

Philosophy of Church Music

Southeast Valley Bible Church

August 2019

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16, ESV)

This verse explains our musical priorities as a church.

Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You Richly

The Word of Christ is the biblical teaching about Jesus and His work. It is the Gospel, the Good News, the announcement of God's work in Christ to reconcile all things to Himself and to redeem a people for His own possession, to the praise of His glorious grace. The central character of this message is Christ, the one who is worshipped as the Lamb who was slain. When we read the Bible, the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to see the beauty and glory of God most clearly in His Son. Because of this, a church that is committed to seeing Jesus and letting His message dwell among them richly will also be committed to hearing God's truth in the Bible. That's why we place such a heavy emphasis on the Bible when we come together as a church. In our music ministry, then, we never want draw attention away from the Bible in general or the Gospel in particular. Instead, we want every song we sing to cultivate a greater love and reverence for God's Word.

Teaching and Admonishing

It's important that when we come together as a church, we are eagerly anticipating God to speak to us through His Word. One way we can *let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly* is by regularly teaching and admonishing one another using music. This means the Word of Christ must be lyrically present and clear in the songs that we sing. When we sing rich truth-saturated songs, God's truth begins to shape our hearts, minds, wills, and emotions to be more like Jesus.

One Another

We don't come to church to be alone with God, we come to church to be in God's presence *with* other believers! Our singing is an extension of that wonderful reality. Our music is not designed to merely be performed by a few while the rest of the congregation sits back and listens. The *teaching and admonishing* happens in the context of *one another*. We need to sing truth *to* one another! Because of this, we make sure that we place a special emphasis on congregational singing in our music. Come ready to sing out! God is not interested in all of his children sounding like the singers on the radio; however, He *is* interested in hearing the song that He put in your heart when He saved you, whatever that sounds like! If you're not used to singing in public, it might take a while to get used to it. That's ok! Listen to our Spotify playlist and try to sing along; you might be surprised how quickly you can catch on.

Singing Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs

The music that we are using to *teach and admonish one another* comes in all colors, shapes, and sizes. There are different types of songs, and that's ok! At our church, we use lots of old hymns, new worship songs, and everything in between. *Every sort of song* is to be used in the process of teaching and admonishing one another. God has created us to be re-creators. Because of that, there is a wide variety of musical expression in different times and cultures that we can take advantage of as Christians. For our gatherings as a church, we want to use musical styles that will be the most helpful for singing together. Sometimes we will sing with just our voices. Other times, we will have a few guitars, a piano, and a rhythm section. The style is never the most important piece of the puzzle, though. As a church, we want to focus on the Christ and His truth that we are singing about when we come together, not whether or not the music is our personal favorite style.

With Thankfulness in Your Hearts

It is not only important that we sing all sorts of truth-saturated, Christ-exalting songs to one another. It is also important that we are deeply thankful for who God is and what He has done. It is never enough to be content with doctrinally precise lyrics. Instead, we must be aware of our inner disposition toward God. Are we undone by our sin against Him? Are we aware of the magnitude of Christ's cross? Are we overwhelmed by the power of His resurrection? Do we long for the fellowship of His sufferings? Are we satisfied in Him? Are we thankful for all He has done on our behalf or have we grown cold toward the realities of the Gospel? In our music, we want the truth that we sing to deeply affect us and motivate us to lives of thankfulness.

To God

Lastly, our thankful singing of truth-filled songs about Christ and His work to one another every week has as its ultimate aim the glory of God. We want the songs of our church to put on grand display all of the beauty and goodness and worth of God, most clearly visible in the life and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Our songs are sung *to one another* in teaching while simultaneously being aimed *to God* in ultimate glory. We want every song to present God as glorious as He truly is. Our songs will draw the attention away from us and place it onto God, where it truly belongs.

We want our music to be:

- Christ-Centered,
- Spirit-Filled,
- Gospel-Saturated,
- Doctrinally-Rich,
- Congregationally-Driven,
- Stylistically-Diverse,
- Emotionally Engaging, and
- **God Glorifying.**