

The Studio

EPISODE // USING A HYMNAL

My love of hymns began at an early age. When I was a little girl, my mom would sit down at the piano every Sunday morning and play hymns as my sisters and I got ready for church. Eventually, she gave me my very own hymnal as a gift one Easter, and I enjoy playing and singing from it to this day.

Whether your congregation sings from hymnals during corporate worship or not, there's great value in learning how to use a hymnal.

- ✦ **A hymnal is a multi-purpose worship planning resource.** It's easy to find songs related to specific themes such as prayer, repentance, joy, and many more by using the Topical Index of a good hymnal. The Index of Scriptural Bases for Hymns comes in handy when trying to support spoken word with song. And one of my favorite features of a hymnal is the Metrical Index of Tunes. It groups hymns together whose tunes and texts can be used interchangeably. Did you know you can sing the words of "Amazing Grace" to the tune of "Joy to the World" and vice versa? Try it! It's so much fun.
- ✦ **Hymnals connect generations of worshipers.** In my church, our children's choirs participate in a hymn memory program. Each month, a new hymn is introduced and children are encouraged to memorize it. Introducing a new hymn each month to children provides ever-increasing ways for young people to, not only learn hymns, but also to participate in the worship life of their congregation with worshipers of all ages. It's also worth noting that many hymns that are still in modern-day hymnals were written hundreds of years ago. Hymns provide a meaningful way to connect worship today with the earliest worship of the Christian Church. As we sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," for example, we are joining a song whose text was written back in the early 1500s by Martin Luther himself. Information about a hymn's tune and text are included on each page.
- ✦ **A hymnal is a wonderful tool for personal worship.** Hymn texts are theologically rich, often summarizing sweeping biblical themes in just a few poetic stanzas. It can also be meaningful to learn the history and circumstances surrounding the writing of a particular hymn. As we "speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" as Ephesians 5:19 instructs us to do, we are not only encouraging one another but also adding to our own personal musical soundtracks. It's amazing to me how many times a hymn comes to mind with just the message I need to hear to help me through a specific situation.

Hymnals remain one of a worship leader's most valuable tools, not only for leading group worship but also for personal devotional times. As you use a hymnal more and more, I trust that you'll find that God truly is "Holy, Holy, Holy," abounding of "Amazing Grace," and truly "Worthy of Worship and Praise."