

Unleash the Gift of the Song of the Lord

She was the picture of shyness, standing at the door and bashfully glancing my way inquiring, "Can I see you, Pastor Jack? "

I beckoned to her, and the 8-year-old walked across the prayer room to where I stood. I knelt to greet the child, so our eyes were at the same level.

"Hi, Aimee," I smiled. "What do you want?"

"Pastor Jack, I wanted you to hear a song the Lord gave me."

The service was about to begin, but right then she seemed a more precious and urgent matter than the multitude gathering for worship.

"Sing it for me," I said. And she did. It was a tender little tune.

"That's beautiful, Aimee. You keep singing it to the Lord Jesus, will you?"

She nodded, and we hugged each other as I whispered, "Thank you for coming to share your song with me. Tell Mama and Daddy hello for me, and ... " I paused and then added, "I love you."

Her smile would have melted a million hearts as she said, "I love you, too," and hurried off.

Aimee's story underscores a conviction I have about worship and song: The Creator, whose Word repeatedly says, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," wants to give everyone his or her own song of praise to Him. At her tender age, Aimee was experiencing a creative possibility open to us all—the potential to sing songs spontaneously to the Lord.

There are places in the Bible where the sheer power of song explodes upon our understanding. Far more than the expression of joy, thanks or unified worship, I'm talking about song as an instrument of miraculous power for battle, for breakthrough and for birthing.

The Song of the Battle

Judah's King Jehoshaphat and his people were vastly outnumbered by the troops of Moab and Ammon. With prayer and fasting they turned to the Lord rather than appealing to a neighboring nation to rescue them.

Their call to God was answered: "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's ...

"'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you'" (2 Chr. 20:15-17).

The people responded with awe and praise. But what makes this event memorable is the strategy they employed for battle.

Jehoshaphat appointed a choir to go out before the army. They lifted their song of praise, expressing their belief in His promise, and their enemies were so confounded by it all that they turned on one another! (See verses 20-23.)

The song of the Lord is a mighty instrument for spiritual battle. The Lord calls us to worship Him with song when faced with an enemy that is too strong for us.

We can find victory in our circumstances as we obey the directive to worship with song. It's a timeless resource

identified in God's Word as a powerful part of the arsenal He has given for our triumph in spiritual conflict.

The Song of the Breakthrough

The breakthrough of the gospel into Europe in the first century began as the result of a Holy Spirit-inspired vision that led Paul and his party to move west instead of east in their evangelistic pursuits (Acts 16:6-10). As God's Word was preached and confirmed by His power, His followers gained their first European converts.

The efforts of Paul and the others were assailed repeatedly by a demon-possessed woman, whose sorceries had gained influence over many in that area. But Paul cast the demon from her, setting the woman free to follow Christ (vv. 16-18).

For their merciful act, Paul and Silas were cast into prison. This was clearly an effort of the recently expelled demon to restrain further gospel advance into its principality, which was the doorway to an entire continent.

From within their prison cell, the two beaten and bound missionaries began to sing praises to God. As they sang, an earthquake shook the area, resulting in the miracle of their jailer's repentance and the conversion of his entire household (vv. 19-34).

This cluster of events established a beachhead for the gospel on a new continent. Clearly, the original breakthrough of the gospel westward into Europe was not achieved without an apostolic experience in the sheer power of song.

The Bible supports the proposition that song is a mighty means of breakthrough and liberation. More than offerings of praise for what God has done, songs are also instruments of our partnering with His might for deliverance.

In Psalm 32:7, we are told that the Lord hides us and

preserves us from trouble by encircling us with songs of deliverance. The song of the Lord on the lips of His people has a potential for contributing to spiritual overthrow, upheaval and breakthrough.

The Song of Birthing

Isaiah 54:1-3 opens with a paradoxical command: "Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing. ... For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations."

The irony here is that no one would direct a despairing reject to sing. In ancient Israel, a woman without children was disenfranchised, suspect of spiritual unworthiness and potentially subject to divorce.

Yet the prophet commands the woman to sing and, incredibly, directs her to start preparing a nursery for there are babies (plural) coming! (See verses 2-5.) A tapestry of joy is prophesied, complete with promises of widespread fruit and joyous consequences flowing from the midst of the singer's song.

In the Word of God, song and birth are linked together time and again (Job 38:7; 1 Sam. 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55). The distinctive thing about Isaiah's words is that the song he calls for is not a joyous response to an impending birth. The song declares the promise and sets the atmosphere for its fulfillment!

When the Barren Sang

More than a decade ago, it seemed like just another Sunday as Mike and Cheri were seated with the congregation. They probably weren't thinking about the matter that morning, but Mike and Cheri were unable to have children.

They were new to our congregation, so I did not know this. Nor

was I aware of their prayerful desire that after 11 years of marriage they might conceive a child.

That day my subject was "The Conceiving and Bearing of Life." Using Isaiah 54 as my text, I discussed God's call to worship and praise Him at any point of our lives that seems hopelessly unfruitful. During my delivery of the message, something very special took place.

I paused, sensing the Holy Spirit's presence and prompting. "Church," I said, "my message has not specifically had to do with natural childbearing but with life flowing into barren parts of our lives in other respects.

"Still, the Holy Spirit is impressing on me that there is a couple here this morning who has longed for a child, who has been told they cannot have one and whom the Lord wants to know He is present to speak to their need in a personal way.

"His word to you is this: 'Begin to fill your house with song, and as you do, the life-giving power of that song will establish a new atmosphere and make way for the conception that you have desired.'"

I didn't ask anyone to respond to that word. Rather, I simply went on with the message as planned, forgetting about the incident until nearly a year later.

I engaged Mike and Cheri in conversation prior to the Sunday they were to present their baby girl for dedication. After opening exchanges, Mike came to the point. "Pastor Jack, we wanted to talk with you for a few minutes because of this Sunday's dedication of our baby. There's something about it we felt you would want to know."

With that, he recounted the episode of that Sunday about 11 months before—of their childlessness, their prayer, the Holy Spirit's word to them and their baby.

"Pastor," Mike continued, "we went home that day and began to do what the Holy Spirit instructed us. We began to fill our house with song.

"Cheri and I would walk hand-in-hand into each room and simply sing praises and worship to the Lord. We just wanted you to know that the baby we're bringing for presentation to the Lord this Sunday is the fruit of that song, that the Lord did fulfill His word given that morning."

That baby's birth was a holy phenomenon not conjured up by man's efforts or enthusiasm. But it was the precious fruit of one couple's natural union that, until the divinely-appointed song of the Lord entered their situation, had not produced the fruitfulness for which the couple longed.

I was especially touched when little Aimee left, her song echoing in my ears. I was praising God for the life-begetting power of song and reveling in how it can transmit from one generation to another where simple childlike hearts will welcome it.

You see, Aimee is Mike and Cheri's daughter, the baby who was born as a result of their filling the house with song, even after years of barrenness without hope. She was the fruit of a song that now was finding a place in her young life.

Who knows what richness her song will bring in the years that follow? Who knows what a new song may bring to you?

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