

Clothed with Compassion

Teaching, Admonishing, and Song

“And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

-Colossians 3:15b-16 (ESV)

How do you let the word of Christ dwell in you while teaching and admonishing? What does that look like in your daily lives? And what does that have to do with songs? For me, this looks like my discipleship relationships. I am both a discipler and a disciple.

On a mission trip to Honduras, I acted as a discipler. We tried to pray with every owner after the pet's surgery. When I noticed an owner was up the hill and had someone bring the pet to us, I felt called to go to the owner. The student with me was fluent in Spanish so I encouraged her to pray with the owner. She was timid and unsure so she asked me to pray, and she would translate. During the trip, I continued to encourage her to be bold. By the end, she was leading prayers with the owners and inviting others to join just as I had invited her. On the card the students gave me, this stood out from her “Most of all thank you for encouraging me to be bold.” How can you disciple someone else so they may be bold and share Christ with others?

As a disciple, I get together with two other ladies. One is our discipler and the other is my fellow disciple. Like Paul and Timothy, our discipler is just someone who is more mature in the Christian faith, who teaches and admonishes us. We do life together. What does this look like?

We regularly get together and check in on how our lives are going. How is our relationship with God, our spouses, and others. Do we regularly spend time with God and what does that look like? Where are we struggling and need help? What sin issues have cropped up that need addressed?

Sometimes the answers aren't apparent until we sit in a passage and discuss it. Currently we are doing a discovery Bible study where we pick a passage and go through a small selection of inductive study questions.

- What stood out to you or what did you not like?
- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about mankind?
- What does this say about the life God wants us to live?
- What will you do to act on what God is saying to you this week? (This is our I will... statement)
- Who can you share with this week about what God is teaching you?

As we read the passage, God might put something on our hearts that we have been struggling with and we discuss it as a group. Our discipler will ask probing questions to get us thinking and to help us figure out what might need to change or what action we might need to take. Ultimately, she challenges us to live grace filled lives reflecting who we are in Christ.

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We start by reading the passage aloud and many times my fellow disciple and I will look at each other and laugh. Why? Having both grown up listening to Christian music, we had the same song pop into our minds. This is one of many ways we connect not only to God and the passage but also to each other. Our discipler has come to enjoy these moments and laughs along with us when she realizes we had yet another song pop into our heads.

In the original Greek, this part of Colossians is one run on sentence. It was therefore up to translators to impart punctuation. In some translations there is no punctuation after wisdom. This makes it seem like we are to teach and admonish through songs. Other translations separate teaching and admonishing one another from singing to God with a thankful heart. I tend to read this verse more like the latter. Christianity can be such an intellectual venture that songs can help us connect emotionally resulting in an outpouring of thankfulness and grace. However, I also find that the meaning behind songs can teach as it would have in Paul's time.

Just think about children's songs and the simple but powerful words in those songs and how they stick with us. Or hymns like It is Well With my Soul. As I have grown in my faith, I have gone from liking Christian songs for their catchy tunes to preferring songs that have lyrics with meaning. Now that I have a child of my own, I am enjoying children's songs and remembering/realizing just how much meaning is in them. I find when I start my day off listening to songs with my daughter, I become more joyful and thankful throughout the day. I even tend to go around with a tune in my head finding myself singing it to God with a thankful heart.

- 1. How does your discipleship relationship teach and admonish you? Consider asking another Christian to disciple you if you don't have a discipler.**
- 2. What does it look like to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly?**
- 3. Read Ephesians 5:18-21. This is a parallel passage. In what ways is being filled with the Spirit vs being filled with the Word similar?**
- 4. How has worship influenced your walk and resulted in thankfulness to God?**
- 5. What will you do to act on what God is saying to you this week?**



Dr. Kara Song is an Ohio State grad, class of 2018 with roots in New England. It was during school that she found a heart for missions and a passion for CVM. After graduating, she moved to Northeast Ohio where she worked in a busy companion animal general practice for four years. During that time, she and Sadie, her Australian Shepherd mix, added to their family. First with a Golden Retriever named Caspian and then with her wonderful husband, Paul. They have since added a daughter, Liliانا, to their family as well. Despite thinking she would stay at her clinic for some time yet, Kara felt God calling her to join CVM where she now serves as the Northeast Region Representative. Email: ksong@cvm.org