, more logical, more rational, and more capable. It improves study habits and test scores. It builds a better sense of self and community. It aids in our general sense of well-being and improves our quality of life. . . . A recent study even suggests that the act of singing improves the immune system.”

Music is a whole-body experience, appealing not only to our emotions but to our bodies and minds. It can provide a powerful and touching corporate experience that tempers the atmosphere, prepares our hearts for spiritual truths, and brings us together in a common encounter with God. It is no wonder that music plays such an important part in worship.

**Consider This:** Discuss with your class their experiences with music in worship. At what times have they experienced a profound connection and understanding of a spiritual truth through a piece of music? How has music drawn their heart toward God? When has music created an atmosphere of joy, of reverence and awe, of praise, of solidarity in faith? To illustrate these points, play a CD or sing several songs that demonstrate the variety of spiritual truths and/or atmospheres for worship that music can create, such as “Faith of Our Fathers,” “There Is a Place of Quiet Rest,” “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow,” or “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee.”

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## David: A Song of Praise and Worship

David's understanding of God and the salvation He offered shaped not only his own life but his spiritual leadership and influence over his people. His songs and prayers reflect a deep sense of awe for the God he loved and knew as a personal friend and Savior.

According to 1 Chronicles 16:7, David presented to Asaph, his chief musician, a new song of thanksgiving and praise on the day that the ark was moved to Jerusalem. This praise psalm consists of two important aspects of worship: the revelation of God as One worthy of worship and the appropriate response of the worshiper. In this song, David first calls worshipers to active participation in worship.

Read the entire song in 1 Chronicles 16:8–36. Notice how often the following action words and expressions are used, especially in the first part of the song: *give thanks, sing, call on His name, seek the Lord, make known, talk of, declare, give glory to, proclaim, remember, and bring an offering*. David then recited some of the reasons why God is worthy of our praise and worship.

**What** were some of the events of the past that the people of Israel were to make known to others? *1 Chron. 16:8, 12, 16–22*. What special acts of God were they to remember? *Vss. 12, 15*.

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**The** psalmist's rehearsal of the covenant takes up nearly a third of this thanksgiving hymn. In what way does the covenant relate to worship?

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The covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was based on His ability, as their Ruler, to make them a great nation, to bless them, and to bring them into the Promised Land. Their part was to love, obey, and worship Him as their Father and God. However different our context today may be, the same principle still holds.

**Meditate on the ways in which David calls us to worship God. In our own time, place, and context, how can these same ideas be reflected in our corporate worship of the Lord?**

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Learning Cycle CONTINUED

■ Try playing a familiar song on CD or invite a soloist to sing a stanza of a familiar hymn, and then sing the same song together as a class. How is the experience of listening to music different from singing together as a choir or congregation? What parts do both types of musical experiences play in worship? See Peter Rutenberg, “The Importance of Music in Everyone’s Life.” Retrieved January 16, 2010, from [http://www.shumeiarts.org/article\\_rutenberg.html](http://www.shumeiarts.org/article_rutenberg.html).

▶ **STEP 2—Explore**

**Just for Teachers:** Help your class to become familiar with the way that David used poetry and music to respond to the things he learned about God.

## Bible Commentary

### I. Songster Shepherd Boy (Review 1 Samuel 16:6–17:58 with your class.)

Jesse’s youngest son, David, was responsible for his father’s sheep, and apparently his father hadn’t considered him important enough or old enough to be invited to a feast at which the rest of the family were special guests of Samuel. Samuel was there to anoint David, but it was done in secret, and it apparently didn’t alter David’s place in the family; afterward, he went back to the sheep. But like Moses in the desert 40 years with his flocks, this time for David was one of preparation for leading God’s people.

As David cared for his flocks, met dangers, and was delivered from peril, he was learning lessons of courage, fortitude, and trust in the Great Shepherd that prepared him to take an elevated place among earth’s most noble men. And no wonder, for his companions in those remote regions were the noblest that heaven or earth could provide. As David meditated among the mountains and hills, the valleys and streams, the sunsets and sunrises, and he saw the handprints of the Father of lights and the Author of every good gift, “he was daily coming into a more intimate communion with God. His mind was constantly penetrating into new depths for fresh themes to inspire his song and to wake the music of his harp,” and

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## David’s Song

“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (*Job 38:7*).

Second Samuel 22 records a song that David wrote in praise of the Lord. (Skim through the song and note the key elements and how they are linked to worship.) The key point here, and in so many other places in the Bible, is that this was a song. It was music. All through Scripture we find music as an integral part of worship. According to the text above, the angels sang in response to the Creation of the world.

**Read Revelation 4:9–11, 5:9–13, 7:10–12, 14:1–3. What does this tell us about some of the things that go on in the sinless environment of heaven? What are some of the themes expressed here, and what can we learn from them about worship?**

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Central to the theme of the songs and praise and adoration is Jesus as Creator and as Redeemer. If they sing about that in heaven, how much more so should we be doing the same here on earth?

There is no question that song and music and praise are part of our worship experience. As creatures made in God’s image, we share a love and an appreciation for music, as do other intelligent beings. It is hard to imagine a culture that does not use music in some way or another, for some purpose or another. Love and appreciation of music are woven into the very fabric of our human existence; God surely made us that way.

Music has the power to touch us and move us that other forms of communication do not seem to have. At its purest and finest, music seems to lift us into the very presence of the Lord. Who has not experienced, at some point, the power of music to bring us closer to our Maker?

**What has been your own spiritual experience with the power of music? What kind of music do you listen to, and how does it impact your relationship with the Lord?**

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Learning Cycle CONTINUED

his songs echoed among the hills “as if responsive to the rejoicing of the angels’ songs in heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 642.

These times taught David wisdom and gave him a piety that made him much beloved of God and the angels. As he meditated on his Creator, “obscure themes were illuminated, difficulties were made plain, perplexities were harmonized, and each ray of new light called forth fresh bursts of rapture, and sweeter anthems of devotion, to the glory of God and the Redeemer.”—Page 642. Much of the music David wrote during this time has come down to us through the book of Psalms, to awaken love and faith and devotion in our own hearts and to bring us closer to the loving heart of our Creator.

**Consider This:** On what occasions was David summoned to play and sing in King Saul’s court? How must the atmosphere of the court and David’s ministries to a king burdened with rebellion, bitterness, and despair have affected the young shepherd as he went back to his flocks, knowing, as he did, that he was destined to sit on Saul’s throne? Where did he learn to find strength in times of hardship? Examine Psalms 37, 40, and 41 for themes that indicate important lessons that David must have learned during these years.

## II. A Faulty Yet Contrite King (Review Psalms 32 and 51 with your class.)

David had a strong, trusting relationship with God that guided him through all the years of fleeing from what quickly developed into jealous hatred on the part of King Saul. Yet, David was not above temptation.

Psalms 32 and 51 describe his response to his terrible fall into sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, after David became king. “Thus in a sacred song to be sung in the public assemblies of his people, in the presence of the court—priests and judges, princes and men of war—and which would preserve to the latest generation the knowledge of his fall, the king of Israel recounted his sin, his repentance, and his hope of pardon through the mercy of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 725.

Though David had initially tried to cover up his sin to the point of murder, once he was convicted, he sought to prevent others from falling into the same pit. He loathed the defilement caused by sin and longed for purity that only God could provide, unlike Saul, who loathed the results of his rebellion but not the sin. David recognized how far-reaching the loss

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## “Sing a New Song to the Lord!”

Unfortunately, though we have access to some of the themes and lyrics of divinely inspired songs, we do not have any of the music itself. Thus, using our God-given gifts (at least, those of us who have those gifts), we write our own music if not always our own lyrics. But as we all know, we do not do this in a vacuum. We worship in relationship to the culture in which we live, a culture that to some degree influences us and our music. This can be a good thing, or this can be a bad thing. The hard thing is to know the difference.

**Read** the following texts. How can they give us principles that should guide us in the kind of music we have in our worship? *1 Cor. 10:31, Phil. 4:8, Col. 1:18.*

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Over the years, the question of music and types of music in worship has arisen in our church. In some cases, hymnal music has been given all but sacred status; in others, it is hard to tell the difference between what is being played in church and what is being played as secular music.

What is important for worship music is that it point us to the noblest and the best, which is the Lord. It should appeal, not to the baser elements of our being but to the higher ones. Music is not morally neutral: it can move us to some of the most exalted spiritual experiences, or it can be used by the enemy to debase and degrade us, to bring out lust and passion and despair and anger. All one has to do is look at what some of the music industry today produces to see powerful examples of how Satan has perverted another of God’s wonderful gifts to humanity.

Music in our worship services should have a balance of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional elements. The lyrics, in harmony with the music itself, should uplift us, elevate our thoughts, and make us long more for the Lord who has done so much for us. Music that can bring us to the foot of the cross, that can help us to realize what we have been given in Christ, is the kind we need for our worship.

Again, various cultures have different tastes in music, and music and musical instruments vary in our worldwide family. What is uplifting and encouraging to those in one culture might sound strange to those in another. Either way, how important it is that we seek the Lord’s guidance in our choice of appropriate music for our worship services.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

of respect would be and how devastating now his influence for evil was among his people, especially among his own sons. This broke his heart, and as his songs portray, he realized that his only hope was to cling to God and humbly accept the judgments that followed from God's loving but thoroughly just hand.

**Consider This:** What were the consequences of David's sin? How did he respond to the judgments decreed by God? For example, discuss the circumstances surrounding the deaths of David's four sons. How did David respond to three of their four deaths? (The fourth son was killed after the king's death.) See 2 Samuel 12–20 and 1 Kings 1, 2.

### ► **STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Challenge your class members to try putting a favorite verse of the Psalms to music. This is an excellent way to memorize scripture.

#### Application:

- 1 As you read Psalms 32 and 51 together, ask your class to list the lessons they contain about contrition, forgiveness, and God's mercy and justice in dealing with our tendencies to fall into sin.
- 2 When has the Lord delivered you from disaster? Ask your class members to examine the songs of deliverance as described in Psalms 18, 34, 57, and 59 and to share the verses with which they most identify, and why, as they recount how God rescued them from trouble.

### ► **STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** Suggest the following ideas to help your class to put the class discussion into practice during the following weeks or months.

- 1 Challenge your class members to write their own psalm and put it to music. Ask for a showing of hands of those willing to perform their creations in class the following week.
- 2 Go to a favorite spot in nature and look for inspiration to write a piece of poetry to your Creator.

**Further Study:** “Let the subject be made distinct and plain that it is not possible to effect anything in our standing before God or in the gift of God to us through creature merit. Should faith and works purchase the gift of salvation for anyone, then the Creator is under obligation to the creature. Here is an opportunity for falsehood to be accepted as truth. If any man can merit salvation by anything he may do, then he is in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for his sins. Salvation, then, is partly of debt, that may be earned as wages. If man cannot, by any of his good works, merit salvation, then it must be wholly of grace, received by man as a sinner because he receives and believes in Jesus. It is wholly a free gift. Justification by faith is placed beyond controversy. And all this controversy is ended, as soon as the matter is settled that the merits of fallen man in his good works can never procure eternal life for him.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pp. 19, 20.

Music “is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. How often to the soul hard pressed and ready to despair, memory recalls some word of God’s—the long-forgotten burden of a childhood song—and temptations lose their power, life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls! . . .

“As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer. . . .

“As our Redeemer leads us to the threshold of the Infinite, flushed with the glory of God, we may catch the themes of praise and thanksgiving from the heavenly choir round about the throne; and as the echo of the angels’ song is awakened in our earthly homes, hearts will be drawn closer to the heavenly singers. Heaven’s communion begins on earth. We learn here the keynote of its praise.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 168.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ In what ways do your culture and society impact the music in your church, or do you deny such an impact exists?
- ❷ Read the Ellen White quote in Friday’s study about music. How much of this do you experience with the kind of music that is part of your church’s worship service? What are ways that we can evaluate the role of music in our church services? How can your church members work together to ensure that the music is, indeed, uplifting and encouraging, fulfilling the role that it should?