

## **Season 6, Episode 10: Singing the Scriptures: A Conversation with Caroline Cobb**

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**Felicity:** We're so thankful for crossway who have sponsored this season in the podcast. Daily Joy is a yearlong set of devotions going through the Bible, written by a wonderful range of people designed specifically for women and lots of women have contributed a portion I've been enjoying dipping in over recent weeks and particularly in joined the way each different writer helps open my eyes to a different facet of the scriptures. A valuable book to have by your bedside to help build you up in faith as you're guided through the Bible over the course of a year. This bonus episode, we are welcoming Caroline Cobb to talk with us. She is a singer songwriter who loves to sing God's big story. Her songs are scripture rich. Sarah and I have both been enjoying her music a lot over the last couple of years. We really hope you're going to enjoy this conversation and be encouraged in your faith as you listen to Caroline and how she's gone about writing these scripture filled songs.

**Sarah:** Welcome to two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Sarah. I live in the UK. This is my sister Felicity. She lives in the US. And we are so excited that for our bonus episode, we've got Caroline Cobb joining us. Caroline, welcome. It's wonderful to have you on the podcast today.

**Caroline:** Thank you guys for having me.

**Sarah:** Well, we're really excited to have you and we're going to be thinking about scripture and song. Caroline, tell us about yourself. What do you get up to with your time?

**Caroline:** We live in Texas. I'm married to Nick and we have three kids who are 12, 10 and eight. And what I do with my days, besides just being in our community and being involved in our church and all the rest, is I do music. And what I love to do with music is to use music to tell God's story, to drop in on different moments in scripture and kind of paint this big story so that people can rehearse it as they're going about their everyday, just listening in their car or whatever they're doing. But that's my hope behind the music that I do.

**Felicity:** We love it. We love your music and the scriptural resonance of it. Before we get into, I want to explore that more with you, but, I mean, we're missing a key ingredient here, which is how do you feel about tea and biscuits?

**Caroline:** Yes, I was thinking about that earlier and I said that I think my most familiar biscuit is really like, biscuits and gravy. So I don't really even know what it quite even is, but I think that I'm used to coffee and that kind of biscuit, but I think that I'd love to have biscuits and tea with you guys someday, so let's make it happen.

**Sarah:** I think one of the realizations of this season has been that a coffee biscuit is like a tea biscuit, isn't it?

**Caroline:** Yeah, almost.

**Felicity:** Yes. Like a classy coffee biscuit, but I would say there's a wider range out there that has absolutely feel like we.

**Caroline:** Need to prioritize this. So next time I'm in Chicago area or next time I come to the UK, we're going to make this happen.

**Felicity:** We would love that.

**Caroline:** This is important.

**Felicity:** I'm glad you got that priority is right? Yeah, absolutely. I love just the way that you explained what you do there in terms of how you do music. And there are loads of singers and singer songwriters out there who are producing excellent music, but we feel like you would do something slightly different with your music in relation to the way in which you sing Scripture. So how did you come to the point where you're at now, where this is the way in which you do your music? I love the way that you said you drop into God's story and you're hoping to enable people to be in that story in their every day, to kind of have that in the background or the forefront. Can you kind of talk us a little how?

**Caroline:** Yeah. I always loved God's Word. Once I started following Him, I feel like that was something that I loved to do, is just be in God's word. But I also loved to write songs and so at some point along the way, I kind of started to explore that. And then when I was turning 30, I decided to give myself a songwriting goal. And I'm not really sure where the goal came from, it just kind of popped into my mind to make the goal to write a song for every book of the Bible in a year. And I'm thankful to God for that little decision because that was such a transformative year for me to do this as a practice, both like, as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus, but also as a songwriter. And obviously it sent me on trajectory. Right? And so then I started playing those songs for other people and doing households and things like that. And then I decided to record the first kind of storytelling album called *The Blood and the Breath* and did that. I saw that. And this is such a deep I could continue to do this again and again and really, like, turn the diamond, if you will, and look at the same big story from a bunch of different angles. And so each album kind of has a theme that it's tracing usually from creation all the way to Christ's return. So there was *The Blood And The Breath* and that one's kind of about redemption and death and resurrection, and then there was a *Home and a Hunger*, which is more about kind of that between time, between the already and the not yet. And then I did an Advent album and also one about Jesus that was like a zooming in, if you will. And then right now, I'm working on one on the Psalms and it's more about it's called the poetry of prayer and it's more about how we respond to the Lord and to his story. But it's got laments and it's got really joyful songs and everything in between and so I'm really excited about that too. But that's kind of how it started and it's something that I can't really it's such a deep well and sort of this faucet that I can't quite turn off. I write personal songs to you and I put some of those out there about motherhood and all the rest. But I think this is what is kind of my life work. What I love to do is just tell God's story, especially through music that's.

**Sarah:** So wonderful to hear. I'd love to hear more about. You just said you wrote a song to go with every book of the Bible in that year. That's extraordinary. That's amazing. Talk us through some of that process of kind of steeping yourself in particular book of the Bible because that's what we love to do on this podcast. We're all about that in terms of just really wanting to kind of soak in a particular book for a season and let it really speak to our hearts and kind of drive it home to our hearts. Talk us through your process of then writing a song on the back of that.

**Caroline:** Yeah, I love that you guys do that. I wouldn't necessarily write a song about the whole of the book, but if there was like a particular passage or a particular story, I would just try to drop myself into that story. Maybe the sermon was about that on Sunday. And so I felt like my antenna was up all the time, especially that year. And hopefully even now still, as I'm just doing Bible study or at church or in my own reading time or kind of how I see God teaching me to have that antenna up, like, what can I write about next? And then in terms of process, just dropping into that story, I think being a songwriter is really fun because we have so many tools in our tool belts. I mean, you have all the writers tools which like alliteration and point of view and perspective. Maybe I'll write this song from God's perspective or maybe I'll be Eve in this song and how did she feel. But then you also have melody and kind of the way that words sound in your mouth when you're saying them out loud. And so I always just try to think through not only what does this story say and how does it point us to Christ? And how would I teach it if I was teaching this in Bible study? And try to be faithful to God's word, but then also kind of engage the imagination through melody and point of view and imagery and all the things that we can play with as people who are creating something. And so again, that was just super formative for me. I think seeing the connections to across Scripture, how this story here hyperlinks with this story here and this passage in Isaiah and there's so much to say and these songs could be so long. And so it's also trying to figure out how to work within the limits of a song. Like I have three verses and maybe a bridge and of course, how do I walk someone through this story and help them to imagine themselves there or to really rehearse it and get it into their bones as they're listening?

**Felicity:** I love that. Get it into your bones. That's exactly it, isn't it?

**Sarah:** You do that so well. Yeah, I just want to say thank you. You do it so well. In terms of us walking us through Scripture and letting it kind of soak into our own hearts. You've got a real gift.

**Felicity:** I love what you're saying there about engaging our imaginations in order to then be able to access this scriptural story, like God's big story. And I think that's so key that there's so many ways in which we can get this into our bones. It's not just simply being in Bible study or reading the Bible, but actually as you take scripture and put it to music. And then I feel like our hearts reverberate in different ways with the same story when we use our imagination in that way. And I think that's just so rich. And I think that's really key for us as Christians to engage on a wider level with the creativity that goes with that and for it to be deeped in the word. But then as we engage with that, how our hearts respond and how our creative minds respond and all that.

**Sarah:** Can I ask a practical question on that in terms of just making time for that creativity to happen? I presume you've had young kids while this has all been happening, and I think a lot of us would resonate with wanting to do that. I long to be more creative in a lot of different ways and yet the kind of head space feels so limited sometimes. How did you make that a priority as well as parenting and just alongside life?

**Caroline:** Yeah, that's a good question. I think it's like swimming upstream. I think especially now, the more we have coming at us in terms of just noise on social media, and I wouldn't throw it out, but it also just is distracting sometimes. I think it is hard to make that space. In terms of that year of writing from the Bible, I had Mother's Day out for my daughter one day a week and then in some other seasons I just asked a friend, can you keep my kids? We lived in California for a while and the child care was just so expensive. And so I was like, just ask a friend, can you keep my kids for 3 hours? A week. And I would just make sure that I only wrote songs during that time because when we had a little chunk of time, we can say like, oh, I should go to the grocery. It'd be a lot easier to go to the grocery without my kid or I should clean my bathtub. But I think I kind of made this choice for good or bad, to go to the grocery with my kids and to not clean my bathtub. I just had a dirty bathtub and this season my kids are all in school and so I have a lot more time and space. But music has kind of expanded where I have to kind of wear the manager hat a lot. And I've been trying to be better about carving out time where I really do just create. And there's something about saying not just, I have an hour, but I have a chunk of time this whole morning and I'm not going to look at email and I'm not going to look at social media, and I'm not going to check the boxes. And that's really important. But I think also just keeping our antenna up and thinking about reading good stories and having good conversations with people and spending time with the Lord is also really important because if we're not kind of filling our tank, then nothing is going to come out that's connected to Him that's deep. And I have seasons where I'm better at that and then seasons where my kind of striving personality can kind of just make me go, go and not rest. And so that's sort of always something I'm trying to preserve and remember and trust God enough to rest and to listen and just to be and create.

**Sarah:** That's really helpful. Thank you.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I love the way that you talked earlier about hyperlinking between the different books in the Bible. And I think something that's really evident in your music is how you when you have your Christmas album, but it's drenched in Isaiah or prophecy or the whole Bible story. I feel like your songs bring in the riches of the whole council of God in some ways. I know that's even just through the odd reference. And I think that's really helpful in terms of us thinking it is the whole Bible story that then informs our understanding of that bit of scripture. That can feel, though quite when we even just say that out loud, that feels quite daunting to even on a personal level. So you're talking there about having your tank filled and listening and resting and waiting on the Lord in that way. Scripture is big and God's big story is big, right. How do you kind of distill that? What's the process for yourself and then as it kind of comes out, without being too big, too dense, too intense, you know what I mean?

**Caroline:** Yeah, I don't really know. I don't think it's like I'm going to sit down and try to understand how everything connects. I think it really is like how Jen Wilkin has talked about making small deposits over time and then as looking for the connections to like looking up

the cross references and seeing, why is this making me go to Ephesians? I'm in Genesis right now. What's there? And I think, honestly, that's so practical and small. But as we let scripture interpret itself and kind of bounce around according to the cross references even or look for Christ in a passage, not forcing him into one, but knowing that the whole Bible really does hinge on him as the Linchpin start to COVID how? One big story, I think. Of course, maybe if someone's like what do you even mean by that? I do think it's nice to have sort of a trellis, some kind of paradigm where, you know, there's sort of this flow. Chapter one is about this. Chapter two, chapter three, and the end of the story is about this. And when you have that kind of structure, you can put pieces into that structure and say, like, this does all fit into a form. So finding maybe a book that's about biblical theology, I think Nancy Guthrie has some really good books where it kind of helps you see, like, I can trace an image from the beginning to the end, and from creation fall redemption to consummation. And so I think having a little bit of a trellis upon which your little understanding, your vine of understanding can grow and cling to is really helpful too. That was helpful.

**Felicity:** Yeah, that's really helpful. I think that's right. And I think even just bringing it down to even some practicalities like that just makes it a little less painful to kind of even get the Bible open and then to understand what is being said.

**Caroline:** Is there there a quote where it's like and I feel this I mean, even as you said that, I'm like there's so much of the Bible that I don't understand. I'm doing this Psalms project and I'm like, rant. I don't have any impregatory Psalms on this project because it's like I don't quite understand. I kind of in my head understand what we're supposed to do with it, but I don't get it. So there's a quote that says something to the effect of and I don't know who said it, but scripture is deep enough for this elephant to wade in. But it's also like we can go in as a little mouse and just drink. And so there's always more depths to plumb and we'll never get to the bottom. And yet at the same time, anyone can read the Bible, anyone can open it and understand it through the Spirit. And that is such a mystery, but we don't outgrow it, and we also don't need to be intimidated by it even at the same time. Pretty great.

**Sarah:** Let's talk about Christmas briefly. So this episode is coming out just as Advent kind of gets underway. And Christmas the busy Christmas season for a lot of us who are listening. Have you got a favorite Christmas carol?

**Caroline:** I love to sing Okamo. Comb Emanuel. You know, those beautiful minor chords. But until he appeared and the soul felt it's worth, there's some beautiful lines in Christmas carols, that line, and then he's coming to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found. Love that line. Anyway, I love Christmas carols.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I do. I'm excited. I feel they get a raw deal, don't they? Just having one month of the year, I feel like we need to bring them in a bit earlier, but swiftly. Your household, they do, yeah.

**Felicity:** We've been going since the start of September. Oh, wow.

**Caroline:** Maybe we should all do that.

**Felicity:** I don't know. It's my husband. He's really into it, and I think partly for the reason that you're saying the words of carols are just so gospel rich, aren't they?

**Caroline:** Right.

**Felicity:** Yeah. I feel like we know there's quite a big ask, though, to keep the Christmas for three months. I don't know.

**Sarah:** Yeah. So we're coming into this busy season. Caroline, can you give us any kind of just ways that you find helpful to kind of let your heart dwell on God's word around this time of year and yeah, just how song helps you to do that? Anything that will just help people to kind of recalibrate their hearts, I guess, with the truth of the gospel.

**Caroline:** Yeah, it's so hard. I think our culture really pushes against being awake to what it's really about. But I think the idea of Advent being a season where we're stirring, the point of it is to stir up our longing for Christ. I think a lot of times people want to push the joyfulness of Christmas into Advent, and I'm not, like, opposed to being joyful in December or something like that, or singing a Christmas carol in December. Not only Advent songs full of longing. But I do think on a practical level, I've been trying to think through, like, what are

the things and the traditions and the rhythms that help me and help my family actually stir up a longing for Christ? And instead of what the culture would want us to do is just kind of put a bow on everything. But why don't we just let ourselves feel the ache of all the upheaval we've felt over the past few years, or death and mortality and all these things? Because when Christ comes, he is the answer to all of that. And so we kind of want to do things that are going to whet our appetite. And for me, that's kind of some things out, and it's not because they're just like, do I feel like I need to do that? If I do that, I'm not going to have time to be intentional about stirring my heart to long for Christ and my family's heart to long for Christ. Whereas the countdowns and those types of things are actually like building anticipation. Those are the things that I want to be intentional to do. So I don't know how to be more practical than that. But I think that's a question that's been in my mind is, number one, to look at Advent and Christmas as sort of like this darkness, and we're, like, waiting for the sun to rise and to kind of be able to acknowledge the darkness even in the joyful time of Christmas when culture would just say, like, shop and all these things. So if you feel that ache to lean into that. And secondly, to not over busy ourselves with a bunch of things that we're supposed to do. And to really think, what do I really want to do that would help my family long for Christ to come and be so excited when we wet our appetite? That way, when Christmas actually comes, it's not like, cool, finally it's over. It's like, yes, it's here. And then in the church calendar, they celebrate it for twelve days. Twelve days of Christmas. So what kind of longing do we need to in order to actually feel joy for twelve days and just feast for twelve days? I don't know. I mean, I don't personally celebrate for twelve days, but it's that idea of, like, we want to stir up our longing so that day of joy is amplified and made more beautiful because we couldn't wait for it to come, because we know how much we need it. So that's kind of what I've been thinking about. Awesome. Yeah.

**Sarah:** That's wonderful. And your Advent album, *Seed in the Sunrise*, is that right? Yes. You do that. You stir those longings and you sing what you've just been talking about, and it's really powerful, and I've really enjoyed listening to it, particularly when did you release it?

**Caroline:** Right in 2020 or right after?

**Sarah:** Okay. I thought I remember listening to it in 2020, and it was a really powerful, really powerful kind of tune to our 2020 Christmas. So thank you.

**Caroline:** In 2020 really did make us ache more than other years had. So I was thankful it came out during that time.

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Felicity:** And we would highly recommend all of Caroline's albums. We love the advent one. And there's also on Spotify, you have this brilliant thing, a playlist that is all of this, that you kind of done the story of all of Scripture in one playlist. I had a sort of four hour journey a few months ago, and I just listened to it all. It was just brilliant. Like to have it all in one. So I highly recommend that as well. So we love your music. We're so thankful for the way in which you're putting Scripture into our ears and into our hearts. Thank you so much. And yeah, we'd encourage everyone to go and check out Caroline's songs.

**Caroline:** Thank you guys.

**Felicity:** Thank you so much for being with us.

**Caroline:** Yeah, thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

**Sarah:** Thank you so much for listening. This episode has been sponsored by Crossway.