

DEVOTIONAL

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Adding Diversity to the Musical Banquet Table

Did the great missionary Paul get involved in the worship music programs for the churches he served? The answer is a resounding yes! Consider Paul's words to the congregation in Colossae:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.

~Colossians 3:16

Paul mentions the same three categories, "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," in his words on worship to the Ephesian Christians (5:19). Why mention three distinct categories of music in his inspired instructions on worship?

The Colossian and Ephesian churches were multi-cultural churches! Paul wanted to make sure that each cultural group within the congregations had worship music that resonated deeply in their hearts. For the Jewish converts, that meant their cherished psalms—the hymnbook of Israel. For the Greek converts, there would probably be music in the style of the religious music (hymns) of the Greek cultures. Paul's third category, "spiritual songs" (from which the word for African American Spirituals can be traced) was apparently a catchall category which could include any of the contemporary sacred music styles of the day!

Our congregations today would do well to follow Paul's example of giving every culture we serve a place at the "musical banquet table." Luther wrote that Paul "bids the Colossians (3:16) heartily

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to sing spiritual songs and psalms unto the Lord in order that thereby God's word and Christian doctrine might be used and practiced in diverse ways." May the Lord guide us to make effective, inclusive worship music choices as we battle with the devil for eternal souls!

Heavenly Father, help us to "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom," as we use your Word in music to create and strengthen faith by the power of the Spirit . With gratitude in our hearts to you, Amen.

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