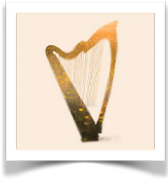


Study Guide for *Dangerous Songs: The Psalms and a Gloriously Disrupted Life*



Joy

Chapter 2

Pages 31-48

First Words of Joy

- Listen to **Creation's Hallelujah** (Psalm 148). Sing along with the chorus if you wish.
- In the first paragraph, the author proposes a metaphorical recipe for joy. What's your version?
- Some of us may have complicated feelings about joy. Discuss your relationship with joy.

Taste and See

- Listen to **Taste Deeply** (Psalm 34). Reflect.

Losing It

- What is your favorite joke?
- What place, person, thing, or activity enacts joy in you?

Joy in Community

- If you're interested, look up Psalms 136 and 89 as the author's examples of communal songs.

We Are All Connected

- Listen to **The Blessing of Life Forevermore** (Psalm 133) and reflect.
- Listen to **There is a River** (Psalm 46). Reading the psalm text, what possibilities do you imagine for the best musical accompaniment?

Joy in Our Shared Laments

- What is the lowest common denominator for what human beings share? That is, what basic things do we have in common?

- Listen to **We Will Sing** (Psalm 89). Discuss which words or phrases are significant to you.

All Creation Sings of Joy

- Psalm 148 imagines all creation as God's singing congregation. Look out of your window and imagine each element of life emanating joy. This seems to be part of the psalmists' imagination.
- Listen to **Everyone Come** (Psalm 36), reflecting on the generous invitation. Read Psalm 36 and see if the song rings true to the text.

Hallelujah Breakthroughs

- What do you think of the author's expression for God— *The Covenant God of Israel with the Unspeakably Holy Name*?
- Listen to Leonard Cohen's song, "Hallelujah." Notice that his Jewish perspective expresses *Hallelujah* not only in joy, but also confusion and heartbreak.

All That God Is

- Listen to **Let Us Shout For Joy** (Psalm 95) and **Bless Your Unspeakable Name** (Psalm 145). What are the most important blessings the psalmists attribute to God's presence and action?

The Slow

- Listen to **You Are Slow** (Psalm 86). Reflect on this song for the Lenten season.
- Listen to **The Earth is Full** (Psalm 33). How does the psalmist's imagination for creation compare with Genesis 1-2?

Awe-ful Joy

- Listen to **Rivers in the Desert** (Psalm 126). Read Psalm 126. How would you paraphrase this psalm in your own words?
- Rudolf Otto's phrase for encountering the holy is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*: mysterious, overwhelming, and fascinating. Which word speaks to you today?

The Joy of Justice

- This section discusses the psalmic themes of justice and *shalom* being rich with joy. How does the idea of joyful politics strike you?
- Listen to **When We Share God's Dream** (Psalm 126), and contemplate what it's like to participate in God's agenda for creation.
- Listen to **Shout For Joy** (Psalm 98) and ***Joy to the World***. How would the experience of Christmas be if your church celebrated with themes of justice and *shalom*?

When Joy Comes to Church

- At Sunday morning worship, how do you think the most vulnerable people in the room are experiencing the service? If your community wanted to enact deep welcome and hospitality, what changes might you make?

Keeping It Real

- How do you personally savor joy?

When the Church Spoils Joy

- This section suggests that fully embracing and sharing joy might have challenges. Do you relate to any of the author's five reasons?
- Listen to **Unfailing Love** (Psalm 32). Summarize each verse of the song in your own words. Bonus points if you can identify the New Testament story in verse 3.