

Ramblings of a Songwriting Fool

There are many singers and songwriters throughout the Bible, even several psalmists. We read of Miriam's song of triumph that she and the women of Israel sang as they danced in the street with their timbrels, rejoicing over the defeat of the Egyptian army whose "horse and rider was thrown into the sea." Still others like Asaph contributed works that have been forever recorded into the pages of God's holy text, and they most certainly deserve honorable mention.

But I want to focus on David, this eclectic, non sequitur, dreamy-eyed young "songwriting fool," who was churning out praise and worship music millenniums before the phrase was even coined. Now I say this respectfully, not at all in the context in which we're instructed not to call someone a fool. (So *please*, no hate mail!) If we ourselves are ever to become fools for Christ's sake, and if we'd ever need a pictorial definition of such, well, I'm just pointing you to one of history's most prominent. Want a lesson from the greatest songwriter of all time? Save your money...no credit card validation required...it's right in the pages of your Bible.

David didn't have the luxury of an annual songwriters' convention, in which he could journey for a 3-day getaway in Nashville to swap tips and helpful hints with others who shared his craft. He didn't have a publicist or a booking agency which arranged concerts in various venues throughout the Holy Land. This wasn't a fellow dreaming of winning a Dove award or aspiring to get a 5-minute spot on Christian television. No, he was just an ordinary guy whose two biggest goals were to serve God and to bring his father's sheep home safely each evening.

So, without a keyboard and the latest software to compose his music, and without any fears of copyright infringement, this young ruddy shepherd sat under the trees with his harp and just lost himself in worship of his God. Clearly it wasn't all that he ever did, for the fact that he could hit any target he wanted to with a sling proves he was skilled in other things. He wasn't lazy and he was no coward. Killing lions and bears and rescuing the flock from predators were victories which inspired psalms of testimony and praise. Not even his older brothers, who probably at times rolled their eyes at his far-fetched notions and sweet songs, could accuse him in his artistic flair as being "sissy-fied," seeing that this crazy sibling of theirs would rise up in uncanny faith and courage to slay beast and giant alike. Experience and adversity forged his faith and trust in Jehovah, so he was able to sing the songs of one who had "been there, done that." He knew hard times, he knew weariness and sometimes fear, but he would share even his weakness in song to show that true strength came from a higher Source.

David seemed to be a bit of a loner...and we can gather that from the fact that, when Samuel came to anoint the next king out of the house of Jesse, David wasn't even missed in the lineup. For whatever reason, he was deemed so ordinary that it never even occurred to his father that this young son was the makings of royalty. What made God choose such an unrefined young outdoorsman to lead His people? A man who loved God

with such unquenchable desire would teach others to love and serve Him...and he would be relentless against any enemy which rose up to harm his Father's "sheep." Who better to be in a position of authority? It tells us much about the power of praise and worship even in the realm of spiritual authority! Yet another lesson...

But speaking of those wonderful, beautiful songs written from the lips of someone passionately in love with the Father...who knows how many psalms were never even written down, never sung more than once! I wonder if there were times when, instead of writing down the lyrics, he just played freely and improvised. The ones we'll never know of were probably the most beautiful, the most intimate. I'm guessing that God kept those preserved for just His ears; those worshipful, impromptu, one-time-only expressions that came and went as a true sacrifice of praise. David had learned a secret that many of us today who are worship leaders need to grasp: that although we may worship in the presence of others, we still have an audience of only ONE.

This shameless young man (and later, old man) would write songs about the Lord which many would consider the fodder for romantic love songs! Yes, he sang of his God as the love of his life. God was his high tower, his rock, his life and breath, the water he panted for, his source of strength. I wonder how many folks who heard his songs just "didn't get it?" Like John, he was unafraid to lay his head on the bosom of the Lord Himself. He wasn't too concerned about what others might think either. That was evident when, upon bringing the ark of the covenant back into the holy city, David danced before the Lord with all his might...even to the utter shock and contempt of his wife! Pleasing God rather than seeking the approval of man...now how's that for a novel idea?

So are you willing to forget all you ever learned about songwriting and just worship God with your voice and your instrument today? Are you unafraid to break a few rules and just lose yourself in the reckless abandon of worship? Try being a "songwriting fool" instead of someone whose seasoned rhyme and meter, musical knowledge, structure and chord progressions dominate the method by which you compose. Then, don't be surprised if the most beautiful songs you've ever penned come from somewhere within you that you never knew existed. Some He may let you share with others, but don't be surprised if He chooses to keep the very best for His ears only. It's ok...He's done that to me a few times too. And while your compositions may or may not ever be the nominated for Song of the Year, you'll definitely have the ear -- and the heart -- of the God Who showed up every day in a shepherd's field just to listen to His precious child's anthems of love.

Isn't *He* what it's all about anyway?

Selah.