

Musical Teachers

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

Recently I was asked by a fine young pastor to recommend some books on teaching children in the church family. I sought to refer him to a couple of websites that contained titles of books appropriate to his concern. Then I returned to my task of writing a devotional.

As I looked for a text to begin the mediation, my mind was turned to our verse for today. As I studied the verse I saw that our singing in the home and church is to be a teaching tool for those who hear the “psalms, hymns and songs” we sing.

When my children were young I would occasionally sing to—or with—they as I did their evening devotionals. The hymns we sang all pointed to the Lord Jesus and His great love for sinners. So I sought to teach the “message of Christ” in song.

You will note in our verse today that the words used

in the singing of the early church were full of “the message of Christ”. This ought to be the focus of all the words of our hymns and spiritual songs sung in the home and church.

Charles Wesley and his brother John published many hymnals. Charles wrote most of the hymns and John did editing as both of them were in the habit of adding Scripture references at the end of every line to each hymn. Their hymns were a rich treasure of biblical truth. These two brothers were responsible for teaching the church much of “...the message of Christ...” through their hymns.

I find that many times when I ponder some truth or another from Scripture that some great hymn comes to mind that reinforces the teaching. The great carols of Christmas, and the anthems of Easter stand out as rich tools to teach sacred themes to us.

Next Lord’s Day—as you sing

praise to the Lord—seek to identify the Scriptures referred to in the words sung. Look under the title of the hymn and see if a Scripture reference is given. A song sung in church that does not remind us of Scripture texts should not be sung.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:15 (NIV) “...I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.” Do everything possible to understand the teaching of Scripture in the songs sung at your church.

Recognize that as the others sing the words they are “teaching” you spiritual truth concerning Christ. Be a willing student and take to heart what is ministered in music. Go with an expectant heart next Lord’s Day and have a mind eager to absorb the Scriptures taught in the music of the church.

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