

The Psalms convey a wide range of emotions, including joy, sorrow, anger, wonder, distress, hope, trust, and yearning. They generally focus on two main themes: praise and lament. In the Psalms of praise and gratitude, we find gentle words expressing joy, while also learning that praise can encompass lament, requests for help, and expressions of thanksgiving. The Psalms help structure our relationship with God and guide our faith, leading us to praise as we navigate life's ups and downs.

In this collection, the Psalm is reinterpreted through poetry and art as a reflection of God's work of justice and compassion in our world today. We begin by praising God, much like the psalmist, who gives thanks for God's creation. The psalmist offers praise to God, the Creator, who overcomes chaos and reigns over creation with righteousness and justice (verses 5–18).

Yet, the poet then transitions into a slow descent toward lament, ending with notes of bitterness and sorrow. The text declares that God has rejected, spurned, and renounced all God's promises; the songs of praise are silenced, the enemy has triumphed, and the former splendour has faded.

What shall we do when it doesn't all turn out happily ever after?

We can cry out to God, even when God seems to have deserted us. In our despair, we can still express our faith: "How long, O Yahweh? O Yahweh, where is your love and faithfulness?"

Psalm 89 offers guidance for maintaining our relationship with God, even when we feel abandoned or burdened by broken promises. During times when it feels as though our world is falling apart, we reflect on God's faithfulness. It is reassuring

to know that we are not flawed for feeling anger toward God and that God desires honesty in our relationship. Celebrating God's steadfast love and faithfulness can help highlight the difficulties of the present, yet God's love continues to work in our lives, making God's promises sure and God's covenant unbreakable.

The experience of feeling abandoned by God is not unique to us. Our feelings of disappointment, sorrow, and even anger are both acceptable and expected. Psalm 89 shows us a way for our relationship with God to persist, amidst us.

In this way, the Psalm teaches us to be gentle with those experiencing the anguish expressed in its lament. We should not silence lament or questions. Psalm 89 encourages us to such honest expression. It says, "I will not take my love from them, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness (verse 33)."

Psalms uniquely connect us to the faith of those who came before us; similarly, hymns speak to the ups and downs of life, giving depth to our praise, words to our grief, power to our lament, appreciation for our gratitude, and reminding us that we join the songs of people past and present in both lament and praise.

Hymns can be taught, but more importantly, they should be lived. Sing, feel, and engage with them—let them live as our faith witness and allow them to transform our lives.

As we affirm that God has been with us through the shadows of the valley of death, our praise is not based on empty words but real-life experience.

The hymns we sing can express both fear and hope; they portray these emotions more vividly than any painter and with greater eloquence than even the finest speaker. When we encounter true darkness in our lives, God's light shines in the midst of that shadow. God is our refuge in times of trouble, and we can place our trust in God, as reflected in the hymns we sing.

We can find hope in God, who is good and compassionate, and whose love is revealed through the hymns we sing.

When we face threats like illness, death, unemployment, poverty, climate change, or any form of violence, the hymns we sing serve as our testimony. They remind us that we were once sinking in the mud, unable to find solid ground. Now, we can attest that God not only heard our cries for help but also rescued us, lifted us up, and set our feet on solid rock. Our cries for help have been replaced with new songs of praise because of all that God has done for us.

Singing hymns serves both as acts of prayer and as invitations to further prayer beyond the hymns themselves. We not only repeat these prayers—whose timeless words remain relevant today—but also find encouragement and nourishment within them to express our own prayers: fresh words that better reflect our experiences, align with our lives, and are vital to our faith.

Hymns provide us with valuable resources for our journey of faith. They give us a voice to express the depths of our souls in any circumstance. They are a sufficient resource to foster a robust faith when engaging with God, no matter the situation.

Moreover, hymns encourage us to place our trust in God, who stands with the weak, the poor, and the marginalized. We understand that God helps us, gives us sight, heals our hearts, and then calls us to do the same for others.

No matter what circumstances or emotions influence you today, there is a hymn that can express your feelings or reflect your faith journey.

Rest assured, God is always with us.

