

## Moses and Miriam Lead the People in Praise

Makena leaned into the canvas, moving her chalk-smearred fingers in smoothing movements. She was immersed in the creating, fueled by the joy of the Lord and caught up by the gospel music filling the sanctuary.

“It looks like . . . I can’t tell yet,” said Jada to Chelsea, the woman she had just met that day.

The two women were at a women’s conference with three Black churches and three white churches participating. The six St. Louis churches and their respective pastors had been gathering for the past two years. Jada suggested to the conference organizers that Makena, her friend and church member, provide a special presentation. She told them Makena was a sketch artist who sometimes used her craft in worship. They were all pleased and fascinated.

Makena took a step back and surveyed the canvas. She needed to add more blue to the sky, so she went back to work. The last few months had been hard, but the Lord had seen her through. She was also thankful for her sisters in Christ—some of them new friends—who had loved her and prayed for her.

“It’s a Black hand clasped with a white hand in prayer!” exclaimed Chelsea. “How wonderful!”

“Yes,” agreed Jada. “I like the way the hands are surrounded by the clouds and sky.”

**1.** *Why is it important to celebrate God’s grace, healing, and deliverance?*

**2.** *What kinds of circumstances might prompt us to celebrate God and His work in our lives?*

**3.** *How have you celebrated God in the past?*

## Praising God Together

*Exodus 15:1-3 KJV*

1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 The LORD is a man of war: the Lord is his name.

*Exodus 15:1-3 NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

"I will sing to the LORD,  
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver  
he has hurled into the sea.

<sup>2</sup>"The LORD is my strength and  
my defense;

he has become my salvation.  
He is my God, and I will  
praise him,  
my father's God, and I will  
exalt him

<sup>3</sup>The LORD is a warrior;  
the LORD is his name."

Moses leads the Israelites in singing praises to God (v. 1). They sing with joy that God has triumphed over their enemies. This is right after the people's rescue and Pharaoh's defeat at the Red Sea. After the people walked amid the sea on dry ground (Ex. 14:22), the Lord threw the Egyptians into the sea, and they were destroyed.

Pharaoh's army was one of the greatest of that time. The people of Israel were terrified to face the Egyptian army since they were under oppressive rule for hundreds of years. Egypt was keeping them away from the worship of God in Canaan by keeping them as slaves in Egypt. In their despair, the Israelites questioned God's promises. But now they could look around at one another and sing together of His deliverance.

Once God showed up in power, all the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob came flooding back. God's victory over Egypt was proof to them that God keeps His promises. This reminder of God's character made the

people praise Him with shouts and acclamation as a warrior and Lord over the once-mighty Egypt.

**4.** *Why is it important to praise God together with other believers?*

**5.** *What can we learn about God's character from the Israelites' song of praise in Exodus 15:1–3?*

## Exalting in God's Character

*Exodus 15:11–13 KJV*

11 Who is like unto thee,  
O LORD, among the gods?  
Who is like thee, glorious  
in holiness, fearful in  
praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out  
thy right hand, the earth  
swallowed them.

13 Thou in thy mercy  
hast led forth the  
people which thou hast  
redeemed: thou hast  
guided them in thy  
strength unto thy holy  
habitation.

*Exodus 15:11–13 NIV*

<sup>11</sup>"Who among the gods  
is like you, LORD?

Who is like you—  
majestic in holiness,  
awesome in glory,  
working wonders?

<sup>12</sup>"You stretch out your right hand,  
and the earth swallows your  
enemies.

<sup>13</sup>In your unfailing love you will  
lead  
the people you have redeemed.  
In your strength you will guide  
them  
to your holy dwelling."

Israel continues to praise the character of God. The song asks, "Who among the gods is like you?" The answer to this rhetorical question is an emphatic, "No one is like God!" No one is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, or able to work the kinds of wonders that God works.

God's uniqueness is on full display in verse 12. His outstretched arm reveals His power over all the earth and His enemies. The picture is of a master who commands his workers. With a pointed finger, the master tells them exactly what to do, and they do it. Likewise, God's outstretched hand tells the earth exactly what to do, and the

earth does God's bidding by swallowing up His enemies. God is patient with his enemies, but when judgment comes, the earth will swallow them up.

Verse 13 is where we see God's heart of action. The reason God is acting in this way is for the sake of His people, whom He dearly loves. God has set His love on Israel and has redeemed them from Egypt. In the context of verse 13, redemption means that God has rescued and delivered His people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

**6.** *What is the significance of God's outstretched arm in verse 12?*

**7.** *What does redemption mean in the context of Exodus 15:13?*

## Considering God's People

*Exodus 15:17–18 KJV*

17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.

18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

*Exodus 15:17–18 NIV*

<sup>17</sup>"You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance— the place, LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established.

<sup>18</sup>"The LORD reigns for ever and ever."

God's plan for Israel continues to unfold through the rest of Exodus. God's plan is revealed in the fact that His goal is to "bring them in" so that He can plant them on the "mountain of [His] inheritance," making them a nation (v. 17). The "mountain" here is likely Jerusalem, where God will make His dwelling in the "sanctuary," the future temple of Solomon.

God's reign means that He shall rule as king (v. 18). A good ruler looks after the interest of the people, which is

why a king is often compared to a shepherd who is caring for sheep. As God reigns, His people will flourish.

**8.** *What significance is the “mountain” in verse 17?*

**9.** *What does the Lord’s reign mean for God’s people?*

## Leading Others to Worship God

*Exodus 15:20–21 KJV*

20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

*Exodus 15:20–21 NIV*

<sup>20</sup>Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing.

<sup>21</sup>Miriam sang to them:  
“Sing to the LORD,  
for he is highly exalted.  
Both horse and driver  
he has hurled into the sea.”

Miriam continues to lead the people in a spirit of worship with tambourines and dancing. The women praise and celebrate God’s victory over their enemies.

Scripture calls Miriam a “prophetess” (v. 20 KJV), which indicates that she is communicating God’s perspective or sharing a message from God. She is one of five women labeled as “prophetess” or “woman prophet” in the Old Testament. She says, “Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (v. 21 KJV).

Miriam’s song has been with God’s people through the ages. She is an example of one who celebrated God and encouraged others to do the same.

**10.** *What is the significance of tambourines and dancing in verse 20?*

**11.** *How does Miriam’s example encourage us to celebrate our God?*

## A Life of Celebration

We often gather to celebrate God. Moses led the people in praise, and they worshiped God together. By definition, celebration implies community. It's hard to celebrate by ourselves. An important part of our worship is exalting God and His character. The Israelites celebrated God by singing about His characteristics. Our God is majestic, is holy, and works wonders. A "wonder" is something beautiful or unexpected—perhaps unexpectedly beautiful. It's so amazing it takes us by surprise and may inspire awe and admiration. This is our response to God's glorious works. Any aspect of creation, any gift we acknowledge from His hand, any miracle recorded in Scripture leads us to acknowledge almighty God in worship.

The Israelites' song mentioned general and specific wonders. When God stretches His hand over creation, it obeys His command. God rescued Israel from slavery. How much more has He rescued us when we accept Him as Lord and Savior and redeemed us from slavery to sin!

Israel responded to God's lovingkindness with praise and worship, and we are encouraged to do the same. As long as God reigns, He will establish His people and keep His promises of inheritance. And God will reign forever.

Moses' sister, Miriam, encouraged the women to follow her in celebration with music and dance. We worship Him in grateful response to the covenant relationship He has initiated with us, and we praise Him for His goodness and mercy in offering us eternal redemption.

**12.** *What are some important aspects of our celebration of God?*

**13.** *What does it mean to say that God works wonders?*

**14.** *What unique characteristics of God's character might we exalt in our worship?*

**15.** *How do these verses encourage us to celebrate God?*

## It's Time to Celebrate!

Moses and Miriam's songs of praise to the Lord provide examples of how to celebrate God. We celebrate God by giving Him honor, praise, and worship.

► *Write a song or prayer of worship and celebration to God. Then consider how you might share this with others to encourage them to celebrate God along with you.*

### KEY VERSE

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. —Exodus 15:20 KJV

Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. —Exodus 15:20 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of September 30 through October 6

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Hebrews 10:26–35—Do Not Persist in Sin.
- Tues.** 2 Corinthians 7:5–11—Godly Grief Leads to Repentance.
- Wed.** Proverbs 28:4–18—The Righteous and the Wicked.
- Thu.** 2 Samuel 11:1–5, 14–24—Sin's Deadly Spiral.
- Fri.** Lamentations 5:1–3, 15–22—God, Restore Us.
- Sat.** John 21:15–19—Follow Christ.
- Sun.** Psalm 51:1–13, 16–17—Create in Me a Clean Heart.