

Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

By Tom Eggleston

Colossians 3:16 is one of my favorite “musical” scripture verses. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

I think this verse suggest 3 important aspects:

1. **Teach & Admonish**—The words of Christ can sink into our hearts and minds AS we teach and instruct through music. I think the great hymns and choruses of our faith do that in such a powerful way. The sound theology of these hymns and songs help to reinforce our faith and teach us the principles of living in a Christ-like manner. After all, music IS the universal language. It can penetrate our hearts like nothing else. Even Alzheimer’s patients who don’t know their own children, are somehow able to sing entire verses of hymns from memory. I have also talked with many people who remember the music that is sung at their conversion experience more than the message that was preached. This does not diminish the message, but it does speak to the powerful effect that music has on our lives.
2. **Balance**—I think that music ministry needs to have balance. Just as the scripture tells us to sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we should strive to sing a variety of music that can stretch us and challenge our spiritual lives. That translates to scripture songs, hymns, and choruses and even new, original songs that bring new spiritual insights. We are encouraged in the Psalms to “sing a new song to the Lord.” I also think that we music ministers need to find creative ways to present this music that will keep it “fresh and alive” for our believers and non-believers.
3. **Gratitude**—An overriding element of our singing should always be done with joy and gratitude for what Christ has done in our lives. I have observed many choirs who sing beautifully but don’t reflect the joy of Christ in their faces. It cannot be a false offering of joy, but must come from the overflow of our deep gratitude to Christ and his unconditional love. If this is done, then we can sing with “true” joy.