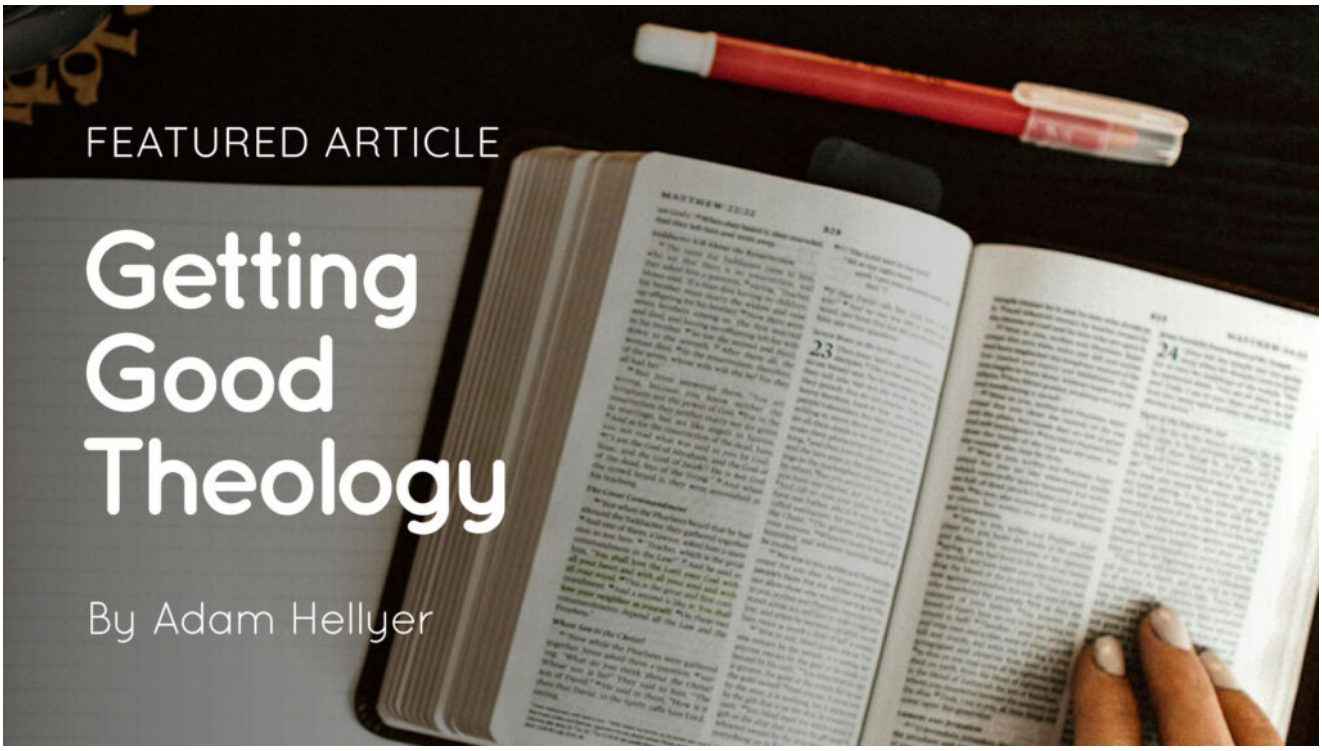
Using Good Theology

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Incorporating good theology into your song doesn't have to be difficult and it doesn't have to mean using complicated words that no one understands. Theology can be something as simple as, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Revelation 4:11), or, "But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high" (Psalm 3:3). There are no big words here that need explaining, yet the verses are rich with meaning and truth about God. Of course, it's okay to use big theological words every now and again in songs, but make sure you balance them with everyday language.

Remember that not all of the people we are writing for have had theological training. Avoid writing a "shopping-list" song which just catalogues all God's excellent qualities without connecting them to our experience of Him. If in your song you want to say that Jesus is amazing, also say why He is amazing. If in your song you want to say that Jesus is faithful, also say how He has been faithful. In the Bible, in the book of Revelation, the angels and the elders sing to the lamb, "You are worthy", but then they say why, "because with Your blood you have purchased men for God". We too, as we write songs, should ground people's theology by connecting who God is with what God has done.

Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors and similes are very popular in poetry and song writing. A simile is when one thing is compared to another using the words “as” or “like”. A metaphor sees two things compared, but without the use of “as” or “like”. The Bible uses similes: “The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze,” Revelation 1:14,15, “As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you,” Psalm 42:1. And the Bible also uses metaphors: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want,” Psalm 23:1, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer,” 2 Samuel 22:2. These Biblical metaphors and similes are safe to use in song because they have been established in scripture and are therefore God-breathed. Just be careful that when reading scripture you apply the metaphors about the right people. Sometimes there are things God says about us, “You are the apple of my eye”, and sometimes there are things said about Himself, “I am the bread of life”. Exercise some caution if coming up with your own metaphors and similes. You may find that your worship song describing God as the “Wind Beneath My Wings”, has a few Bette Midler fans giggling.

Seasonal Emphasis

In the life of any church or group of churches there will be seasons where the emphasis in teaching will be on certain aspects of who God is. In these seasons it is good for song writers to immerse themselves in this teaching and write songs that carry this theology into our times of worship. For example, the seasonal emphasis may be on the Father Heart of God. Then write songs about God as a good Father. A song about God coming in His wrath as a Judge may seem out of place in this season even though the theology is good. You can still write that song if you’re inspired to, but keep it in your folder till the season is right.

Hymn Books

Finally, get yourself an old hymn book. Many old hymn books are organised not alphabetically, but by theme. So you will find all the songs about the cross together, all the songs about the blood together and all the songs about Jesus’ return together. It is great to study how the old hymn writers wove theology into their hymns. While not all the hymns would work with the way we do worship today, many are great examples of men who knew the word, writing songs that really speak about God.