

**Text:** Colossians 3:16

**Title:** The Richly Indwelling Word

**Truth:** Every Christian needs to know the Bible well.

**Date/Location:** Sunday December 6, 2015 at FBC

## Introduction

“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 grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

## I. The Word of Christ

- A. The message about Christ. This message is the gospel, good news about God and sinners. You are a sinner; you have offended the holy God with your sin; that offense brings the penalty of eternal death. But God graciously provided a gift in the person of God the Son, who we know as Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life to die as a perfect sacrifice and to stand in the place of sinners who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus. He rose again from the dead and commands all men everywhere to repent. If anyone calls upon His name this way, they will be saved; their sins will be forgiven, they will be justified, they will be made anew. Please carefully study these passages in the Bible to make sure of your salvation: Romans 3:10; 3:23-24; 3:28; 4:25; 5:1; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9-10; 10:13; 8:1.
- B. The word from Christ, the entire Bible. This Word of Christ is not only “the gospel.” Today it is common to reduce everything down to the gospel. This passage is about far more than that. The gospel is weighty, and should be addressed appropriately, but without leaving the rest of the Word of Christ undone (the principle of Matthew 23:23). The Word refers to the entirety of the word of God. It is the 66 book Bible. It is the inspired, inerrant, infallible word of the living God, the only written message from God to man. It is the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

## II. Richly Indwelling

- A. This is parallel with Ephesians 5:18 as you can see from the identical results, but these two passages do not say exactly the same thing. However, the parallels draw the concepts of Spirit-filling and Word-dwelling together so that we must understand the two to co-exist in the life of the believer. The Spirit of God works with and through the Word of God in your life. You cannot have some effusion or effect of the Spirit which is divorced from the Word of God, as often charismatics do. And you cannot have the Word of God without the Spirit of God, or you will have something like sterile liberalism that doesn't believe the Word of God in the end anyway.
- B. Passages that use the same “indwelling” verb: Romans 8:11 (of the Spirit dwelling in the believer), 2 Cor. 6:16 (of God dwelling in the believer), 2 Timothy 1:5 (faith dwelling in the believer), and 2 Timothy 1:14 (again the Spirit dwelling in the believer).

- C. So what does this mean? This is a command to know God’s Word. It cannot richly dwell in you if you don’t know it, read it to know it better, think about it, memorize it, meditate on it, or talk about it. No true progress can happen in the Christian life apart from major involvement in God’s Word.
- D. Note the word “richly.” It means abundantly. It is not a stingy word. God was rich toward us in mercy (Eph. 2:4). Christ has made us rich in salvation (2 Cor. 8:9). Joseph of Arimathea was rich (Matt. 27:57). You read about the rich young ruler and the rich tax collector Zaccheus (Luke 18:23, 19:2). The Holy Spirit is richly given to all believers (Titus 3:6). The Word of God must not be a “little bit” in your life, but “abundantly” in your life. If you think to yourself that you don’t know the Bible too well, there is one simple way to fix that: get into it: read it, listen to it, come to hear more preaching on it, ask me for homework, etc.

### III. Note the Correct Translation

- A. Many translations over-emphasize the singing aspect of this verse, translating it this way:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, **teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**

The idea conveyed by the above translation is that the teaching and admonishing happens primarily through song. That is functionally how many churches operate today, with a heavy emphasis on loud music and long portions of singing in their services.

- B. But the text really looks like this:

The word of Christ must dwell in you richly,  
 With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another,  
**By psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with grace singing in your hearts to God.**

The idea conveyed above is that the teaching and exhortation are modified by wisdom, and the singing participle goes with the various kinds of songs.

- C. By so saying, I am not suggesting that zero teaching happens in songs, or that the two categories are entirely exclusive of one another. Rather, the emphasis is on wise teaching and exhortation on the one hand, and singing on the other. The overlap between the two ‘hands’ is that song can and should teach and admonish sound doctrine in a memorable way as well as express gratitude toward God.

### IV. Results In...

Three results of the indwelling Word are envisioned by Paul as outlined below: teaching, admonishing, and singing. These have a *corporate* aspect and an individual aspect of participating in the corporate whole. They have to do with teaching and admonishing *one another* and singing in your *hearts* (plural). You cannot do those things by yourself alone.

A. Teaching. To keep things right.

1. **Definition:** To provide instruction, whether informally or formally. The same word is used in Matthew 28:20. We see then that the church's ministry is simply to carry out the Great Commission!
2. **Details:** *With all wisdom* applies to both the teaching and admonishing. The idea is to allow the indwelling Word to have its full effect by which you learn to skillfully apply the Word of God to life's circumstances.
3. **Application:** You have to be involved in the teaching ministry of your church—not necessarily always teaching, but learning, and able to teach those whom you are responsible to teach—your spouse, your children, and others under your charge.

B. Admonishing. When things go wrong.

1. **Definition:** When Christian teaching is not *observed* (see Matthew 28:20 again), it is necessary to advise someone to stop or avoid a sinful practice in their lives or to start a required practice. This can be done in a public setting with a group, or often privately in an individual setting.
2. **Application:** As our church covenant says, we agree to give and receive admonition with meekness and affection, and to be slow to take offense.

C. Singing. To praise God in all circumstances.

1. **Definition:** The main outlet for emotional aspects of the Christian life is largely taken up with song. Certainly there is joy in thanksgiving and talking of the Word of God as well. But to focus the emotional aspect on things like seeking to speak in tongues and other charismatic expressions is not in line with this verse. Remember that the song has to be Biblical. It is not just any song, or generic song that could maybe fit God in some kind of double-meaning scenario. It is song that clearly extols the true God.
2. **Details:** There are three types of songs that are mentioned. Psalms are songs of praise, which I understand to be Biblical Psalms (1-150). Hymns are songs with Biblical Christian content. Spiritual songs are also songs of praise to God. Perhaps choruses would fit into this category. I do not believe, as some do, that our singing has to be limited to the Biblical Psalms. The justification for my view is simply that there are two other categories listed along with the psalms.
3. **Application:** You need to remember that singing is an integral part of worshipping God. While some believe that song is the main part of worship while they relegate preaching to a small part, others relegate song to an insignificant spot and just want to hear the preacher. That might be flattering to the preacher, but it is not impressive to God. If you find yourself with an attitude that singing is optional, or coming in late because functionally you believe it is not important, then you show disrespect to the principle of this Scripture passage. Remember that singing in these ways is an expression of

the word of God dwelling in you. I know that you don't want it to be said of you that you do not permit the Word of God to dwell in you, and that the evidences are not apparent in your life.

4. With gratitude in your hearts. The important part of singing is not perfect pitch or harmony, but the heart. The heart should be singing, overflowing to the mouth, with gratitude. The word gratitude is grace, which can either be a favor or beneficent stance toward a person, an act that arises out of that favor, the effect that arises out of such an act, or the response to such favor. The latter is the emphasis here, as the Christian expresses thanks to God for the favor bestowed by Him. By the way, complaints about the style of the music indicate more about your heart (it is full of complaining) than it does about the music (it is boring or slow or old fashioned).

D. We must emphasize that all of this teaching, exhortation, and singing must be done in connection with the Word of Christ dwelling in you. These things cannot be done apart from the Bible. The Bible is their center, not one spoke in the wheel. It is where singing and admonishing and teaching come from and the basis upon which they can be correctly applied to one's life. If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:20)!

## Conclusion

It has been said that Christianity is a "**teaching** faith." It is also an **exhorting** faith, and a **singing** faith. Some people don't like being taught, or they want to be taught what they like to hear. People don't like to be admonished, but they do like to tell others what to believe or do. People don't like to sing about God, but Christians love to do so. When the Word of God lives inside of you—when you know it and think about it—these results are impossible to avoid. You will be able to instruct others and admonish them, and yourself! And you will be glad to sing out praise to God.

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