

IMPROVING OUR SERVICE

Lesson 4 Song Leading

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Singing Leading (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) ...

1. Praises God.
2. Edifies saints.
3. Teaches the lost.

B. Song Leading Is Important.

1. With the exception of Bible study (class and sermon), we usually spend more time singing in our worship service than anything else.

C. Song Leading Improvement.

1. This lesson does not cover music theory. There is much material available for song leaders who want to study technical aspects of music.
2. This lesson is confined to basic principles of effective song leading - principles that everyone can apply, even those who “cannot carry a tune in a bucket”.
3. We want to avoid two extremes: a) over-emphasize the mechanics of song leading so that the words of the song become secondary; and, b) concentrate on the words only and overlook basic song leading principles that would lead to a confusing song service.

II. THREE SONG LEADING MISTAKES.

A. Cannot Be Heard.

B. Cannot Be Seen.

C. Cannot Be Followed.

III. BETTER SONG LEADING.

A. Be Heard (see Supplement 1).

1. Announce the number of the song (and title if you wish) loud enough so everyone can hear it. Remember to give the audience time to find the number.
2. Announce the number of verses of the song that you will be leading before you begin the song and again at the end of each verse by using your fingers. Some songs contain a progression of thought in each verse. In this case, all the verses should be led to get the entire thought of the song.
3. Sing out and with confidence so the audience can hear you. If you are shy, work to get over your shyness (see Supplements 1 and 2).
4. You are a song leader. Give the audience something to follow. If the audience cannot hear you there will be confusion.

B. Be Seen.

1. You are a song leader. The audience must first see you, before they can follow you.
2. Don't bury your head behind the songbook. The audience needs to hear your voice. Don't hide behind the pulpit or keep your arm low if you are beating the tempo. The audience needs to see the beat of your hand. Stand where most or all of the audience can see you.
3. If the audience cannot see you there will be confusion.

C. Be Understood.

1. Do you know the meanings of the words in each song you are leading? How can you or the audience be "making melody in your hearts to the Lord" and "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" if you do not understand what you are saying? Remember, singing is designed for "teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16). How can this be done if we don't understand the words we are using?
2. There are a few songs in our book that use old English or poetic words that we do not easily understand today. A standard *Webster's English Dictionary* will help you find the meanings of those words. You can then explain briefly the meanings to the audience before you begin. Other songs take thoughts directly from scripture. Those scriptures can be found and read for a better understanding of the song.
3. Examples in *Songs of the Church*:

2 -- "cleft of the rock"	475 -- "sweetest frame" and "veil"
37 -- "guerdon"	482 -- "bade" and "succor"
52 -- "chain of loving rite"	496 -- "by[e] and by[e]"
67 -- "Incarnate Word"	528 -- "A wall of fire about me"
100 -- "sue" and "Balm of Gilead"	558 -- "ajar"
105 -- "wondrous measure!"	568 -- "bar" and "bourne"
157 -- "Eden's bowers" and "repine"	591 -- "ether plains" and "borne"
237 -- "vale"	594 -- "Peal"
287 -- "holy lays"	619 -- "Zion"
370 -- "ebon pinion, Brooded o'er the vale"	

D. Be Orderly.

1. Do you have the correct "pitch" (key)? Songs that are lead too high, or too low, will keep certain members of the audience from being able to sing. Use a pitch pipe to find the correct starting pitch. Remember, the pitch pipe is an aid, not the main attraction! Blow it no louder than you need to. Electronic tuners are also available.
2. Do you have the correct tempo (speed)? Songs that are led too fast or too slow (or constantly changing speed) will distract the audience and make it hard for them to follow. Use simple hand-arm movements to maintain the correct tempo. Remember to use a style of beating time that is easy to follow. A simple back and forth  (or up and down ) motion like a windshield wiper is good. Don't distract the audience with "wild" arm motions. Counting time is an aid, not the main attraction!
 - a) All songs are not to be led at the same tempo. Songs range from slow to fast.

- b) Do not vary the tempo throughout the song unless otherwise instructed in the song by its various markings (for example, “rit.” meaning retard, get slower; “slowly;” “quickly;” “spirited;” etc.). Your hand beat should be constant like the movement of a windshield wiper, pendulum, or metronome.
3. Do you have the correct volume? Just as there are songs with different pitches and different tempos, there are songs with different volume levels (and different volume levels within the same song). Observe the different volume symbols in the song (for example, “p” - soft; “m” - medium; “f” - loud). You may want to announce the change in volume before leading the song and indicate the change with the hand after the song begins.
 4. If the audience cannot follow you because of an incorrect pitch, incorrect tempo, or incorrect volume, there will be confusion. It is best to stop the song and then start over if the pitch or tempo of the song is incorrect.
- E. Be a Leader.
1. Don't let the audience lead you by dragging the song or speeding up the song.
 2. You are a song leader, not a song starter, or a song follower. There should be only one song leader at any given time, and that song leader is you. If there are several members of the audience taking the lead at the same time there will be confusion. If you do not lead, someone usually will lead from the audience and this causes confusion.
- F. Be Creative.
1. Pick out songs to go along with the sermon or that have a similar theme. Use the index in the song book to find songs that are similar in theme. You may want to make brief remarks about the song before you start it, such as: who wrote it, why it was written, what scripture it is taken from, how it relates to the worship service, etc. However, be careful not to let your remarks turn into a mini sermon.
 2. Pick out songs that are appropriate for the time they are to be sung. Use the index to help you. Look at the words of the whole song to see if it is appropriate for the Lord's supper, the invitation, etc. You wouldn't want to sing “Are You Coming to Jesus Tonight?” on Sunday morning, and, “Break Thou the Bread of Life” for the Lord's Supper song.
 3. Pick out songs with different pitches, tempos, and volumes. Pick out songs that have not been sung in awhile. This will keep all the songs from sounding the same and boring the audience. It is best to practice new songs at a special time, or at home.
- G. Be Ready.
1. Have your songs picked out in advance. This will allow you to concentrate during the service on the points mentioned above and not have to worry about finding a song. It is difficult to follow the suggestions mentioned above if you are rushing to pick out songs at the last minute.

2. Be ready to stand and lead. Anticipate the ending of the sermon and be ready to stand and lead. A delay between the sermon conclusion and the song of invitation allows the urgency of the call to obey to die.

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. Let's Go Out Now and Provide Good Song Leading.
- B. Class Motto: "I Will Try To Do Better!"