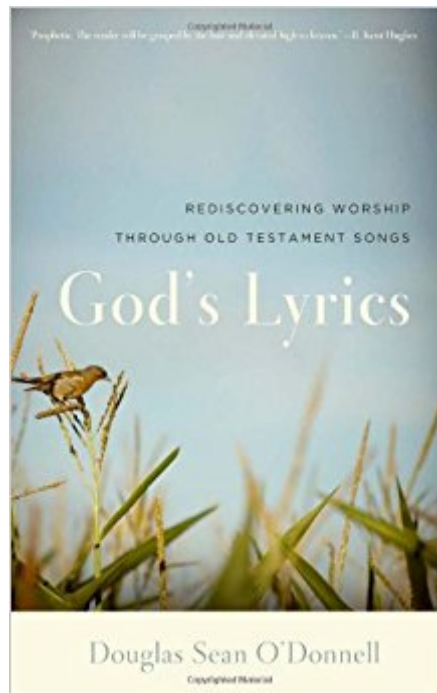




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# God's Lyrics: Rediscovering Worship Through Old Testament Songs



## Synopsis

Douglas O'Donnell draws out the historical, exegetical, and theological significance of the songs of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, David, and Habakkuk. He then shows, in the light of the person and work of Jesus Christ, how the lyrics of God's Word apply to contemporary congregational singing. *God's Lyrics* offers both a corrective and a call; a corrective to sing of Christ from the Psalms, the Law and the Prophets, and a call to use the whole counsel of God in worshiping him. The new hymns and music provided for each biblical text encourage pastors, lyricists, and church musicians to reengage with these ageless songs and their timeless themes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Doug O'Donnell has carefully and caringly unpacked the treasury of Scripture's songs and provided a rich resource." --Niel Nielson, President, Covenant College  
"This book is unique: it combines the careful exposition of God's Word with creative work in hymnody. It will be appreciated by pastors, musicians, and everyone else who loves to worship God in the biblical way." --Philip Ryken, President, Wheaton College  
"God's Lyrics is a bracing challenge for both classic and contemporary Christian lyricists . . . pointing the way forward toward a revival of song texts that are both biblically true and balanced." --Randall Gruendyke, Chaplain of Taylor University, Upland, Indiana

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Many Christians and Christian churches today shun doctrine and biblical inerrancy. This book is not for them. This book holds to 2 Timothy 3:16, that ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The main reform pushed by the author is that we have neglected certain principles found in the word of God and that our "Christian songs" often times are so vague in language that they are by no means distinctly Christian. As John MacArthur says in his introduction to the CD *Exalted Worship*; "So often today we hear worship music that may be catchy, but it lacks a certain theological depth. Unfortunately, what it lacks in loftiness it makes up for with mind numbing repetition." I was drawn to this book upon coming to much the same conclusion. This book, though a criticism, is not about any new technique in worship. In fact it's not about anything new at all; it's all based on Old Testament texts. What the author is calling us to is not only to preach from the bible as the ultimate authority, but also not to neglect the whole character of God in our worship. Is God's justice any less an admirable attribute than His love? Or are we ashamed that our God is a God of wrath? As Paul said in Acts 20:26-27: "...I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not neglected to declare to you the whole counsel of God." Are we learning from the songs that we sing? Are we worshiping the True and Living God? These are all questions the author attempts to answer using the Old Testament songs.

Most evangelical Christians would give lip service to the idea that Scripture is our source, guide and power for all that we do. But does our worship really do that in practice? In *God's Lyrics: Rediscovering Worship Through Old Testament Songs*, Pastor Douglas O'Donnell has written a book that is both challenging and uncomfortable for anyone involved in church worship, singing, and song writing. The first section of his book consists of a detailed, sermonic look at six of the songs of God's people in the Old Testament: The Song of Moses (Exodus 15), The Song of Yahweh (Deut. 32), The Song of Deborah (Judges 5), The Songs in Samuel (1 Sam 2, 2 Sam 22), and The Song of Habakkuk (Hab. 3). Each sermon/chapter is both scholarly and readable, convicting and at times humorous. The second section seeks to apply the lessons and models of those six songs to our worship. He writes that "there are four themes in each of these six scriptural songs: 1. The Lord is at the center; that is, our God is addressed, adored, and 'enlarged'. 2. His mighty acts in salvation history are recounted. 3. His acts of judgments are rejoiced in. 4. His ways of living (practical wisdom) are encouraged." (pp. 113). Then through what was some very thorough research of both popular hymns and praise music, he compares their content to these themes and finds that many of

our hymns and praise songs fail to follow these themes. In fact, as O'Donnell makes clear, many are so vague, that their content would not be objectionable to a Moslem, a Mormon, or a Jewish person! He makes it clear that even in many churches where the whole counsel of God is preached from the pulpit, something less than the Gospel is proclaimed in our worship:"Gordon Fee once said, 'Show me a church's songs and I'll show you their theology.' Today's most popular songs...show a theology that is un-Christian at worst and biblically unbalanced at best. Not only the texts, but also the themes of the songs of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, David, and Habakkuk are too often neglected. And such neglect has had its effect. By turning from substantive songs that well reflect these texts and themes to what Carl Schalk calls 'Twinkie Tunes with a Ding-Dong Theology,' a generation has gotten theologically fat and forgetful." (pp.176).Pastor O'Donnell goes beyond merely criticism, but attempts to offer a positive remedy as well. For the final section, he takes each of the six OT songs, and has written original lyrics to them, set to some familiar hymn tunes. This I thought was a perfect conclusion to the book. Rather than merely showing how many of our hymns and praise songs were Biblical deficient, he offers a path for how to move forward and gives tangible, singable examples of what he hopes that God's people will do to improve and re-energize our musical canon. Here's hoping that this book is widely read, discussed, and applied in our churches!

This book was described as a book of lyrics with some of the music included. Actually, there were a few lyrics and less music. I could not use it at all. I think that this person had his own agenda in mind - not research from scholars about the subject.

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