Getting Good Theology

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If we are writing songs to be used in worship, they need to speak about God. If we are going to write songs about God, then we need to know Him and know about Him. Theology is simply everything we know about God. The word theology comes from the Greek ‘Theos’, meaning God, and -logia, meaning utterances or sayings. In other words, the things that are said about God.

The Bible

The most trustworthy things said about God are the things He has said Himself. Our starting point for theology is always Scripture. Scripture is the primary way that God has revealed Himself to man. Even Jesus, who was God revealed in the flesh, is revealed to us now through the Scriptures. The Bible is the Word of God, and even the bits that appear to be written by men, Paul tells Timothy, are “God-breathed”.

The first key to having good theology in your life, and therefore your songs, will be a good knowledge of the Scriptures. If you are a new Christian, or struggle with the discipline of reading the Bible regularly, find a Bible reading plan that can help you establish that discipline in your life.

As you read the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to make it alive to you. You will find the Scriptures truly

are living and active, just like Paul says. Make notes of Scriptures that speak to you and use these notes when you sit down to write songs.

The Apostles' Doctrine

Second to the Scripture, we have the apostles' doctrine. In Acts 2, we also find that the early church was devoted to what the apostles taught. Often in the Bible we see how Jesus or men anointed by God opened the Scriptures for others and revelation came. This still happens today. When those who are recognised as apostles, teachers and elders amongst us teach the Word of God, revelation will come.

If we attempt to forge our theology alone, inevitably it will end in error. However, when we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, we can know that we are thinking about God the right way.

This is a key way that our personal theology is formed and is secondary to the Bible only because whatever is taught must still agree with Scripture. No doctrine of men should ever add to or take away from the Bible. Scripture trumps all.

Take a notebook to church with you and as you listen to the preaching, write notes. Re-listen to messages your church makes available online. Take down key phrases that speak to you and revisit those notes when you sit down to write songs.

Encounters with God

A third way we learn about God is by meeting Him. In the Bible, people who met God received revelation about Him. We too are able to meet with God, because of Jesus, who has gone before us into God's presence.

When you spend time worshipping, expect to receive revelation by the Holy Spirit. Have a note book handy and write down ideas and thoughts about God that come to you as you worship Him.

This is another way that our personal theology is formed. It is important to test these revelations against Scripture (God will never contradict Himself), and we should check that these revelations are in harmony with the apostles' doctrine, to avoid moving into error. Often songs can come from these moments of personal revelation. Many of the songs in Scripture were sung immediately after God had spoken or appeared to someone, or after something that God had done.

The Natural World

Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork”. In Romans 1:20, Paul tells us, “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made they can clearly see his invisible qualities- his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.”

Nature is another way we learn about God. God created everything and, like any great artist, God has put something of Himself into all He has made.

Even though the sin of Adam caused all of creation to come under the curse, we are still able to see God reflected in the world around us. In the Bible we see nature used to describe aspects of God. For example, “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout … So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth” (Isaiah 55:10,11). The water cycle is something that God created and it teaches us about Him.

Whenever you are out and about in nature, working in your garden or watching something on the Discovery Channel, expect the Holy Spirit to speak to you about God. This is one way that we can learn about Him. Again, it is important to test these revelations against Scripture and we should make sure our thoughts are in agreement with the apostles’ doctrine to avoid moving into error. Nature is rich with song-writing potential, so much so that if we remain silent, the rocks themselves will cry out!