

Table of Contents

Introduction

v

Chapter 1

Personal Preparation

1

Chapter 2

Leading in Worship

7

Chapter 3

Knowing Your Audience

15

Chapter 4

Choosing Appropriate Songs

21

Chapter 5

Tips for Effective Song Leading

27

Chapter 6

Overcoming Common Obstacles

39



Chapter 1

Personal Preparation



Imagine a minister delivering a sermon after spending only a minute flipping through the Book of John right before his message. What if this was his only preparation for his sermon? This seems unthinkable, yet how many times has a song leader put little thought into the songs he has chosen for the Sunday morning service? Too often, singing is seen as a filler between the spoken parts, rather than an important part of the service itself.

A song leader leads the congregation in worship. At a Sunday morning service, the song leader is often the first person to stand up front. His mood, his attire, and his choice of songs impact the tone of the service. He should never take his responsibility lightly.

Beyond Beating Time

God is worthy of our best. He deserves our time and energy. If He has given you the gift of music, use it for His glory. Sing for the glory of God. Lead music for the glory of God. Learn to effectively enhance congregational worship so people can see the excellence of God.

Spiritual Preparation

Since the song leader is leading the congregation in worship, it is important for him to spend time in prayer. If a song leader expects to draw his congregation to Christ, he must first be in tune with God and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading in his own life.

A questionable reputation or known sin in the song leader's life will detract from the worship in singing. People will be distracted by the hypocrisy and may be repulsed by his inconsistency. In contrast, if the song leader's heart is clean and open before God, he will have nothing to hide. His Christlike spirit will come through as he leads in worship and will complement the message of the songs.

Prayer focuses our hearts on Him whom we are worshipping. We come together to worship God; He should be the focus of our worship services. God knows who will be in the audience that day and what songs will minister to their souls or point their thoughts toward Him. The song leader should ask God to direct his song selection so he can be used as an instrument of God in the worship service.

Musical Preparation

The amount of musical preparation required will vary from person to person, but a song leader should feel confident directing the whole song before he stands up to lead the congregation. If this means directing the song five times at home for practice, he should do that. The King of kings is worthy of his preparation, energy, and dedication.

A congregation will be the most at ease if the song leader has a relaxed yet confident spirit about him. If the song leader needs to write down the key of the song so he knows what to blow on his pitch pipe, he should do so. If he needs to write down the starting note and whether that is up or down from

Beyond Beating Time

the pitch he blows, he should do so. Ample musical preparation is key to humble confidence.

A song leader should increasingly familiarize himself with all the songs in the songbooks his church uses so he can choose appropriate songs for any occasion. Most hymnals contain a wide selection of songs on a vast array of topics, and yet in many churches a surprisingly low percentage of these songs are sung in the course of a year.

Although it is not ideal to sing a high percentage of new songs on a continual basis, a song leader should not avoid certain songs just because they are less familiar for the congregation. If a song leader is acquainted with a wide selection of songs, it can make it that much easier to choose the *perfect* one to go along with the Sunday morning message.

If the song leader allows himself little time for song selection, he will often end up using the same songs again and again because they are easy for him to lead and take little preparation. Although this is easiest for him, it might not be best for the congregation. Rather than enhancing the worship, it can contribute to a stagnant worship experience.

Some leaders keep a running list of the songs they have chosen to help them avoid using the same ones excessively.

Emotional Preparation

The song leader should be emotionally prepared to lead the songs he has chosen. It is not enough for the song leader to be physically present; he must also be emotionally present. He must be there in body, soul, and spirit. The drive to church can be an excellent time to prepare his heart for worship. If his thoughts are focused on work or hobbies on the drive to church, he will find it more difficult to focus his thoughts on worship once he sits in the pew.

Each song has its own character and mood. The combination of words and music is often an excellent guide as to how a song should be sung. One must prepare by studying the song in order to know what the mood of the song is and what an appropriate tempo would be. The song leader should feel the mood of the song in preparation for leading it.