

4 Spirit-Filled Ways You Can Praise and Trust God in These Times of Fear and Loss

We are living in unprecedented times in our global history. With illness and economic pressures ravishing the globe, it's easy to lose hope. Life feels like a wilderness.

In Numbers 21, we find an interesting story that I feel has profound lessons for us in this hour in our history. The children of Israel had been wandering in the wilderness. Barrenness for as far as the eye could see. No water. No vegetation. No change in sight. The people had been traveling over the hot sands and felt desperate for water.

I've been to the wilderness they wandered, and trust me when I say it's barren. God called Moses to gather the people and promised He would provide water. Let's stop there for just a moment. What do we do when we're in our own wilderness? God has promised to meet all our needs, but we don't see any evidence of that. Do we complain? Give up? Walk away from our faith? Ah, this gives you more empathy for the children of Israel, who often were rebuked by God for their complaining! Back to our story.

Moses gathered the people. As they began to dig, looking for the well God had promised, they sang. Yup! Go figure! Parched and thirsty for the provision of God, they sang. "Spring up, O well! Sing to it" (Num. 21:17).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us are thirsty for God's provision. Some have lost jobs. Some are worried about their 401(k)s. Some are running out of daily provisions and fear going to the store. Do we dare sing in the chaos? Here's the thing: God honors faith and praise. Often as we sing and praise God, God moves on our behalf. Does praise manipulate

the heart of God? No. But God honors faith. When you dare to praise God in advance of Him responding, your faith is strengthened, and you begin to see your trials as opportunities for God to show up!

Praise doesn't deny the circumstances. Praise exalts God *above* the circumstances!

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1. Read a psalm out loud. The power of praising God using Scripture is enormous! Scripture is God's Word. So, when you praise God using His Word, the enemy flees. Do you want to silence the work of the enemy in your life? Then try reading and praising God out loud using any one of these psalms: Psalm 29, 46, 91, 149 and 150 all are great psalms to read and declare out loud over your life!

2. Flood your home with praise and worship music. Download worship music on your phone or play it on YouTube. Join in the many worship services being offered online right now. Many churches are having regular Wednesday night worship and prayer nights online. Find one and tune in. As you soak your body, mind and spirit in the worship and praise of God, your fears and anxiety will be calmed. As you allow your focus to shift from the news to the God who reigns above the news, your attitude will shift and your faith will be strengthened.

3. Praise God in advance of specific provision you need. Do you need wisdom? Praise God that He is the God of all wisdom (Rom. 11:33-36) and He delights to give you wisdom (James 1:5). Do you need financial provision? Praise God in advance that He promised to provide for all your needs (Phil. 4:19). Praise the Shepherd that you can trust Him to provide all that you need (Ps. 23:1). Your provision might not come in the way you expected and might not be the amount you expected. God promises to provide, so take Him at His word! Praise and thank

God for the joy and peace He promises (Gal. 5:22-23).

God's Word is eternal. The principle that applied to the Israelites in their wilderness is the same principle that applies in our wilderness. The circumstances might be different. But the principle remains the same. A great method to internalize this truth is to take the words found in Numbers 21:17 and change the wording according to *your* needs. For example, "Spring up, O joy," or "Spring up, O peace." If God promises it, you can count on it. Dare to sing a song of faith today.

4. Ask God what He wants to do through COVID-19. Ruth Haley Barton, in her excellent article on COVID-19, raises the point that sometimes we ask God the wrong question:

"The disciples made this mistake in John 9. Speaking about the man born blind, they asked Jesus, 'Who sinned, this man or his parents?' (John 9:2). Jesus answers, 'Neither.' He goes on to say, 'This happened so that the works of God might be displayed.' It's possible that you might be asking the wrong question about the coronavirus pandemic. Instead of asking who sinned or whose fault is this, ask how God's work can be revealed in this. Then consider how you can join God by showing the love of Christ to others."

Friend, we are living in unprecedented days. The hour is urgent. Let's view the coronavirus pandemic through the lens of God. Let's ask Him for wisdom on how to best make His love known during this time. Don't get distracted. Instead, keep your eyes focused on Jesus and follow His lead in loving others. {eoa}

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