

How Psalms and Hymns Significantly Spark Your Faith

Paul's epistle to the Colossians explained that "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" can be used to "teach and admonish one another" as we "let the word of Christ dwell in (us) richly, in all wisdom" (Col. 3:16).

He similarly taught the Ephesians (5:18-20) this trilogy of musical communication ("psalms and hymns and spiritual songs") is an expression of being "filled with the Spirit" and a means of "making melody in your heart to the Lord." He also explained that the content of the lyrics should be in the context of "giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."

Israel's King David was an experienced musician, having learned to play a stringed instrument skillfully while caring for smelly sheep in the fields. As a teen, he had enough reputation to be recommended to King Saul to play his elementary, harp-like instrument to soothe the king's soul and find relief from his unrest.

- **"Psalms" are scriptural lyrics, in song.** David accumulated accounts of his Godward reflections and aspirations. Later, he or his royal music director put them to music as "psalms." These became righteous reminders to read and sing. The Jews learned to sing collections of these psalms at various times and places. Even today, we are encouraged and taught by these same "psalms" put to music.
- **"Hymns" are humanly inspired lyrics, in song.** They might be said to be songs which are about "Him," meaning God. The lyrics are about Him, His character and His actions.

Hymn lyrics are great expressions of biblical truth and doctrine about God. As songs, they are often sung boldly, with great expression.

- **“Spiritual songs” may be expressions from our spirits** and not our souls (human thought). Paul taught that he often prayed “in the spirit,” where his mind was “unfruitful” and the words were unknown to him (1 Cor. 14:14-15). “Spiritual song” is the same thing, but with a spirit-supplied melody and lyrics in an unlearned language. Pastor Jack Hayford describes this experience of a spiritual song as “impromptu rhythmic lyrics given by the Holy Spirit in one’s own language or in ‘tongues.’”

Another kind of Christian music is commonly called “Gospel music.” I think of these as “testimony songs,” because they usually convey testimonies of personal experience and related Gospel truths. Like David’s psalms, they express real emotion, sincere aspirations and deep passion. They draw from the inspiration of life and Scriptures and declare biblical truths and doctrine.

Consequently, many have been schooled in the truths of the Good News of Jesus Christ (the “gospel”) more from the songs they have heard and sung than the sermons they may have heard or the books they have read.

Yes, Christianity is a singing faith! Let me conclude with an example of a significant scripture and the inspiring, related lyrics of an older gospel song: “Day by Day”

Scripture: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9a).

Day by day and with each passing moment/ Strength I find to meet my trials here.

Trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment/I’ve no cause for worry or for fear.

*He whose heart is kind beyond all measure/Gives unto each day
what He deems best,*

*Lovingly its part of pain and pleasure/ Mingled with peace
and rest.*

*Help me then in every tribulation/ So, to trust Your
promises, O Lord,*

*That I lose not faith's sweet consolation/ Offered me within
Your holy Word.*

*Help me. Lord, when toil and trouble meeting/ E'er to take,
as from a Father's hand,*

*One by one, the day's, the moments fleeting/ Till I reach the
promised land. (Text: Caroline Sandell Berg; translated by
Andrew L. Skoog) {eo}*

*Ordained to the ministry in 1969, **Gary Curtis** is a graduate of
LIFE Bible College at Los Angeles (soon to become Life Pacific
University at San Dimas, California). He has taken graduate
courses at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois and Fuller
Seminary in Pasadena, California. Gary served as part of the
pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the First Foursquare
Church of Van Nuys, California, for 27 years (1988-2015), the
last 13 years as the vice president of Life on The Way
Communications Inc., the church's not-for-profit media
outreach. Now retired, Gary and his wife have been married for
50 years and live in Southern California. They have two
married daughters and five grandchildren.*