

Effective Leading Of Congregational Singing In Worship

~ Prepared by ~

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I. Introduction

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: Come before his presence with singing." (Psalms 100:1, 2)

A. The Reason For This Study

Throughout time, God has placed strong emphasis on music, particularly in times of celebration and deliverance. As we view the edificational value of singing, we quickly realize the need for thoughtful consideration of song leadership. God has chosen singing as a powerful teaching tool and a means of praise in the church today. In view of this, it becomes evident that leading singing in worship is worthy of serious consideration.

Your participation in this study indicates your sincere desire to improve in your service to God. The more we learn about pleasing God in reverent service, the more we understand the significance of our influence. Whether we are teaching, praying, serving communion, or singing, we can have a considerable effect on others. If we are zealous, we will have a good influence; if we are apathetic, it will be bad.

There are only two basic elements of singing: the music and the message. This study is not intended to merely consider the technology of the music. This study is also intended to show the importance of order and truth in our singing. Women can benefit from this study as well if they have singing in their ladies classes.

As we begin, it is important to ask two questions:

1. What are we supposed to be doing?
2. How well are we doing it?

In this study, we will investigate these questions.

B. The Divine Directive

Our authority for singing in worship is most evident in these familiar passages:

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:18, 19)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

We will make more observations about what these and other verses are saying to us, but we will begin by simply noting that they tell us to sing. We frequently focus upon what these verses do not say, that is, that nothing is said about playing a mechanical instrument. The point is well taken that the specific sense of the word "sing" excludes mechanical instruments. However, to the extent the word is generic, many different styles and forms of vocal music will acceptably fulfill the command, from crude unmeasured chants to complex choral arrangements.

So then, what is our singing today supposed to sound like? The Bible simply says "sing" but no musical notation has been revealed by a divinely inspired pen. This is left for us to expedite. Singing styles vary from place to place, culture to culture, and time to time. For example, melodic phrasing is distinctly

different in eastern countries from what is characteristic of western countries. In God's wisdom, He allows us to use melodic forms familiar to us where ever and when ever we may live. Therefore, appropriate forms of singing in worship today will be largely influenced by what our culture currently deems appropriate for the occasion. We should be careful not to criticize the singing in worship in other places and other times because it is different from what we may be doing now where we live, as long as it is truly singing as the scriptures instruct. Even today, primitive cultures exist in the world, and we should not expect that the singing in worship there should sound like it does everywhere else on earth.

For accommodative purposes, this study assumes the backdrop to be twenty-first century North American culture. However, much of what is presented here should be applicable in principle in many other cultures.

C. Our Purpose And Goal

Singing is a work of the church. Therefore, to fully understand the purpose for singing, it helps to understand the work of the church. The primary work of the church is to uphold the truth of the gospel, as revealed by the apostle Paul in this passage:

But in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our specific purpose in singing and song leading must have a direct connection to the church's main function.

Our goal in this instruction is to learn how better to direct worshipers in praising God, to teach scriptural precepts, and to edify one another in song. To accomplish this goal, we must each commit ourselves to giving our utmost effort to the leading of singing. We should not be satisfied with mediocrity but press on to be all that we can be.

D. Requirements And Expectations

In fulfilling the New Testament command to sing, the need for a song leader is unavoidable. In order to have singing in a large body of people, there must be a leader to coordinate all the voices together as one. The responsibility for this falls upon the song leader.

God has not set rigorous technical requirements that all who worship Him in song must attain in order to be pleasing to Him. His command is simply that we sing. Some members refrain from singing or just sing very quietly because they feel they cannot sing good enough. This is not what God desires; God judges our hearts and our motives, not our voices.

Is it therefore not important how well we sing? Of course it is. A nonchalant attitude is not acceptable before God either. We need to remember who it is we are worshipping when we sing. It is the God who created all of heaven and earth that we are praising. This alone should demand our personal best, as those under Moses spared not the best of their flocks for sacrifice. God simply expects our best efforts.

Can anyone therefore be an effective song leader as long as he is sincere and does his best? Effective leading is difficult. Song leading in public worship requires a certain degree of expertise and practice. Unlike any other act of worship, song leading is inherently limited to only those who have a certain degree of natural ability.

God gives each one of us different natural gifts just as he gave different miraculous gifts to early Christians.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)

The song leader has the serious responsibility of preparing the audience for other modes of worship while also concentrating on many different complex things at the same time. To a large extent, in traditional worship services, his work is a central function, having control of the timing of when other forms of worship are also observed. If confusion results, a visitor may surmise that the singing would be much improved if a piano was used.

Singing is a powerful means of stirring the emotions of men and magnifying God. We should regard song leading as a challenging opportunity to utilize a tremendous resource for edification rather than an activity for filling time with lifeless routine. In whatever we do, let us each grow and serve God to the fullest extent that God has given us ability.

In this study, we want to avoid using opinion as authority for what is correct or mandatory. However, a significant amount of our attention will focus on things that pertain to sound judgement in assembly situations. Not everything contained in this guide is intended to be viewed a matter of faith and doctrine, but rather, good suggested practice. Nevertheless, let us give careful attention to the principles involving this subject and respect the autonomy and personality of each congregation, keeping opinion in its proper perspective.

Regardless of your experience level, we ask you to take a few specific principles or methods that you will learn and immediately begin applying them as you lead singing.

May God bless our efforts as we try to grow together in His service.

II. God's Purpose For Singing

God has a reason for every instruction He gives us. His word may not always reveal His reasons or at least not all of them. Furthermore, we may not always understand why God has given us various instructions with certain limitations. So it is with worshipping God in song. God has revealed some reasons for His will, and some things that God has not purposed are evident as well.

Prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)

A. Biblical Observations

In Old Testament history, singing has always had an important role in man's relationship to his Creator:

- Moses sings of the deliverance from the Egyptians. (Exodus 15:21)
- Moses writes a song as a witness to testify against Israel's idolatry. (Deuteronomy 31, 32)
- Debra and Barak sing of their victory over the Canaanites. (Judges 5)
- David, throughout the Psalms, reveals his joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears. (Psalms 30:2-4)
- The Song Of Solomon tells of the closeness of a pure marriage relationship.

As we turn to the New Testament, our source of authority in the church today, singing in worship is seen in many circumstances and has many purposes. In this section, we will examine these New Testament references.

B. Praise

Through the psalmist, God demonstrates His strong desire to receive our praise. The point is not that God needs our praise, but He appreciates our praise. Furthermore, our praise can lead others to Him. Honoring God in song is to be something we do gladly, willingly and joyfully, not as drudgery or under compulsion.

Saying, "I will proclaim Your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise." (Hebrews 2:12)

C. Expression And Thanksgiving

In many of his psalms, David pours out his heart to the Father expressing his innermost feelings. Singing is an instrument by which we also can do the same. When we feel happy, sad, lonely, afraid, excited or worried, singing is a means of expression and sharing. James reiterates this thought:

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. (James 5:13)

God has richly blessed us with spiritual blessings through Jesus His Son. We have a lot to be cheerful about, and singing hymns is one way we can express to God our thankfulness.

D. Admonition And Encouragement

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:18, 19)

This passage indicates that our song service to God is to be sincere, from the heart. Singing is a powerful communication tool whereby we speak one to another. The messages we bring to each other in harmony with God's word cause us to be filled with the Spirit. In addition, we build up each other and encourage one another to be strong in the faith. Our love for God and one another grows as we blend our voices together in spiritual songs.

After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26)

This remarkable snapshot of Jesus came shortly after revealing Judas as His betrayer and shortly before His ordeal in the garden. Imagine how Jesus must have been strengthened by this singing.

To admonish literally means to put in mind. It includes both words of encouragement and guidance as well as words of warning and correction.

E. Teaching And Edification

The following passage shows that singing is an effective method for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in the righteousness of God's inspired word.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

The word "edify" always has the meaning of building up by instruction. The word is sometimes misused today with reference to things not associated with instruction, such as taking meals together or sending cards or flowers. These things are certainly good and in many ways encouraging, but they are not edification in the biblical sense.

Notwithstanding, singing can also play a part in teaching. Words are often easier to remember when set in melody, meter, and rhyme. Many truths of the Bible and the nature of God can become engraved in our hearts by the familiarity of song.

In the noteworthy passage that follows, the multi-purpose nature of singing is most clearly demonstrated.

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25)

The verse plainly states Paul and Silas were singing praises to God. They had just been beaten and thrown into prison, so they were no doubt thanking God that they were counted worthy of that and seeking His protection, as was done before (Acts 4:29; 5:41). As they sang, they were speaking to each other, which certainly gave them courage to bear the trial. The inspired writer makes the point that the prisoners were listening, and the gospel message heard by the jailer that night in those songs obviously touched his heart.

F. God's Wisdom

From every aspect that we may view the church, we see reflected the wisdom of God. Paul reveals that he preached the unfathomable riches of Christ:

In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church... (Ephesians 3:10)

If we look at the church from the standpoint of salvation, we see the wisdom and simplicity of Christ's innocent blood our behalf. We contact His blood through the burial of baptism. Anywhere on earth that has enough water to sustain human population has enough water to baptize people. This reflects God's wisdom.

If we look at the church from the standpoint of the Lord's Supper, we see the wisdom and simplicity of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine commemorating Christ's body and blood. Anywhere that people populate the earth, there are found vineyards and bread. This reflects God's wisdom.

If we look at the church from the standpoint of singing, we again see the wisdom and simplicity of praising God through the instrument of the human voice, the "fruit of our lips," (Hebrews 13:15). Anywhere on earth people are found living, there is some form of singing within that culture. This also reflects God's wisdom.

God has always chosen things weak and foolish in man's eyes for His glorification and honor (I Corinthians 1:18-31). In God's eyes, these things demonstrate strength and wisdom. God has made it simple for us to serve Him in every respect.

The New Testament scriptures indicate no other musical instrument than the simple human voice used by the early church for worshiping God. If we alter this standard, we are telling God His wisdom is just not good enough. We would be wise to align our practices with the simple New Testament patterns.

G. Our Attitude

God is as much concerned about our attitude in worship to Him as the actions themselves. He is worthy of more than worship characterized by mindless routine. Our manner of doing a thing is as important as the thing itself. Note the following scriptures with such emphasis on how the worship is performed:

- Take the Lord's Supper in a *worthy* manner. (1 Corinthians 11:27, 28)
- Give *cheerfully*, as we have *purposed* in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- Pray *fervently* and *effectually*. (James 5:16)
- Speak the truth *in love*. (Ephesians 4:15)
- Sing *with the spirit and the understanding*. (1 Corinthians 14:15)

God has never been satisfied with superficial worship demonstrated by a mere outward show of reverence. Consider these biblical statements:

For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. (Samuel 16:7)

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. (Matthew 15:8)

The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23, 24)

Let us therefore seriously consider the *manner* in which we lead singing, as well as other things, and not just the acts themselves.

H. God's Purpose For Singing - Conclusion

God has not purposed that our singing should be competitive. This leads to elevating the best singers as soloists to display their talents. God has not purposed that our singing should be merely entertainment, either. This leads to selecting the best singers for a choir so others can sit passively and listen as spectators. The religious world has unfortunately altered God's simple, divine purposes for singing.

Notwithstanding, this is not to say that the singing need not be handled by competent and skilled leaders. Some song leaders believe that they need only to pick out a few songs that they know and get the congregation started; the audience will take it from there. If they can do only that, they feel they have met their responsibility and are qualified to lead the singing.

The scriptures outlined above suggest much more than that. As song leaders, we must endeavor to incorporate the characteristics of praise, expression, teaching, and edification in the songs we select and the way we lead them. Anything short of this hinders the worship of those in attendance rather than uplifting them and drawing them to Christ. For this reason, we must realize the importance of this study.

In Appendix B, an article by Royce Chandler discusses the impact a well planned song service can have on the worship service. It also illustrates the result when we fail to give due attention to the responsibility we have as song leaders.

As with all areas of our service to God, we must remember His purpose and strive to be pleasing to Him rather than ourselves.

We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

III. The Importance Of Proper Song Selection

Perhaps the most important part of the song leader's job is done at home. When you sit down in your living room with a song book, the selections you make to a large extent predetermine the effectiveness of the song service. Obviously, if you don't have a book of your own at home, it will be difficult for you to give adequate time to preparation.

The impact you will have will be proportional to the amount of time you spend preparing. If you were teaching the Sunday adult Bible class, you would probably want to study at least the night before. However, too often we are content to hurriedly pick out a few songs as we are rushing out the door or jot down a list during class. This is simply not adequate preparation for something this important.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed...
(2 Timothy 2:15)*

In this section, we will be considering what song features are important in selecting our songs.

A. Scriptural Message

The scriptures indicate that we are speaking to one another when we sing. Therefore, above all, we need to insure that the songs we sing are in harmony with God's word. For this reason, this may be the most important matter in song leading. We need to have an understanding about what we are doing.

I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also. (1 Corinthians 14:15)

Since singing is identified as a teaching tool in scripture, then all other scriptures that give instruction concerning teaching are justifiably applied to that aspect of singing as well. Consider the following passages now in light of singing:

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. (1 Peter 4:11)

But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

If the songs contain false doctrine, then we become false teachers if we choose them for the song service. Just as a preacher must give careful consideration to what he teaches, the song leader must give careful thought to the songs he chooses and the messages they convey.

The song books we use are not infallible. If we would not teach in a Bible class the message contained in a particular song, then we should refrain from choosing that song, no matter how beautiful the melody may be. Most of our songs, other than those set to scripture, were composed by people who were not members of the church of Christ, so be cautious.

When selecting a song, make sure you know what the song is saying. Take time to read each line carefully to see if you agree with what it teaches. This is particularly important with songs that are new or songs that are very familiar to you. With new songs, we are often so concerned with learning the melody or intricate harmony that we fail to notice, more importantly, the message of the song. When faced with a new song, just read the lyrics first to see what it teaches. With familiar songs, we often take its scripturalness for granted because we've always sung it. Try just reading these again as if for the first time. If you see that a song actually contains doctrinal error, do not lead it.

It is possible for a preacher to use scripture to teach error by taking it out of context. Likewise, a song containing scriptural phrases is not necessarily scripturally sound. If the writer does not understand the scripture, then it is likely that it has been misapplied.

Don't be afraid to be objective and critical of the content of songs. If a song is questionable, avoid leading it, or at least the objectionable part. In some areas of doubt it may be effective to comment or read a scripture to explain the text.

On the other hand, be willing to allow for poetic license, avoid wrangling about words, and do not be dogmatic on opinions. We will undoubtedly differ in our opinions, but a brotherly attitude assumes that we will be considerate of one another. For example, if you know that someone else among you has the opinion that a certain song is unscriptural, avoid leading it whether you agree with the objection or not, simply for conscience's sake. It creates a very uncomfortable circumstance for those in attendance when they feel they cannot participate in some part of our worship without violating their conscience.

Some songs contain words which are not part of most people's working vocabulary. If a song contains a word you do not understand, look it up in a dictionary. If you feel others may not know the meaning of the word, then prior to leading the song, give a brief explanation.

B. Congregational Support

When selecting songs, the leader needs to be aware of the capabilities of the congregation. For example, do not select one with a tenor lead if there are no tenors in the audience. Know your audience; if your strongest altos are absent or have colds, don't select songs with an alto lead. As the song service progresses, you may find the singing group is not in their usual form. Listen to the congregation for these indicators, and you may decide that one of your selections is not suitable. Be prepared to change your selections on the fly if the circumstances warrant.

Observe what songs the congregation knows well. If the audience does not know the song, the effectiveness will certainly be diminished. If you are not sure whether the congregation knows a song, ask someone you trust will know.

Probably the best time to learn new songs for worship is in a setting other than a normal worship service. Consider having a singing in your home as a time to work on new or difficult songs in a more casual setting. Perhaps the congregation where you regularly attend may want to set a special time to assemble together for song practice.

If you do choose to try a new song in a regular worship service, make certain that you know the song completely and correctly and that you can sing it confidently. Don't rely on the congregation to carry you on a song you don't know very well. Also, try not to lead new songs when a lot of visitors are typically present, as on Sunday morning. Results can sometimes be less than desired, and visitors may not understand what is happening and be distracted. Save trying new songs for when talented help is present. Especially don't sing a lot of new songs in one service; limit your new selections to one per service. Avoid leading a new song for the Lord's Supper or invitation, as you especially want to have the maximum influence on the audience at these times.

Sometimes when trying new songs the results are disastrous. However, don't be discouraged if this happens. Just stop the song and choose a different one. Some new songs are easier to learn than others. The more complicated songs are certainly better introduced in a more private setting.

C. Variety

The song service is more interesting to participate in if there is a mix of song types. Some songs are to be sung fast, some slow; some are contemporary, some classical; some are for praise, some for admonition; some are hard, some easy.

Be careful not to lead the same songs all the time. Don't use the excuse that you don't know many songs. Make the effort to learn more songs. Get your own book and practice at home. Take advantage of the chance to learn new songs when someone else is leading the singing. Try taking note of songs other leaders are leading that you think you could learn. Audio tapes can also help increase your repertoire.

Consider going through the song book and making a list of all the songs you can lead. Note when you lead each song. Try not to lead any song twice before all the other songs on the list have been sung once.

Avoid wearing out your favorites. If someone else recently lead a particular song, do not choose to lead it again too soon. Others may not appreciate the repetition. If we bore the congregation with the same songs constantly, the effect will be negative. Their attention will be drawn to your song selection rather than the message.

At times it is advisable not to sing all the verses of a song. If a song is significantly long or has many repetitious words, consider omitting some of the verses or singing the chorus only at the very end of the song. Give attention to the message you are trying to convey when selecting verses to omit. Do not be afraid to do a little of your own arranging, but do not make your arrangements too complicated. Always let the congregation know what you are doing.

D. Applicability

Choose your songs to prepare the congregation for certain events during worship. Before a prayer, the collection, the Lord's Supper, or the message, lead a song that compliments the activity.

For the first song, your best choice is a hymn of praise. Select one not too fast to allow the singers time to warm up on the first song. Your second selection is a better time to pick up the pace with a faster song. For closing, choose a song with a devotional theme.

Several songs have special applicability to mornings or evenings. Be sure not to lead an evening hymn in the morning or vice versa.

Try to find out what the speaker's topic is. Choose related songs for immediately before the lesson and for the invitation. It is particularly important to choose rousing, thought provoking songs of encouragement for the invitation.

Try to arrange all your songs around the speaker's message. If this is impractical, perhaps you can make your song service teach its own lesson by following a theme. Utilize the topical index in your song book if it has one.

Do not hesitate to briefly read a scripture or make a comment to compliment your selection. Perhaps the best moment to do this is during the pause after you have announced your number and people are turning in their books. Remember to speak up so you can easily be heard over the sound of turning pages. Keep your remarks brief so the song service moves with continuity.

You might think of a song during the sermon that fits well with the lesson. If so, consider using it as a closing song to give the message more impact. Don't feel locked into your selections even if they are posted, or you may miss an unanticipated opportunity to teach or edify.

Certain songs are naturally associated with sectarian holidays because of their seasonal use by the religious world. Refrain from leading these songs around the time of the connected holidays to avoid the appearance of participating in the celebration. However, do not discount these songs at other times.

Some songs were written during a period when our nation's culture was quite different than it is now. Put yourself and others into the songs you sing. If a song has lost its applicability due to economic or social changes, avoid leading it.

There may be current events that will make certain songs particularly inspiring. Choose your songs for an effective overall edification benefit.

E. Quality

Two things contribute to the quality of Gospel songs: the music and the message.

If the melody is dull and monotonous, the participants may become listless. If the music is overly complex or awkward, the singers may despair. Most of our music is arranged in four part harmony for mixed quartets. Take note of the contribution these parts give the song. It will be difficult to make poorly written songs effective for edification.

If the lyrics are unnecessarily repetitious, the participants may become bored. If the lyrics are overly cumbersome, the singers will concentrate more on getting all the words to fit right rather than the message. Since the songs are for teaching and admonishing, this is of utmost importance.

A well written song will have a clear, simple message coordinated comfortably with the music.

Unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. (1 Corinthians 14:9)

F. Proper Song Selection - Conclusion

An effective song leader's work begins well before services begin. As a preacher must prepare well in advance to present a lesson, a song leader likewise needs to prepare well in advance of the song service. In order to maximize the teaching and edifying benefit of singing, we have to be willing to devote some of our time and creativity to the selection of songs.

...Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

IV. Essentials For Leading Singing

Let all things be done for edification. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

In this section, we will discuss matters that have more to do with leading a public worship service rather than music. A song leader should easily be able to begin applying these principles regardless of his musical skills. The musical elements of song leading will be covered in later sections.

The following items are basic fundamentals that if applied, will provide an orderly, edifying song service.

A. Maintaining Order

As song leaders, we must realize the responsibility to maintain order in the song service. Disorder creates confusion rather than edifying the congregation.

Let all things be done decently and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40, KJV)

The original word here for "decently" means to act in a seemly manner, becomingly, and gracefully. The original word here for "order" describes an arrangement, a fixed succession observing a fixed time, due or right order. With this in mind, the song leader is constrained to exhibit propriety and reverence as he serves. Several ways this can be put into practice are noted here.

Give attention to your appearance when you stand before the assembly to lead singing. The clothes you choose to wear when leading public worship will leave an impression on those in attendance. Certainly, God does not judge us on outward appearances, but on our hearts. Nevertheless we should be considerate of others who may be spiritually weak and expect some decorum. If we are in disarray, wearing shabby, dirty, or inappropriate attire, when we can do better, we may be inadvertently sending a message to others that we lack reverence.

There is something to be said for appropriateness as well. In our society, culture naturally places certain expectations upon how the songs should sound. Though human traditions are not to be our standard of authority in the church, the scriptures make it abundantly clear that tradition must be considered in matters of judgement. Specifically, in matters concerning the eating of meats, observing holidays, and wearing particular apparel, remember Paul's advice on our use liberties (1 Corinthians 8 - 11; Romans 14). More is said about attire that is fitting for the occasion in 1 Timothy 2:9. These principles are legitimately extended to our singing also, as Paul states:

Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:32)

When applied to our singing, we understand that certain musical styles would probably be considered inappropriate for hymns today. For example, secular history bears out that the singing in the early church was very simple and more like chants. To perform such in services today might do more to distract than if modern hymns were used. Similarly, a popular form of music today, the rap, would probably have a similar effect of drawing attention to the musical style and away from the message. Most hymnals in use today are compiled with appropriateness in consideration. However, when sometimes adding supplemental songs, be careful that the line of good taste is not crossed.

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (Romans 14:19)

B. Taking The Lead

Show enthusiasm as you begin to lead singing. Those in attendance need to sense that you are happy to be doing what you are doing. When the opportunity is yours, always begin the service with a brief greeting to those assembled especially to those that may be visiting. Try to create a friendly atmosphere that allows all to freely participate in the song service.

Do not apologize for your songleading. Never tell the congregation that you have not lead a certain song before or that you are not very good song leader. Remarks such as those contribute nothing to edification.

Maintain eye contact with those in the audience as you announce songs and lead. You will find that they will respond to your direction if you are communicating with them through eye contact. This may be uncomfortable or make you nervous at first, but confidence will come with practice.

C. Getting Started

Be sure you are familiar with the established sequence of the worship service. You may wish to prepare a blank form for each regularly scheduled assembly. The form should be designed as a worksheet and for quick reference of the song service you have prepared. In addition to spaces for filling in your selections, include spaces for the names of others who are leading worship, scriptures or comments you may want to use with the songs, and announcements that need to be made. This will make it easy to insure a smooth, orderly service.

Before announcing a song number, make sure you have the attention of the audience. If people are coming into the auditorium, wait until they are seated before you begin. This will allow them to be ready to participate.

Remember that as you lead the singing, you are also a public speaker at this time. Deepen your voice and project your words. Look up at the audience as you speak, not down at your book. Announce your songs clearly and distinctly. As a suggestion, state the title of the song in addition to the number, especially if sight-disabled members are present. Speak loud enough so those in the back of the auditorium can hear the song selected. If your voice does not carry well, utilize the P.A. system to allow amplification.

After announcing your selection, wait until everyone has turned to that number in their song books before beginning. This will be clearly evident by listening for the sound of turning pages to subside. Do not feel the need to get the next song started in a hurry. Take your time so the congregation does not feel rushed..

Pitch the song correctly and begin with an appropriate tempo as outlined later.

D. Directing

It is best to always direct the songs using an effective hand movement as described later. Hand directing is important for the congregation to be able to know where you are heading in regard to timing and tempo.

Sing out loudly, but don't scream. It is easier for the congregation to follow you if they can hear you. In fact, you will find the congregation as a whole will follow your voice more than your hand movements. Voice instructors emphasize two main factors for power and volume in singing: breathing and opening your mouth.

Breathe from the bottom of your lungs, not the top. When you take in a breath, you should see your abdomen push out in addition to your chest expanding. When your abdomen moves outward, this allows your diaphragm (the muscle that makes you breathe) to drop down low, causing additional air to enter your lungs. When you then begin to sing, you can use also your abdominal muscles to force the air with power across your vocal chords. You can actually increase your volume by exercises, such as sit-ups, to develop your abdominal muscles.

Opening your mouth allows the sound to come out better. It also gives an improved timbre to your vowel sounds and helps you enunciate the words of the songs clearly. If you sing with your mouth half open, "O thou fount of every blessing" sounds more like, "Ur ther fernt erf erfry blersing." Watch the mouth of a good professional singer on television. You will notice a wider mouth when singing than when just speaking. This is one reason why a singer sounds so different when singing than when talking.

These brief tips will help increase the power of your speaking and singing voice and improve your ability to demand that the audience follows your lead.

When a part other than soprano has the lead, let that part predominate slightly in power. Sing the bass or tenor lead for all male duets if need be. For female duets, consider singing very softly or not at all, unless the guidance is required. Allowing only the female voices to predominate makes the duet sound more pleasing.

Never be afraid or ashamed to stop a song and restart it properly. Sometimes a song might be started at the incorrect pitch or tempo, and the effectiveness of the song is lost. Some song leaders allow this to continue rather than stopping and restarting the song properly. We must remember the teaching and edification value of singing, and make any adjustment that is necessary.

E. Instructing Clearly

At times it is advantageous to have the audience stand for a song or to be seated after the singing of a song. When doing this, be sure your instructions are clear to the congregation. For instance, avoid asking the congregation to stand and turn to a song before brother so and so leads us in prayer. What typically happens is the congregation is standing and turning to the page while our brother is attempting to lead our minds in prayer. We have created a situation of confusion by trying to ask the audience to do too much at one time. Ask the audience to do only one thing at a time.

In addition, be sure to instruct the congregation to be seated at the appropriate time. Many congregations are accustomed to sitting down after standing for a prayer, or after the invitation song. If the song leader is not clear in his instruction, you will see part of the congregation sitting down while the other part remains standing, waiting for his direction.

If you do not intend to sing all the verses of a song, tell the congregation before beginning the song. Remind them of your instructions at the end of each verse by indicating with your fingers the number of the next verse to sing. Sometimes each verse begins with the same lyrics through the first several measures. Your finger indication of the verse being sung should always remain visible to the singers until the lyrics become different. If your instructions are not clear, typically the result is part of the congregation is singing one verse and part is singing another. This confusion has a deleterious effect on edification.

If you have any special wishes concerning tempo or loudness variations, give a brief instruction before the song begins.

Always make a note of who is scheduled to participate in the services. Never have the congregation enter into prayer without announcing the individual who is to lead that prayer. That individual may not be aware that he is scheduled, and the silence at that time can be deafening. Again, we have created a situation of confusion due to poor preparation on our part.

Keep the congregation informed of each upcoming activity throughout the service: a prayer, the sermon, the offering, or dismissal. Remember that visitors will not be familiar with the order or services. If the opportunity is yours, always end the service with a brief salutation, especially thanking the visitors for their attendance.

F. Improvising

It may be necessary for you as the song leader to quickly bring organization back to the worship service. For instance, the minister usually ends his lesson by offering an invitation. Normally he will ask those subject to the invitation to come to the front while we stand and sing. However, he may forget to ask the audience to stand. If this occurs, out of habit, some will stand and others will not. As you walk to the podium, simply ask the congregation to stand to clear up any confusion. Then start the singing of the invitation song.

One time during worship, a visitor was in the audience from a charismatic church. A young man was leading the singing. After the invitation song, this visitor began loudly speaking in unintelligible "tongues". The song leader just stood in front of the audience not knowing what to do. At that point, one of the elders motioned for him to sit down. The elder got up, announced a song, lead it as the congregation sang over this visitor. He subsequently quieted down, and the rest of the service continued normally. This is an extreme example, however, it immediately brought back order to a disorderly situation.

During the invitation song, don't allow yourself to become disconcerted if an audience member steps to the front in response, rather, expect it and watch for it. You may see someone decide to respond with just a few words remaining in the song. At this point, you may want to signal the congregation to sing the first verse over again. So then, this individual is not made to feel more conspicuous, as he would otherwise be making his way to the front in silence. Also, while a responder is preparing to be baptized, be prepared to sing a hymn in a decisive and orderly fashion, as the situation may dictate.

The skilled song leader is constantly aware of the circumstances in the assembly. We need to develop the ability to improvise and spontaneously alter our format as required to keep the congregation in control.

G. Essentials - Conclusion

It is the song leader's responsibility to create an atmosphere conducive for worship. We must be well organized and prepared. We must be flexible enough to regain order in a situation that has become disorderly. By doing so, all things can be done decently and in order while edifying those in attendance.

"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace." 1 Corinthians 14:33

V. Musical Notation And Pitch

If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified. (1 Peter 4:11)

One of the most important parts of song leading is insuring proper pitch. If the song is not properly pitched, the singers must strain to reach notes higher or lower than their comfortable range. When this happens, even though our hearts are sincere, the singing suffers and the edifying quality is diminished. In order to correctly pitch a song, the leader must have a basic understanding of musical notation.

A. Background And History

All the sounds we hear are actually vibrations in the air. If the vibrations are very random, the sound to our ears is indistinct. We call this "noise". If the vibrations are more orderly or cyclic, our ears hear a distinction. We call this "tone". The faster the rate of vibration or frequency, the higher the pitch of the tone. Healthy human ears can normally detect tones as low as 20 cycles per second and as high as 20,000 cycles per second.

The formulation of musical notes is actually a wonderfully amazing, naturally occurring phenomenon, and a profound testimony to the intelligence of our Creator. To illustrate, when you pluck a simple string in tension, it makes a tone, naturally vibrating at a given rate, which is determined by its length, its tension, and its mass. You can also make this string vibrate at double the original rate in two equal segments. You can furthermore make the string vibrate in three equal segments at three times the original rate of vibration. The tone thus generated is different from the original tone. These are called harmonic modes. Now if the string is retuned to this new tone, its third-mode harmonic is likewise a different tone. As this procedure is continued twelve times, twelve unique tones are generated, after which, the process would repeat if continued further. The number twelve is therefore special not only to the Bible and our calendar but also to music.

It took many centuries for music to evolve into what it is today. The earliest biblical mention of music is in Genesis 4:21, just eight generations removed from Adam. Little is known of how the music of antiquity may have sounded. David is perhaps the most notable musician mentioned in scripture, living around 1000 BC. The earliest known written musical notation in a primitive form is a Mesopotamian work from before 800 BC. It was around 550 BC that the Greek mathematician, Pythagoras, developed the familiar eight-note scale, and complex music theory followed soon after that. By the fourth century AD, secular writings indicate that singing in worship began to change from simple unmeasured chants to rhythmic and harmonic choral styles. At about the tenth century AD, musical notation using marks above and below a horizontal line was used, and slowly multiple line notation staves began to be developed. By the eleventh century, a system of syllables assigned to relative degrees on a scale was developed to aid singers to learn their parts. This system, still used today and described in detail later, is called "solmization." In the sixteenth century, written musical notation began to look more like what we see today. The use of shaped note heads first appeared in written music in the early 1800's to make the sight reading of notes of relative pitch easier. This later developed into what we now see in our hymnals.

B. Musical Notes

In order to standardize music, seven letters are chosen to designate the musical notes: A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. "A" is arbitrarily chosen to have 440 cycles per second. The notes go up from "A" to "G" until "A" is repeated again, eight notes higher. This higher "A" has 880 cycles per second, twice rate of vibration of the original "A". The same holds true for descending notes as well.

In general, for any two tones eight notes apart, the letter designation is the same, and the frequency of the higher tone is twice that of the lower. These two notes and the range they span is called an octave.

To illustrate, most singers have a voice range of about 2-1/2 octaves. A piano has a range of 7-1/3 octaves. The normal hearing range of the human ear spans almost 10 octaves.

Musical tones are indicated graphically by the position of the notes on the lines of the staff. Two staves are commonly used to write music for quartets. For mixed quartets, the notes for female voices are on the upper staff, male voices are on the lower.

The position of the musical tones on the staff is determined by the clef symbol. The G clef, or treble clef, establishes the position of the female voices: soprano and alto. The F clef, or bass clef, establishes position of the male voices: tenor and bass. The lead melody is usually sung by the soprano. Song leaders sing the soprano an octave lower. Refer to the diagrams for voice positions.

Some songs are arranged for male quartets. These use a C clef in the upper staff, which typically positions the notes exactly one octave lower than the treble clef does. Songs written for male quartets are difficult to use for mixed quartets because the voice ranges are different.

C. Sharps And Flats

The increment between successive notes on the staff is one full step except for two of the intervals. The increment from B to C and from E to F is a half step. A half step is called a chromatic. Refer to the diagram for letter designations.

A sharp (\sharp) raises a tone one chromatic.

A flat (\flat) lowers a tone one chromatic.

A natural (\natural) deletes sharps and flats.

A double sharp (\times) raises the tone of a note that has already been sharped one chromatic.

A double flat ($\flat\flat$) lowers the tone of a note that has already been flatted one chromatic.

Refer again to the diagram showing letter designations. Notice that there is always more than one way to indicate a note. For example, C-sharp is the same note as D-flat; D-sharp is the same note as E-flat. Furthermore, B-double-flat is the same note as A; G-double-sharp is also the same note as A. Notice also that by definition, E-sharp is the same note as F-natural and C-flat is the same as B-natural.

Sharps, flats, and naturals beside notes in the staff are called accidentals. An accidental affects all the notes of the same degree that follow the accidental until the end of the measure or until another accidental occurs. For example, if G is sharped in a measure, all G's following that accidental are also sharped until the next measure line or until another accidental. Refer to the diagram showing accidentals.

All the notes combined with the sharped or flatted notes make up the twelve distinct tones of music.

D. Key Signature

The group of sharps or flats at the beginning of a song is the key signature. This indicates the key of the song. For instance, if a key signature contains three flats, the flats are positioned on B, E, and A. This means that all B's E's, and A's in the song are flatted without requiring the flat symbol on each note. The number of the sharps or flats determines the key.

Flats:

Number of Flats:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Key of Song:	F	B ^b	E ^b	A ^b	D ^b	G ^b
The flats can be remembered by this:	F at	B oys	E at	A pples	D ropped	G reen."

Sharps:

Number of Sharps:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Key of Song:	G	D	A	E	B	F [#]
The sharps can be remembered by:	G o	D own	A nd	E at	B ig	F ish

You will have to remember which ones are sharped or flatted. (Note that the key of F-sharp and G-flat is the same key). Also, no sharps or flats in the key signature is the key of C.

Another way to determine the key is to scan through the first score and find the note with the "do" shape, explained later. That is the key note.

E. Scales

The major diatonic scale is the familiar "do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti, do." The different shapes of the notes correspond to these syllables; refer to the diagram. These notes are the basic building blocks of all music. Eight notes make an octave, and then the tones repeat at a higher pitch. "Do" is always the key note. If a song is written in the key of E-flat, "Do" is E-flat.

A few songs are written in a minor key. The notes are the same as in a major scale, but the key note is actually "La". For example, the key of E-flat major has identical notes as the key of C minor. Refer to the illustration.

Songs with a minor key have a sad or mysterious mood. They are usually more difficult to sing and require more expertise to lead.

The chromatic scale consists of 12 distinct tones each a half step apart.

F. Pitch Instrument

Almost unavoidably, to be sure of pitch, some sort of instrument must be used. A tuning fork works fine but is somewhat difficult to use. Perhaps the most expedient method is a metal reed type chromatic pitch instrument or "pitch pipe" used commonly by a cappella barber-shop groups. You will want to

make the small but very worthwhile investment to purchase one of these from your local musical instrument store.

As an alternative, some leaders pitch by ear, but this requires tremendous skill. They sometimes use the natural upper or lower limit of their voice range as a reference point and go from there. Needless mistakes are frequent which can be avoided if a pitch instrument is used.

One song leader had determined that the fluorescent lights in the auditorium hummed very close to A-flat. He used that as a reference to pitch his songs. Whatever method we choose, it should be easy and reliable.

Once you have determined the key in which the song is written, you are ready to pitch the song.

G. Pitching A Song

It is best to let the congregation know the pitch of the song you have chosen before the song begins. Don't expect them to figure it out for themselves halfway through the first line. Only by giving the pitch will you be able to have anyone singing with you on the first note.

To do this, some song leaders simply sound the beginning note of the melody. Many leaders sound or sing the key note. The advantage to this is that those singing harmony can also find their note. Most songs begin with all parts forming a triad, or three-note chord, of the first, third, and fifth tones of the scale, or do, mi, sol (la, do, mi, for minor keys).

Some leaders sing "do, mi, sol" to help establish pitch. This is probably the best method of informing the congregation of the pitch.

It is important to accurately match the tone of your voice to the tone sounded on the pitch instrument. Maintain that note until the song begins. If you cannot consistently match your voice with the correct pitch, you will need to devote more time to practice. Someone else will have to tell you if you miss the note. If you cannot do it, it stands to reason you will not be able to hear that you cannot.

We should be careful not to over emphasize these technical aspects. Song leaders need the opportunity to grow and develop. Nevertheless, an inept song leader can render an entire song service lifeless and greatly diminish effectiveness by using improper pitch. Song leading is perhaps the most technically demanding part of the worship service, and proper pitch is critical.

The proper pitch of a song is too often given little thought when singing songs of oral tradition. These are the songs that may have the lyrics printed but have no music notation in written form. Many of these popular tunes have complex melodies and rhythmical patterns, so chaos in the singing can easily result if good leadership is not exercised. To avoid problems, determine the best pitch for the song in advance and make a note of it. When preparing to lead such a song, give the audience the pitch as you would for a notated song, and direct it with your hand (explained later).

H. Reading Music

In reading music, the simplest thing to remember is that if the notes are ascending, the tones you sing should go up, too. If the notes are descending your voice should go down. If a group of notes are all on the same line of the staff, the pitch of your voice should be constant.

Your ability to read music on sight will be determined by the degree of natural skill you possess and your amount of practice. In many instances, it is not of utmost importance that the notes are sung exactly as written. However, in some cases, if the melody is sung incorrectly, the parts will not harmonize.

You may find two songs that have the same lyrics but a different melody. With just a little music reading ability, you should be able to tell whether the melody you know is the one written in the song. Be careful not to lead the wrong melody of the song you selected. It will be difficult for others to follow, especially those singing harmony.

I. Musical Notation And Pitch - Conclusion

Proper pitch is essential to insuring a positive situation where all may participate comfortably. Certainly none of us would want to do anything which would inhibit the teaching of another individual. Improperly pitched songs place an unnecessary obstacle in the way of others we are trying to teach and edify.

One might reason that the congregation should be more tolerant of our inability. However, you have the opportunity to change the situation whereas those in the audience do not. We therefore should think more of others than ourselves.

*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
(Philippians 2:4)*

LETTER POSITIONS ON THE GRAND STAFF

← one octave →

steps: 1 | 1 | 1/2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/2 | 1 | 1 | 1/2 | 1 |

"FACE"

ASCENDING CHROMATIC NOTES ON THE TREBLE STAFF

Top: Using Sharps
Bottom: Using Flats and Naturals

A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G G# A
Bb Db Eb Gb Ab

ACCIDENTALS

Sharps (#) raise a note 1/2 step
Flats (b) lower a note 1/2 step
Naturals (♮) cancel sharps and flats

Key Signature = E \flat

E \flat E F# E E \flat B B \flat A A B \flat B \flat A

MIXED QUARTET

Treble Clef (G-Clef) (G) →

SOPRANO: High Female Voices (usually carries lead melody)

ALTO: Low Female Voices

Bass Clef (F-Clef) (F) →

TENOR: High Male Voices

BASS: Low Male Voices

MALE QUARTET

Alternate Symbol

(middle C) →

Alto Clef (C-Clef)

COUNTER TENOR: Very High Voices

TENOR: Moderately High Voices

(F) →

Bass Clef (F-Clef)

Alternate Symbol

BARITONE: Moderately Low Voices

BASS: Very Low Male Voices

KEY SIGNATURES

C G D A E B F#

Go Down And Eat Big Fish

C F B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat

Fat Boys Eat Apples Dropped Green

MAJOR DIATONIC SINGING SCALE SHAPED NOTES

Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do

E-FLAT MAJOR DIATONIC SCALE

▲ ◆ ● ← Do, Mi, Sol = E \flat Major Chord

E \flat F G A \flat B \flat C D E \flat

Steps: 1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do

E-FLAT CHROMATIC SCALE

E \flat E F G \flat G A \flat A B \flat B C D \flat D E \flat

Steps: 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2

Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do

C MINOR SCALE

■ ▲ ◆ ← La, Do, Mi = C Minor Chord

C D E \flat F G A \flat B \flat C

Steps: 1 1/2 1 1 1/2 1 1

La Ti Do Re Mi Fa Sol La

VI. Timing And Tempo

Modern songs are built upon the framework of time. In order for a song leader to be most effective, he needs to be able to coordinate together a great many voices in an organized manner. This necessitates a basic working knowledge of musical timing on the part of the song leader and the ability to convey these few essentials to the participants.

So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. (2 Chronicles 29:35)

A. Timing

Our songs are regulated by time. Time is marked out in a song with a definite number of beats of equal duration. The beats are grouped together usually in twos, threes, fours, or combinations thereof. The first beat of each group has an accent. This grouping of the beats and accents creates a rhythm you can feel in a song.

Time in written music is represented graphically along the staff: the horizontal lines on which the notes are written. Think of the staff as a time line. The groups of beats are represented as subdivided sections in the staff called measures. Measures are separated by vertical lines or bars in the staff. Each measure contains the same number of beats and therefore the same interval of time.

Technically speaking, music is a series of notes and rests of variable duration. The timing of the notes and rests is arranged to coordinate with the groups of beats in each measure.

The various symbols for notes and rests indicate how much relative time each has. A whole note and rest always has some given number of beats. A half note and rest has one-half the number of beats in a whole note; a quarter note has one quarter; an eighth note has one eighth, and so on. For instance, if an eighth note and rest gets one beat, a quarter note gets two, a half note gets four, and a whole note gets eight.

The two numbers at the beginning of the song is the time signature. The top number of the time signature indicates how many beats are in a measure. The bottom number indicates how many beats are in a whole note or rest. For example, in 3/4 time, 3 beats are in a measure and a whole note gets 4 beats; a quarter note gets one beat.

Frequently, the first measure of a song is missing some beats. In these cases, the missing beats are contained in the last measure. This way, the last and first measures combined are actually one measure as the next verse of the song begins.

In mathematical terms, the sum of the number of beats contained in notes and rests within a measure equals the specified number of beats per measure.

Refer to the illustration for the relative timing of notes and rests.

B. Special Notations

A dot after a note or a rest is called a dotted note or dotted rest. This increases the time by one half. For instance, if a half note gets 2 beats, a dotted half note gets 3 beats.

In rare cases, a note is followed by two dots. This increases the time by three quarters. For illustration, if a half note gets 2 beats, a double dotted half note gets 3-1/2.

A small "3" over a group of notes or rests is called a triplet. This means that the 3 notes or rests take the same time as two of the same value. Think: "trip-o-let-trip-o-let-trip-o-let".

A curved line over a group of notes is called a tie or slur. (Specifically, it is a tie if the notes are of the same degree and a slur if they ascend or descend.) This indicates the notes are smoothed together without an interruption or breath. In many song books the flags of eighth and sixteenth notes are tied together as a shorthand method of indicating a slur or tie.

Refer to the illustration for special notations.

C. Full Counts

Keep full counts. The song should flow with an even, steady rhythm. Do not rush through holds or rests at the end of a verse or phrase. This gives all the singers a chance to breathe. Besides, rushing through does not help keep up the pace as some may think. There's no need to be in a hurry to get to the next phrase.

For practice, try singing with a metronome. If you don't have a metronome, tie a small weight to the end of a string and let it hang from a fixed object. Start the weight swinging back and forth. Notice that the rate of oscillation is the same whether it swings a lot or just a little. You can slow it down by adding weight or increasing the string length. This makes a crude but effective metronome.

As you sing with your metronome, try to stay on beat; don't get ahead of it or lag behind. Adjust the speed to a rate suitable for the song selected. Try a song you're very familiar with so you can look at the metronome rather than your book. You may find that you have not been singing with a consistent pace. Try to train yourself to maintain a steady rhythm throughout the song.

Give those singing harmony time to sing their part. Hold the end of the song for all the counts, and pause briefly before starting the next verse. Remember that a beat is a pulse with a duration. In practicality, for example, the third beat of a measure should continue until the beginning of the fourth beat. Keep this in mind when counting out dotted half notes in common time.

D. Tempo And Mood

Tempo specifies how much actual time one beat has. Tempo is effectively the "speed" of a song. The difference between timing and tempo can be illustrated by an automobile motor. In the cylinder of a two-cycle internal combustion engine, timing relates to the order of events and their relative duration. For instance, in every two revolutions of the crank shaft, the intake valve opens, remains open for a time, and then closes. Likewise, the exhaust valve does the same at a different time. Furthermore, at a particular point in the cycle, the spark plug fires. This is timing. Tempo would simply relate to the engine's speed, expressed in revolutions per minute. In music, tempo can be described in terms of beats per minute.

Some songs, such as those about the crucifixion, are often intended to be sung more slowly. Other songs, such as those about evangelism, are often intended to be sung faster. It is important for the speed of the song to match the mood. A song of rejoicing should not sound like a dirge.

The song's time signature has nothing to do with tempo. For example, you can sing a song written in 6/8 time either slow or fast. The melody and message of the song will suggest its pace.

In general, don't lead songs unnecessarily fast or slow. Leading too fast makes it difficult to speak all the syllables of the words clearly. The, the message becomes garbled. If the song is too slow you may lose the attention of the singers.

The following is a list of standard musical tempo designations:

Largo -	a very slow tempo
Larghetto -	a somewhat slow tempo
Adagio -	a slow tempo in an easy, graceful manner
Andante -	a moderately slow tempo
Moderato -	a medium speed tempo
Allegretto -	a moderately fast tempo
Allegro -	a brisk, lively tempo
Presto -	a rapid tempo
Prestissimo -	a very rapid tempo

Many songs indicate the suggested speed written above the musical score using these terms.

Maintain the speed you begin with. Don't start a song faster than you actually intend to sing it, only to let the tempo drop. If the group refuses to keep up, try to continue without stopping the song, which is one of the most disruptive things you can do. After the song is completed, tactfully instruct them to pay more attention to keep up the tempo on the next song and continue. Using a hand movement to lead and singing at a strong volume will best keep the song on track.

E. Hand Directing

Hand movements are recommended, particularly to direct the harmony parts. Three basic hand movements are all that's suggested to lead most songs: a two beat, a three beat, and a four beat motion. These patterns are easily applied to songs having six, nine, or twelve beats per measure as shown on illustration page.

Some songs contain time signature changes. For example, the verses may have 3 beats per measure and the chorus 4 beats per measure. This will require changing the pattern of your hand motion during the song. This has no effect on tempo.

Move your hand with a relaxed, natural motion that flows with the rhythm. Do not use a mechanical motion like a drum major or something flashy like a maestro. No two song leaders are alike; develop your own style, but keep it very simple. Avoid slight hand movements so that those in the back can see what you are doing. In contrast, do not wave your hand with an exaggerated, distracting gyration.

Try holding a string-type metronome described earlier in your hand while you practice. Adjust the speed by the string length and sing along. You can feel the beat in your hand, and this will help you learn to make a smooth and steady motion.

A hand movement is essential to getting all the singers to start and stop at the same time. Obviously, if some are stopping as some are going, confusion results, and order is lost. When starting, hold up your book (not in front of your face), hold out your hand without moving it, and look at the audience. When you see you have their attention, begin the song with a motion from your hand. It is a good idea to indicate with your hand one beat just before the one you actually start singing on.

Direct all the parts completely through the song; keep aware of what the other parts are singing. Your hand should guide them through any fill-in or back-up vocals to maintain rhythm. If you do not end the song with a motion from your hand, you will hear the voices kind of fade away at the end. It is a small thing, but it all adds up for an well ordered service.

If you do not presently use hand motions, you may wish to begin with an easier method. Use just an up and down motion to simply mark out the beats. This can be used with any number of beats per measure. Think of it as tapping your foot, but with your hand. After you become comfortable with that, You may want to try different directing patterns, which give more complete indication of the song's rhythm.

Another method is to just mark out the syllables by hand. This will probably wear you down on a faster song with a lot of syllables. It is also easy to let the song drag, as your hand has to move very fast to keep up. This method is not recommended, however, if you do this, be consistent, and mark out the syllables for fill in vocals as well.

F. Tempo Variations

A half circle over a dot as a bird's eye in appearance is called a "fermata". It indicates that the note or rest is to be prolonged at the discretion of the leader. Your hand motion is critical to keeping the congregation together.

Special terms are used to indicate portions of a song that speed up or slow down:

Ritardando, abbreviated "rit": slow down,

Accelerando, abbreviated "acc": speed up.

The phrase "a tempo" means to resume the original speed after a ritardando or accelerando.

G. Timing And Tempo - Conclusion

The authors of the songs we sing in worship have chosen words intended to stimulate, motivate, and touch our hearts with God's grace. Likewise, they have set these words in a fitting rhythm to arouse a personal and emotional response on the part of the participants. We have the opportunity to make our songs as persuasive as possible by setting the tempo of our songs with an inspiring pace.

"Let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel." 1 Corinthians 14:12

TIME SIGNATURES

	Whole	Dotted Half	Half	Dotted Quarter	Quarter	Dotted 1/8th	1/8th	1/16th
Number of Beats:	4	3	2	1-1/2	1	3/4	1/2	1/4
Number of Beats:	2	1-1/2	1	3/4	1/2	3/8	1/4	1/8
Number of Beats:	8	6	4	3	2	1-1/2	1	1/2

TIMING EXAMPLES

		Measure Bars			Triplet													
	Beats:	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1/2	1/2	1 3/4	1/4					
	Beats:	4	1	1	1	1	1 1/2	1/2	1 1/2	1/2	2	2	1	3				
	Beats:	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 1/2	1/2	1 1/2	1/2	1 1/2	1/2	3	3	1	5
					Alternate Symbol for Quarter Rest													

SPECIAL MUSICAL SYMBOLS

Accents
Staccato

Crescendo
Fermata
Diminuendo
Grace Note (Appoggiatura)

Tie
Slur
Ledger Line

Explanation of Symbols:

- Accent: Note to be sung with emphasis
- Staccato: Notes to be distinct and disconnected with a slight accent
- Crescendo: Gradually increasing in volume
- Diminuendo: Gradually decreasing in volume, also called decrescendo
- Fermata: To be sustained or prolonged at the leader's discretion
- Grace Notes: Embellishing notes to enhance the melody
- Tie: Notes of the same pitch to be held unbroken
- Slur: Notes of different pitch to be smooth and unbroken

DIRECTING BY HAND

Two-Beat Hand Movement:

2

↑

↓

1

4,5,6

↑

↓

1,2,3

3,4

↑

↓

1,2

Three-Beat Hand Movement:

3

↗

↓

↖

2 ← 1

3,6

↗

↓

↖

2,5 ← 1,4

7,8,9

↗

↓

↖

4,5,6 ← 1,2,3

Four-Beat Hand Movement:

4

↗

↓

↖

2 → 3

↘

1

10,11,12

↗

↓

↖

4,5,6 → 7,8,9

↘

1,2,3

half

↗

↓

↖

half → 2,4

↘

1,3

VII. Musical Dynamics And Terminology

If a public speaker reads from the scriptures with a persistently dull monotone, he is likely to lose the attention of the hearers, and his message will not be conveyed. However, if he speaks with inflection, adding feeling with a pleasant, lilting voice, the message is easily conveyed to the attentive audience.

So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8)

So it is with singing. If we sing our songs with similar dynamic variations, we can add considerably more affection to our songs. Frequently in scripture we read of worshipers shouting aloud with joy. In our singing there are times we need to be more subdued, but there are also times we need to make the rafters ring as well.

And they sang, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, "For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. (Ezra 3:11)

A. Accents

A dot over a note is called "staccato", which is to be sung with a short punch.

Accent marks (>) are called sforzando and indicate a note to be sung with emphasis.

Some parts are intended to be sung more loudly or more softly for a dynamic impact. This is indicated by the following loudness abbreviations:

pp:	pianissimo -	"very soft"
p:	piano -	"soft"
mp:	mezzo piano -	"medium soft"
m:	mezzo -	"medium"
mf:	mezzo forte -	"medium loud"
f:	forte -	"loud"
ff:	fortissimo -	"very loud"

The congregation usually has a tendency to slow down when they sing softer. The leader should try to overcome this and maintain speed or else the song will become increasingly slower as the soft parts are repeated. This is where hand motion and eye contact will be especially beneficial in getting the congregation to follow your lead.

Sometimes there is nothing you can do to get the congregation to sing a part softly short of stopping the song, which is not recommended. Try to remember the next time you lead the song with the soft part to tactfully instruct the congregation before beginning. If you do this with consistency, the singers will eventually become more familiar with softness variations and start following your lead without introductory remarks.

Refer to Appendix A for further explanation for various musical terms.

B. Dynamic Variations

Many of the songs in our books indicate dynamic variations in tempo and loudness. These are intended to convey the mood and express the feeling the author intended. Pay attention to these notations for the greatest effectiveness.

With experience, you will begin to anticipate which kind of dynamics create certain responses. Feel free to make variations on your own which are not noted in the score to suit your own needs. Perhaps you determine a deeper feeling may be achieved by making certain alterations. For example, consider singing one verse softer than the others or the chorus faster, and so on, depending on the message. By speeding or slowing, softening or making louder certain portions, you can enhance the emotion of the song.

If you do decide to improvise with your own dynamic variations, be sure to keep it simple. Some song leaders, in their quest for cleverness, come up with such complicated schemes that the congregation becomes confused and annoyed. This is the exact opposite of the desired effect. Also, make sure you let the assembly know ahead of time what you intend to do. Keep your explanation to the point and free of technical terms.

C. Following The Musical Score

D.C. (Da Capo) means return to the beginning and repeat to the word "Fine". D.S. (Dal Segno) means return to the sign ":S:" and repeat to the word "Fine". "Fine" is the end of the song.

Repeat dots are used to mark the beginning and ending of a phrase which is to be repeated. After singing to the repeat dots at the left of the heavy bar, go back to the repeat dots at the right of the heavy bar and repeat the phrase one time.

With first and second endings, sing through the first ending to the repeat dots and return to the repeat dots at the right of the heavy bar. Repeat to the beginning of the first ending, then skip over to the second ending to conclude the song.

These movements in the score are short-hand methods for writing music. Refer to the illustration for a diagrammatic explanation of movements.

Don't feel the need to adhere too closely to the written music. Many songs are traditionally sung a little differently than exactly as written, but this is alright, as long as disorder does not result. Be tolerant and work with the technical ability of the congregation. Don't stop the song during a worship service and tell them they're singing it wrong. A private setting is a better time to try to make these corrections.

D. Dynamics And Terminology - Conclusion

Spirited singing comes from deep within the heart. Our feelings and sense of praise to God can vigorously and dynamically be expressed with words, melody, rhyme, and rhythm. These are tools useful for adding energy and a greater consciousness to our service.

The effective song leader is capable of utilizing these benefits and is familiar with the terminology.

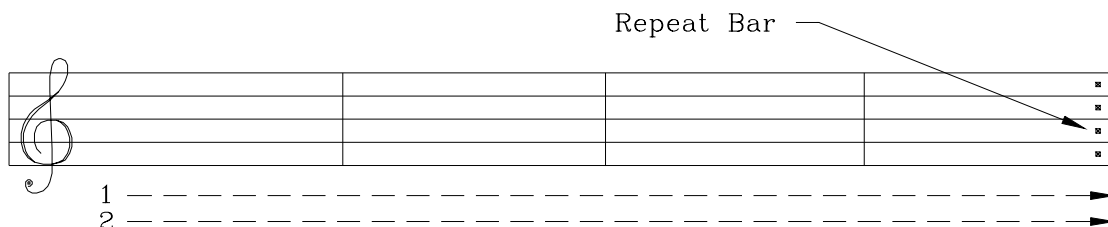
FOLLOWING THE MUSICAL SCORE

Explanations Follow

Repeat Bars:

Line 1: Begin and follow to the repeat dots, then return to start.

Line 2: Repeat the passage and continue past the repeat dots.

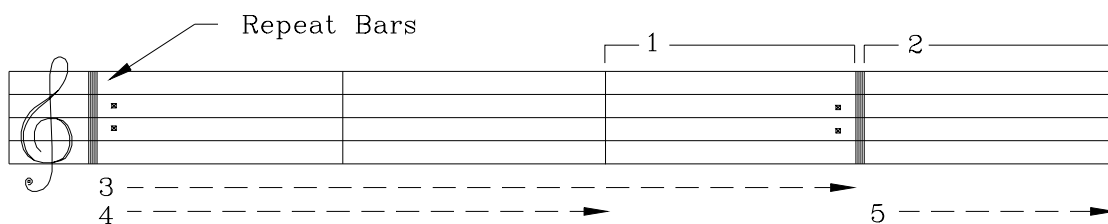


First and Second Endings:

Line 3: Follow to the next repeat dots through phrase 1.

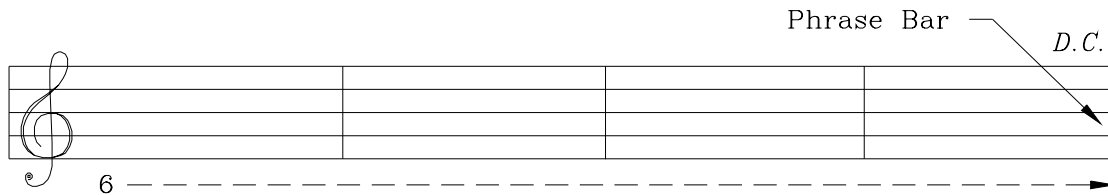
Line 4: Return to the reversed repeat bar and follow up to phrase 1.

Line 5: Skip phrase 1, continuing on phrase 2 and the next line.



Da Capo:

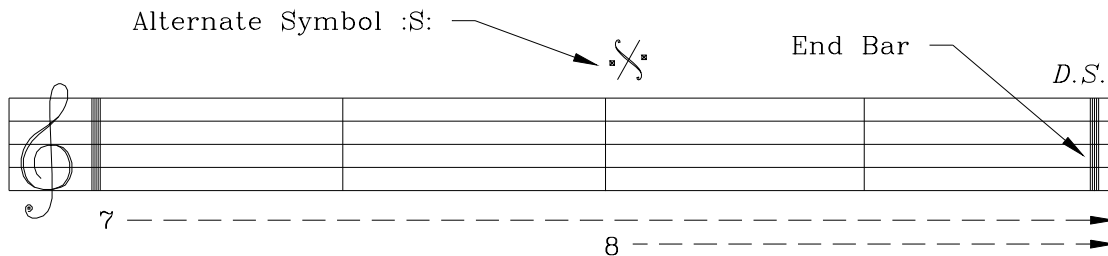
Line 6: Follow through to D.C., then return to the beginning.



Dal Segno:

Line 7: At D.S., go to the special symbol

Line 8: Then continue on to the end



Summary

Our singing to God can serve many purposes, but our primary purpose is to hold up the gospel to the world as a truly glorious and precious thing. As we sing unto the Lord and to one another, always keep in mind our need to share with others the treasure we have found, and they will hear it in our voices.

The song leader, therefore, has an important and complicated task. To do it well requires not only a certain natural ability, but a strong desire, the motivation to practice, and a willingness to improve.

Our hope is that your participation in this study will increase your effectiveness in the service of God.

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds ... encouraging one another. (Hebrews 10:24, 25, NAS)

VIII. Appendices

A. Appendix - Glossary

The following list of musical terms and abbreviations should be helpful particularly in cases where special notations appear in the musical score.

Adlibitum	Not so important that it cannot be omitted, abbreviated "ad lib."
Allabreve	Cut time, or 2/2 time
Allargando	To sing the words with open emphasis on the vowel sounds, abbreviated "allarg."
Alto	The part for low female voices.
Antiphon	A song sang in alternate parts in response to one another. e.g. antiphonal hymn
Appoggiatura	Grace notes.
Bar	Vertical lines in the staff dividing the measures.
Baritone	The part for moderately low male voices in a male quartet.
Bass	The part for low male voices.
Brace	Any connecting symbols such as {} used to connect words, lines or staves.
Chorus	The portion of a song recurring usually with the same lyrics and music at the end of each stanza.
Clef	The special symbol at the beginning of the staff to indicate the position of the notes.
Coda	A final refrain to be sung at the end of a song.
Common Time	4/4 time indicated by the symbol "C" in the time signature.
Counter Tenor	The part for very high male voices in a male quartet.
Cut Time	2/2 time indicated by the symbol " " in the time signature. Also called alla breve.
Descant	A second melody or counterpart accompanying a the basic melody.
Duet	A song or portion of a song with two-part harmony.
End bar	A double heavy bar at the end of the staff indicating the end of the song.
Forte	Loud, abbreviated "f"
Fortissimo	Very loud, abbreviated "ff"
Grace notes	Smaller notes without shapes appearing in the score for optional embellishment of an essential melodic note, also called appoggiatura.

Ledger lines	Short lines added above or below a musical staff to extend its range..
Legato	Smooth and connected without breaks between the notes.
Mezzo	Medium volume, abbreviated "m"
Mezzo forte	Medium loud, abbreviated "mf"
Mezzo piano	Medium soft, abbreviated "mp"
Middle C	A note at the middle of the average human voice range designated by one ledger line below the treble staff or one ledger line above the bass staff. The first C above the standard "440" A.
Molto	Much, very, used to describe loudness or tempo.
Obbligato	So important that it cannot be omitted.
Octave	Two tones 8 diatonic steps apart. The range spanned by these notes.
Phrase Bar	A heavy vertical bar in the staff indicating a separation in major portions of a song, as used to separate the verses from the chorus.
Pianissimo	Very soft, abbreviated "pp"
Piano	Soft, abbreviated "p"
Poco	Somewhat, rather; (e.g: poco rit. - somewhat slower).
Poco a poco	Gradually, little by little.
Quartet	A song or portion of a song with four-part harmony.
Quintet	A song or portion of a song for five voices.
Refrain	A synonym for chorus.
Ritardano	Slow down, abbreviated "rit"
Sanctus	A special refrain proclaiming God's holiness.
Soprano	The part for high female voices, usually carrying the melody. Song leaders sing this part an octave lower.
Score	The musical composition in written notation.
Sforzando	Also sforzato, abbreviated sf., sfz., with emphasis: symbol ">", "^".
Solmization	The system of using syllables to denote the notes of a musical scale.
Solo	A song or portion of a song written for only one part, with or without backup vocals.
Staff	The horizontal lines on which the notes are written. Plural: staves.
Stanza	The verses which are repeated with different lyrics but the same music.

Tenor	The part for high male voices.
Trio	A song or portion of a song with three-part harmony.
Tutti	A song or portion of a song having all the voices singing together.
Unison	To sing with all parts singing the same notes, perhaps separated by octaves.
Vigoroso	To be sung with an energetic style.

B. Appendix - How Song Leaders Contribute

An Article By Royce Chandler

The singing, more than any other one think, sets the mood for the entire assembly. And the song leader is the one who usually determines the kind of atmosphere that will prevail over the period of worship. To be responsible for finding a way to get an entire assembly to focus off the world and on the Lord, to lead them to give a unified effort to praise God with enthusiasm, and to lead them through the singing to be ready to give their attention to the sermon of the hour, is a heavy responsibility. It requires careful thought and preparation. It often requires an intimate knowledge of the personality of the audience. It requires in intentional inclusion of some songs and the intentional exclusion of others. It requires a high level of skill in the actual leading of songs, including knowing how to work with an audience that is not immediately responsive to the leader's efforts to establish a clearly spiritual tone to the assembly, so as to lead them to a proper frame of mind. The difference between good singing and ordinary singing is usually due to the difference between a song "leader" and a song "starter."

Listless, perfunctory, unspirited singing usually produces a listless audience--an audience that appears to be nothing more than mere spectators. Their detachment from the speaker and his subject is evident in their placid faces. A skilled leader of songs can make all the difference. Until a congregation understands and acts on this fact, its singing will likely be uninspiring and can actually be the chief contributing cause of an all-around unstimulating assembly.

A song "leader" understands songs: what they say, the mood they set, the purpose of their tempo, how they can be used to positively manipulate an audience to a desired end, and how to lead them effectively. He picks songs with a specific purpose in mind for each song and leads them in a carefully thought-out order. His purpose is to establish a spiritual atmosphere for the assembly and to "set up" the audience for the lesson of the hour. He spends whatever time is necessary to choose songs that will best accomplish those goals. He leads them, not only at the proper pitch and tempo, but also with both authority and enthusiasm.

A song "starter" may know little or nothing about the above items. His criteria for selecting songs is merely to find some he knows or to select his favorite ones, regardless of their appropriate or inappropriate nature. He pays little attention to proper pitch and tempo, often killing the true benefit of the songs through his inept leadership. He means well, but he simply is not qualified for the job.

In planning gospel meetings, we often plan years ahead to be sure we can schedule just the right speaker, and then we turn around and guarantee him an unprepared audience by appointing a bunch of "song starters" to be responsible for the singing. We may spend \$1000 or more for that week's meeting, and then consistently set up each audience to be listless and disinterested because of the poor song service. It's like a football team spending a fortune on a star quarterback and then providing him with only a mediocre supporting cast. Assuming it isn't important who hikes, punts, catches, or runs with the ball is foolish. Even the "sons of this world" are wiser than that. Whether the song leader compares to the center, the punter, or whatever, he needs to be the best you've got. What he does with the audience at the beginning of the assembly will largely determine what the speaker is able to do with it when it is handed over to him.

The local church must recognize the key importance of using a skilled "leader" of songs instead of just anyone who can stand up and start one. If necessary, obtain a skilled leader from another local church. It is right to import the speaker, it is equally right to import the one who prepares the audience for the speaker's lesson.

If you are asked to lead songs for a meeting, consider these suggestions for doing an effective job of truly leading your audience.

- Find out what the sermon subject will be and pick song that fit it.
- Pick songs the audience is familiar with; save learning for later.
- Pick songs that vary in length, speed and mood.
- Begin with an up-beat song to arouse and stimulate the audience.
- Use a similar song immediately before the sermon.
- Avoid songs that focus on mechanics rather than on the message.
- Create an informal atmosphere; put the audience at ease.
- Give a brief summary of the message of each song before singing it.
- Use a pitch pipe or tuning fork to get the pitch right.
- Give the starting pitch and clearly indicate what verses to sing.
- Be sincerely enthusiastic and let it show to your audience; they will follow your lead.
- Be sure to keep the songs at their proper tempo.
- Gently and tactfully control the audience; don't let them control the songs by singing too fast or too slow.
- The key: know ahead of time exactly what you want to accomplish and how you intend to accomplish it.

C. Appendix - Tips For The Congregation: Song Following

Some instructional information for the congregation is beneficial to the song service also. This section presents some basic information for singing in a public worship assembly setting.

The musical ability of the each individual in attendance will vary greatly. Though there will be some who would be able to understand the technical material presented in this work, by and large, most people in attendance would not. Therefore, these singing tips are presented in a less technical way, whereas song leaders would be expected to have a deeper technical understanding.

Some information presented in this section will be a repeat from previous chapters. For convenience in presentation, they are repeated here.

As we begin, it is important to ask two questions:

1. What are we supposed to be doing?
2. How well are we doing it?

1. Our Purpose

By divine design, scripture shows our singing to serve these purposes:

- In the Old Testament, songs were often written to record historical events for their remembrance.
- Singing is a way we can give praise and glory to God, which magnifies Him before men.
- By singing we can express our thanksgiving to God and confess our faith before men.
- We can teach and admonish in songs, through instruction in sound doctrine.
- The wisdom of God is manifest by what we do in our song service.

In light of these facts, it becomes evident that our singing is something that that we as a body of God's people, not just song leaders, need to give careful consideration and even self examination. Of all the acts of assembled worship, singing involves the greatest degree of perceptible activity on the part of those assembled. However, just as the admonition is to partake of the Lord's Supper with discernment, the heart should likewise be in our singing. Similarly, as God expected the best of the livestock for a sacrifice, would He not also expect our best effort in this form of worship?

The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23, 24)

2. Get Involved

If a visitor comes and sees us singing in a half-hearted, easily distracted manner, they will likely make negative conclusions about us, whether justifiably or not. Conversely, when a visitor comes in and sees each member fully engaged in the song service, whatever our individual musical abilities might be, they are likely going to conclude that God has made real differences in each of our lives. This is typically not the scene in a denominational worship, where the instruments or a choir might carry the service.

Note that our worship is not for show. If you feel you are not a talented singer, do not let that dissuade you.

Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." (Luke 19:37-40)

Let our attitude be that, since God is in our midst, we cannot keep our silence, and that if we do, the walls of our building will cry out!

Singing is something anyone with a voice can do. God has not set criteria on our technical expertise but on the attitude of the heart. We should use the voices God has given us to our utmost ability. Notwithstanding, most people will actually be able to improve their singing, if they have never tried. The two most basic factors stressed by voice trainers is breathing and opening the mouth. Develop the habit to breathe utilizing the abdominal muscles for more power and greater sustain. Opening the mouth will improve word pronunciation and make the words easier to understand. For example, try to make sure people hear "And He walks with me," not "Andy walks with me."

We try to teach our song leaders how better to lead. Nevertheless, they will still sometimes make mistakes. They may pitch a song too high or too low, they may lead a song not well known, or they may go too slow. How should we respond when the song leader makes a mistake? We need to still make our best effort even in those situations. He needs us most then. It not the time to dally with kids, or put our songbook away in despair, or discuss the matter with others. Others will be distracted by our display of discontent.

3. Try To Keep The Pace

One of the most frequently heard complaints regarding congregational singing is that the songs drag. Two things can happen: either the song leader can start the song too slow from the beginning, or he can allow it to become gradually slower as the song goes on. The audience can do nothing about the former, but they can the latter. Song leaders are taught that it is their responsibility to keep up the tempo of a song, however, we can each make their job easier by doing our part to avoid this problem from our seats.

Listen for the pace of the tempo at the very start of a song. Song leaders usually have more influence on the congregation to lead with their voice than with hand directing. Also, look at the leader. Get your eyes up out of your book. This is easy to do if singing a familiar song, so take advantage of visual contact, especially if the song leader is using effective hand direction. Watch for slowing down and speeding up portions of a song and hold points (fermatas). Resist the tendency to slow down during softer portions. Try to follow the song leader's direction.

Those singing parts have a greater responsibility. Typically, these singers have more natural ability and musical understanding, so they have a unique opportunity to help. When harmony parts, such as alto or tenor, have lead portions or fill in, the song leader is usually not singing those parts. It is difficult for him to keep the pace in these cases with his voice, so keep the tempo moving for him.

4. Music Tips For People Of All Skill Levels

Avoid long slurs between notes where no slur is noted. Listen to the leader and others and try to stay on pitch. For some reason, a song will usually drop key a half step or sometimes even a whole step by the

end of the song. Give attention also to the timing, especially as involves dotted and flagged notes. Watch for portions that become softer or louder throughout the song. The song leader may request such dynamics in addition to what is noted in your book. Try to follow his lead.

Here are some common abbreviations used for musical dynamics:

pp:	"pianissimo"	very soft
p:	"piano"	soft
mp:	"mezzo piano "	medium soft
m:	"mezzo"	medium loudness
mf:	"mezzo forte"	medium loud
f:	"forte"	loud
ff:	"fortissimo"	very loud
rit:	"ritardano"	slow down
rall:	"rallentando"	gradually slower