

Song Selection

Song leaders face a difficult challenge in selecting songs for worship services. There are the 'old standards' that have been known and loved for many years and there are the newer songs preferred by many of our young people. What I favor is variety among scriptural songs.

When we sing only a few songs over and over again, they can become stale, and it is easy for us to simply mouth the words without thinking about them. So I try to make sure that the congregation where I am a member gets to use a variety of songs. Since several other song leaders are more comfortable with songs they have known for a long time, it's often my job to introduce some that are newer or less familiar. But one of my goals is enough variety that our minds remain occupied with the objective of worship, not overly confused by a wave of new & unknown things, and not lulled to sleep by endless repetition of a few familiar hymns.

Of the newer generation of songs, there are some that I will not lead because they seem to be written for their performance value rather than for edification. I am aware of a song in which the four vocal parts are singing four different sets of words at the same time, and it seems to me that this cannot lead to us edifying one another any more than (in the 1st Century) having four different prophets speaking at the same time rather than in turn (1 Cor. 14:29-30). I am aware of another song where the first verse is intended to be sung only by a few people, and those who sing soprano are invited to join only in the 4th verse, and I won't lead that one, either, because I don't think it's right for most of the audience to be sitting idle while 3 verses go by. I also think that the newer generation of songs tends to be more 'emotional'. What I mean is that they seem to be written to express more awe than praise - to emphasize our own reaction to God, and that tends to lead many of them to focus more on us than on God. That's not always a bad thing in small doses, but a couple of songs are written with so much 'mush' that I literally cannot understand what they are expressing. If I don't understand the message, I don't lead the song.

Our objective is to worship. Scriptural content is the first goal, and the second is an atmosphere where the focus is worship. Too little variety and too much novelty are both distracting, as I said above. Furthermore, a song should be within the vocal capabilities of the people in the audience, or it will fall flat and disrupt the mood.

- by Erin Percell

What Determines Right?

NOT REASON: "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching (message preached) to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21). "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:9).

NOT CONSCIENCE: "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day." (Acts 23:1). (This said by Paul, even though he had persecuted Christians).

NOT CUSTOM NOR TRADITION: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3). "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8).

NOT "AUTHORITIES": "And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your RULERS". (Acts 3:17).

NOT THE MAJORITY OR THE MASSES: "Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby." (Matt. 7:13).

BUT RATHER THE WORD OF GOD: It is reasonable, will make the conscience good, is God's "tradition", authoritative and intended for all.

- by **Bill Crews**

Aim Small, Miss Small

Jordan Spieth has made a name for himself in the world of professional golf. He's won titles at 'major' tour events and several other tournaments. He's certainly among the 'elites' in the field.

So, what is the key to his success? He follows this philosophy on the golf course -- "Aim small, miss small." He explains it this way: "The smaller the target that you can pick, the smaller your misses are going to be." Thus, instead of just aiming for the fairway in general, Spieth aims for a specific branch on a tree. He usually ends up where he wants to be – or very close to it. He breaks down every hole into its component parts, and then solves each of those parts in turn. The value of such an approach is obvious in the success Spieth has achieved.

Christians can benefit from a similar methodology when it comes to serving God. There are some huge challenges out there. The world is full of lost people, the moral climate is deteriorating, temptations are multiplying, and discouragements seem to be mounting. What can we do? The answer is: pick a small target, take aim, and shoot for it.

What do we mean? Well, instead of thinking of ALL the lost in the world – most of which we will never have the opportunity to personally reach – think of your neighbor, your co-worker, your near relative. Aim to reach these with the gospel. Rather than taking wide, random shots at converting the lost, try reaching out to someone you already know and have a relationship with. This is a proven strategy that will work. Or, in regards to dealing with temptation, try simple and obvious things that are sure to succeed. Turn off the TV, limit access to the Internet, etc. Take small achievable steps towards the greater objective. Or as Jordan Spieth says, "Aim small, miss small."

- by **Greg Gwin**