

WEEK TWO: SINGING A NEW SONG

Since our theme for these devotionals is “all things new,” here’s some interesting trivia. People who like doing *new* things are more likely to experience *earworms*. What’s an earworm, you ask? The Germans coined the word to describe those pesky songs that get stuck in your brain on an endless loop, kind of like a worm crawling around in your ear.

I had an earworm over Christmas that drove me nuts. It started when I heard *The Prayer* sung in our churches’ Christmas show. It’s a beautiful song and I found myself singing it throughout that day and the next. But then I heard it again on the radio and suddenly I could not get it out of my mind—day and night. Before long, a song I’d once loved had become a nuisance!

When I read about this weird phenomenon, it occurred to me that we often have verbal messages, usually negative, that play like irritating songs on endless loops in the back of our minds. Where do they come from? Research shows that when we experience something hurtful or threatening, the neurons in our brains lay a deep pathway that can easily shape our reality. This happens as a result of painful childhood events or even difficult encounters as adults. If something causes us to feel a strong sense of shame or inadequacy or embarrassment or rejection, our brains go to work creating a negative narrative that plays persistently in our subconscious, and often conscious minds.

These messages become toxic to our souls, if we don’t recognize them and find a way to stop them. I had one for decades that was rooted in childhood experiences. Simply put, it was *don’t be a bother*. This song played like an earworm a good part of my life—words crawling around persistently in my psyche and I had no idea how to rid myself of the noisy nuisance.

I think David experienced the same thing at times, which may explain why he often proclaimed, “Sing a new song.” In Psalm 98, he pleads for God to rescue him from people who were telling lies about him. You can imagine the messages swirling in his brain as he was on the run from Saul, the man who’d been like a father and was now trying to kill him. But in the midst of this, David declares: *I will sing a new song to you oh God* (verse 9).

What unhealthy message might be imprinted on the neural pathways of your brain? What words play like an earworm you can’t get rid of, robbing you of peace and keeping you from experiencing God’s presence and purpose in your life?

Social scientists have studied earworms for some time now—seriously! How do they suggest we get rid of them? The main thing they’ve discovered is that focusing on them or trying to forget them will only make them worse. This can also be true in our spiritual lives. So often we drill down on ourselves, almost bellybutton gazing at the negative messages we harbor, thinking we will change them that way. But what if that just makes them worse? What if the thing we need instead, is to look to God for a new song?

This is how I stopped playing my *don't be a bother* song. When God began to show me not only the depths of his love, but the passion to pursue friendship with his creatures, it was hard to take in. But through years of turning to him, of meditating on his being, of letting Jesus in to heal my broken places, I finally became captivated by the wonder of it all. A new song began to grow in my heart. It was a song about Jesus and his beauty. The more I gazed upon him, the softer those destructive messages got until they finally stopped.

I am not saying that singing a new song is easy, nor is it a “one and done” deal. Just this week I caught that false narrative trying to “worm” its way back in. When all my normal tools didn’t work, I simply sat with Jesus until he healed a place I didn’t know was still broken. Then a new song rose in me—of his grace, his power, his mercy, his sovereignty or his love.

We will learn more about this process next week, but for now

The next five days are designed to help you find a new song to replace at least one of those endlessly looping lyrics that keep you from living in the hope and joy God wants to pour out on you. As you turn your eyes upon Jesus each day, may they slowly fade away in the light of his glory and grace.

W2-DAY 1

READ

Quietly read Psalm 145. Read it one more time, aloud if possible

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What does this tell you about God—his character, his ways or his attributes? Write down a full list.
- What is something about God from this list that you really need to see afresh today?

Pray:

- Offer words of praise and gratitude to God for each of these things.
- Ask God to help you identify one unhealthy message that plays often or repeatedly in your mind. (These usually begin with the word “I”. (*I am not enough, I can't get it right, I will never be okay, I need to be perfect, I can't make mistakes etc.*)
- As your loving heavenly Father to implant the thing you've identified from Psalm 145 deep within so that it might replace this destructive one about you.
- Prayerfully write out one or two lines of a new song that you can begin to sing or speak out whenever the negative message worms its way into your mind.

RESPOND

- Write your new song on a card you can carry with you (or put as a note or screensaver on your devices)
- Practice singing your new song by first turning your heart to God, then speaking or singing it when you go to bed tonight and when you wake up in the morning.
- Share your new song with a friend!

W2-DAY 2

READ

Quietly read Isaiah 42:1-10. Read it one more time, aloud if possible.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- Who is this prophecy about? What does this tell you about him—his character, his ways, or his attributes? Write down a full list.
- Why does God call his people to sing a *new song* here? What circumstances in your life might need this message?

Pray:

- Offer words of praise and gratitude to God for the things you've seen about Jesus.
- Think again of the message you identified in day one that plays often or repeatedly in your mind.
- See yourself as that “bruised reed” or “faintly burning wick”. What is God's promise for you? Listen. What is he saying?
- Prayerfully write out one or two lines to add to your new song that you can begin to speak out whenever the negative message tries to worm its way into your mind.

RESPOND

- Add your lines to the new song on the card from day one (or put as a note or screensaver on your devices)
- Practice singing your new song by first turning your heart to God, then speaking or singing it tonight before you go to bed and when you wake up.
- Share your new song with someone!

W2-DAY 3

READ

Quietly read Psalm 40:1-5. Read it one more time, aloud if possible

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What does this tell you about God—his character, his ways or his attributes? Write down a full list.
- What does the psalmist say his new song is? When have you needed this particular song in the past month?

Pray:

- Offer words of praise and gratitude to God for each of these things.
- Think again of the unhealthy message you've identified that plays often or repeatedly in your mind. See how this has been a pit of destruction. Wait before God and ask him to show you how he wants to lift you from it or how he already has. Wait for his healing touch.
- Prayerfully write out one or two lines of a new song that you can begin to sing or speak out whenever the negative message worms its way into your mind.

RESPOND

- Offer words of praise and gratitude for what you have seen.
- Add your lines to the new song on the card from day one (or put as a note or screensaver on your devices)
- Commit to speaking or singing out this new song whenever the negative message worms its way into your mind.
- Share your new song with someone!

W2-DAY 4**READ**

Quietly read Psalm 98. Read it one more time with a strong, vigorous voice (if possible)

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What does this tell you about God—his character, his ways or his attributes? Write down a full list.
- What is one thing that speaks to you the most for today?
- What does the psalmist call us to do in light of these things?

Pray:

- Offer words of praise and gratitude to God for each of these things.
- Think again of the unhealthy message you've identified that plays often or repeatedly in your mind.
- Stop and imagine you can hear the sea roaring, the rivers singing, trumpets and lyres playing, and your own voice joining in as you sing a new song of praise to God. Hear it drowning out the destructive words.
- Prayerfully write out a joyful refrain (phrase) to add to your new song whenever the negative message worms its way into your mind.

RESPOND

- Add your lines to the new song wherever you are keeping it (a card, your journal, digitally etc.)
- Practice singing your new song by first turning your heart to God, then speaking or singing it tonight before you go to bed and when you wake up.
- Share your new song with someone!

W2-DAY 5**READ**

Quietly read Revelation 5:1-14. Read it again with a worshipping heart, aloud if possible.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What is going on here?
- Who is singing a new song? Why?

- What are the truths in the new song they sing? Which one has the most meaning for you in this season?

Pray:

- See yourself one day joining that throng of people singing a new song of Jesus' worth.
- Bow your heart before him and worship him for all that he is and all that he has done for you.
- Sit in this place of worship, asking for full healing from the King of kings as you release the remnants of the false narrative you've been holding.
- Prayerfully write out one or two lines of a new song that you can begin to sing or speak out whenever the negative message worms its way into your mind.

RESPOND

- Add your lines to the new song wherever you are keeping it (a card, your journal, digitally etc.)
- Practice singing your new song by first turning your heart to God, then speaking the truths in it tonight before you go to bed and when you wake up for the rest of this week.
- Share a testimony of what God has done this week with a friend, your small group or family.