Aim for Change
By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE why and how Moses and Miriam praised God; REFLECT on the actions of God that are celebrated through music, dance, and words; and CELEBRATE God’s faithfulness with joy.

In Focus
“FIRE DEPARTMENT, CALL OUT!”

“Over here!” Ramona cried, coughing.

The smoke stung her eyes and was so thick that she couldn’t see where the voice was coming from. The disaster had been sudden. One moment, she was typing away at her desk. The next, there was a quick rumble from the ground that shook the floor and shattered the floor-to-ceiling windows. Part of the ceiling frame fell to the floor, dragging down tiles and light fixtures. Some of the sprinklers came on and drenched everything nearby, but others were broken. The way to the exit stairs was blocked with flaming debris. Ramona prayed, “Heavenly Father, please bring me to safety.” She could hear the firefighters crashing through the wreckage to get to her. “OVER HERE!” she shouted again. Ramona could see the shapes of the firefighters coming forward in the dark, knocking aside desks and chairs and filing cabinets. The water sprayed from their hoses sizzled and turned to steam as it hit the flames, adding to the chaotic scene. But after a moment, two of them emerged like ghosts and crouched next to her.

“Praise God! I am so grateful to see you!” Ramona cried.

One firefighter said, “Just stay close.” The other firefighter slid his arm around her and stood up. “We’ll get you out of here. Stick with me.”

In between coughs, Ramona said, “Thank you! God is good! God is so good!”

When have you spontaneously praised God after an emotional event?

Keep in Mind
“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11, KJV)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, KJV).
KJV

Exodus 15:11 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.

14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

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.

19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

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.

NLT

Exodus 15:11 “Who is like you among the gods, O LORD—glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, performing great wonders?

12 You raised your right hand, and the earth swallowed our enemies.

13 With your unfailing love you lead the people you have redeemed. In your might, you guide them to your sacred home.

14 The peoples hear and tremble; anguish grips those who live in Philistia.

15 The leaders of Edom are terrified; the nobles of Moab tremble. All who live in Canaan melt away;

16 terror and dread fall upon them. The power of your arm makes them lifeless as stone until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you purchased pass by.

17 You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain—the place, O LORD, reserved for your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands have established.

18 The LORD will reign forever and ever!”

19 When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and charioteers rushed into the sea, the LORD brought the water crashing down on them. But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground!

20 Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine and led all the women as they played their tambourines and danced.

21 And Miriam sang this song: “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has hurled both horse and rider into the sea.”

People, Places, and Times

Miriam. The sister of Aaron and Moses and the daughter of Amram and Jochebed. When Moses is placed in a basket in the Nile as a baby, Miriam watches over her brother and volunteers her mother as a wet-nurse when Pharaoh’s daughter decides to keep the child. She is also one of the people sent by God to lead the Israelites. Miriam leads the people in a joyous victory song after they cross the Red Sea out of Egyptian slavery. Much later while journeying through the wilderness, Moses married an Ethiopian woman and Miriam did not approve, rebelling against Moses. She and Aaron spoke against Moses, but God heard them and rebuked them. God struck Miriam with leprosy. Moses prayed for her and she was quickly healed.
Background
Over roughly 400 years, the 70 members of Jacob’s family who had moved from Canaan to Egypt had grown to over 600,000 strong (Exodus 12:37). They lived freely in Goshen until a new pharaoh came to power. He was unaware of the life-saving role that Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, had played in saving Egypt and surrounding countries from famine. Threatened by this growing population, Pharaoh tried to decrease their numbers through genocide and enslavement. The people prayed for salvation from oppression. God answered, upholding the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose name had been changed to Israel. Through a man called Moses, God performed ten mighty acts that forced Pharaoh to end the Israelites’ slavery. But Pharaoh couldn’t accept the fact that he had been defeated by the God of slaves. He set out to find and kill them. In an epic act of salvation, God walled back the waters of the Red Sea, giving the Israelites safe passage across the final barrier that blocked their exodus. The same waters drowned their oppressors. To memorialize God’s phenomenal intervention on their behalf, Moses and Miriam led the Israelites in a song of exuberant praise.

At-A-Glance
1. Sing to Gain Strength (Exodus 15:11–13)
2. Sing to be Heard (vv. 14–18)
3. Sing to Remember God’s Goodness (vv. 19–21)

In Depth
1. Sing to Gain Strength (Exodus 15:11–13)
The Egyptian culture was known for its numerous gods and goddesses. There was a sun god who was responsible for light and a goddess who was in charge of fertility. Another goddess brought the rain and Pharaoh himself was believed to be the god who had power over all the inhabitants of the land. But for the people who had just experienced deliverance and witnessed the annihilation of their oppressors, no god surpassed their God. He was unrivaled, not only in His power but also in His holiness and His worthiness to be praised. God had wiped out their enemies and that new reality gave them the courage and strength to sing about a future, unlike their past. This song of praise was also a song of hope. They looked forward, confident that their victorious God would guide them and bring them to a place where they would dwell in God’s holy presence.

How has a past experience with God shaped your outlook about your future?

2. Sing to be Heard (vv. 14–18)
On their journey, the formerly enslaved people were going to meet people from other nations. News of God’s mighty acts would have reached these nations before the Israelites actually arrived. How would the Canaanites respond? Would they realize that God was God? Or would fear lead to violent actions? The fitting response when learning about God’s manifested power and goodness is holy reverence. Such an example is Rahab, the prostitute who protected the spies sent to assess Canaan. By the time the Children of Israel reached Jericho years later, she was able to recount the incident at the Red Sea (Joshua 2:9–11). The testimony embedded in this song had proceeded the spies and secured their safety, and the safety of Rahab and her family. The song at the Red Sea was a testimony meant to be shared so that others would hear, trust, and worship God.

Name a time when your faith has been strengthened by someone’s testimony.
3. Sing to Remember God’s Goodness (vv. 19–21)
Miriam was Moses’s sister. She was a courageous woman who, as a child, defied Pharaoh’s horrific decree to kill male babies. When her mother, Jochebed, placed her brother, Moses, in a water-tight basket and put him in the Nile River, Miriam kept an eye on the basket and when Pharaoh’s daughter found the baby and wanted to keep him, Miriam, with the daughter’s consent, ran to get her mother to nurse him. Jochebed was able to rear Moses and share with him his true heritage. Now years later, Miriam was at her brother’s side. She could trace God’s deliverance in the past to the joys of freedom she and all Israelites were experiencing that day. Using the unique gifts God had given her as a prophetess, musician, and dancer, Miriam led a chorus of singers and dancers who recounted the triumphant victory of their God.

What are some ways you have celebrated God’s liberating grace in your life?

Search the Scriptures
1. Name three ways the Lord God is different from the so-called gods other nations worshiped (Exodus 15:11).

2. What will be the response of other nations when they hear of God’s victory for the Israelites (vv. 14–16)?

Discuss the Meaning
Victory for the Israelites also brought about the annihilation of others. Egyptian families lost loved ones that day. In Matthew 5:43, Jesus tells His listeners that they are to love their enemies and pray for those who despitefully use and persecute them.

1. Compare and contrast the context and attitudes toward violence between today’s text and Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:43-45.

2. In our modern context, how are we to respond when our enemies fall into unfortunate situations?

Application for Activation
Songs are often used to help shape a people’s identity. The song in today’s lesson helped formerly enslaved people to see themselves as victors. They could advance, knowing that their unrivaled God would guide them into the land he had promised their forefathers. Another song, “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” had a similar impact. Written in 1900 by James Weldon Johnson and set to music by his brother, John Rosamond Johnson, it helped African Americans to see the gains made despite great adversity. While recognizing the past, it continued in hope, anticipating increased goodness from the God who had brought them thus far on the way.

Consider memorizing all three stanzas of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” and as a class, perform it at a church service, nursing home, or shelter for formerly incarcerated men or women.

Follow the Spirit
What God wants me to do?
Remember Your Thoughts
Special insights I have learned?

Say It Correctly
Philistina. fill-iss-TEE-nah.
Moab. MOE-ab.
Edom. EE-dom.

Daily Bible Readings

**MONDAY**
God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart
(Exodus 14:1–9)

**TUESDAY**
Don't Just Do Something; Stand There!
(Exodus 14:10–20)

**WEDNESDAY**
Victory by the Sea
(Exodus 14:21–31)

**THURSDAY**
Blessed Be God Our Savior
(Luke 1:67–75)

**FRIDAY**
Victory in Jesus
(1 Corinthians 15:51–58)

**SATURDAY**
Moses Sings of God's Triumph
(Exodus 15:1–10)

**SUNDAY**
Moses and Miriam Praise God
(Exodus 15:11–21)