

The Influence of Job in Modern Worship Music

I feel things deeply. And I'd definitely describe myself as a melancholy. That surely lends itself to why Job has been my favorite book of the Bible since 1999, my second year at Bible College.

And as a result I long for music that speaks to the darkest aspects of the human condition and how to deal with them. I could listen to the Caedmon's Call song "Center Aisle" – a haunting, depressing testimony [which I wrote about here](#) – on repeat. I have listened to Mark Schultz's "He's My Son" – written from the perspective of a parent whose child has leukemia – dozens of times. I have often said that The Fray's "You Found Me" has phrases you rarely hear Christians say...unless you read the Bible.

So when people look for ways to make verses and themes from Job into worship music, I am all ears. Even if not the dark aspects of the book. Job does, after all, speak clearly to themes of reconciliation and God's sovereignty. In the last twenty years, several Christian artists have drawn inspiration either directly or indirectly from Job's words, and God's words to Job. Today I want to celebrate a few examples.

"Though You Slay Me" (Shane and Shane)

Taken directly from Job 13:15 where Job says, "Though you slay me, yet will I hope," Shane and Shane has blessed the church with an extremely biblical and worshipful response to suffering. Also, they draw from chapter 19 when they write:

My heart and flesh may fail

The earth below give way

But with my eyes, with my eyes I'll see the Lord

This reference comes right after Job has declared that his Redeemer lives and at the end of time He will stand on the earth. The thought of this overwhelmed Job emotionally and hearing this lyric does the same for me. The mere thought of seeing Jesus one day with my physical eyes instead of by faith moves me to tears. It is with this thought that H.G. Spafford concluded "It Is Well".

"Though You Slay Me" is not upbeat or jovial. It doesn't make me happy when I hear it or sing it. Which I think is appropriate for a Job-inspired song. It also references God in Deuteronomy[1. Or perhaps Job 5:18, though I hope not] and quotes from Jesus in Gethsemane. And in all of these passages, there is a heaviness that cannot be avoided. "Worship" when we are suffering may mean cries of faith in spite of anguish and a heart that has been destroyed by our circumstances.

Blessed Be Your Name (Matt Redman)

Taken directly from the fourth phrase in Job 1:21, Matt Redman develops Job's thought that no matter the circumstance he will bless God. Whether my world is filled with darkness or whether it's "all it should be" (always in quotes when I see it, producing a wink-at-the-reader effect of how our idea of what the world should be is not God's), my heart will choose say, "Blessed Be Your Name".

I love how the bridge of this song is the third phrase from the same verse above. The two thoughts should not be separated.

Unlike "Though You Slay Me" when we do this song at my church in Chicago it is upbeat and positive and I think that is appropriate considering that Job spoke these lyrics before he

descended into the abyss seven days after his tragedies.

Redeemer (Nicole C. Mullen)

I don't know if any verse in Job is more important to me than 19:25 because I think it teaches that Jesus is resurrected, two millennia before it happened. And Nicole C. Mullen took that amazing prophecy and penned one of the great worship songs in the modern church canon.

And as with Shane and Shane, she didn't limit herself to one verse to tell the story. She speaks God's heart through his own words in Chapters 38-41 by talking about God's pride in his creation. The line "Who told the ocean you can only come this far?" is directly from Job 38:11 and other lyrics allude to this four-chapter speech by God as well.

This song also would more uplifting than most of what Job would inspire but since it is a testimony to God's sovereignty over creation and death I think it's perfect. I appreciate the awe it conveys. It is a song that truly makes me think outside of myself, much the way God's discourse at the end of Job does. Center that around the most important Christian doctrine—the resurrection of Jesus—proclaimed in the most important Bible book on suffering, and you have a song that needs to be sung.

How He Loves (John Mark McMillan)

This one is a bit of a stretch because there are no overt Job references and as far as I know John Mark McMillan has never said that Job was an influence.

But I include it for two reasons. First, the song was written out of a painful time in McMillan's life, after his best friend died in a car accident. Secondly, he opens the song by

claiming that God “loves like a hurricane” and that “I am a tree”. Whether intentional or not, I will always think of Job 38:1 when I hear that. God didn’t come to Job in gentleness as Jesus speaks in Matthew 11:28-29. He comes in a whirlwind. God brought a thunderstorm to Job’s desired courtroom. And Job’s pride was eradicated and his demand for justice was given a final verdict for all time: God is God and we are not.

Do I think this is God’s love on display? Absolutely. God humbles because he loves and only accepts love from the humble. God’s love isn’t nice and pleasant all the time. As C.S. Lewis taught us, God isn’t safe and he can be terrifying to our sensibilities. Job 38-41 proves that. And Job reacts exactly how God desires, by repenting in dust and ashes. This is a story, in part, of relational reconciliation. Which doesn’t happen without love. Even love like a hurricane to a tree.

As always I’d love to hear from our readers about these songs or any others that you like on this subject. Please comment below!