

Using Music to Truly Worship and Teach God's Word

by Doug Nichols

Once I spoke in three services at a church that emphasized discipleship and the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

The music, however, was anything but true to God's Word, no emphasis on discipleship or following Christ.

How can there be such a difference from the preaching and the music?

The Word of God builds up, encourages, strengthens, convicts, challenges and gives glory to God. If our music is filled with God's Word, it will do the same.

In the 1700s, John Newton was a well-known pastor. This former slave trader was diligent about getting the Word of God into the hearts of people. In the new biography about this great man, "John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace," the author, John Aitken, writes:

"At the beginning of his curacy in Olney, Newton used the hymns of other writers such as Isaac Watts or John and Charles Wesley for this purpose. The first recipients of this biblical teaching through hymns had been the children of the parish. Over two hundred of them came on Thursday mornings to a weekly meeting held in the Great House (Lord Dartmouth's unused mansion) on the edge of the village. When Newton realized how effective the singing and learning by heart of hymns could be as a spiritual teaching aid for children, he expanded the practice to the adult members of his congregation who attended three other weekly prayer meetings in the Great House. Although the hymn singing there proved popular, it was only occasionally extended into the Olney church itself because the eighteenth-century Church of England frowned upon anything other than metrical Psalms (the Psalms of the Bible set to song meters) being sung within consecrated buildings." (p. 224-225)

Let's encourage pastors, music directors and worship leaders of our churches to spend more time in carefully selecting choruses, songs and hymns that are filled with God's Word.