

Worship Music Advisory: Song Selection

Preaching.

Prayer.

Praise.

These three things are what come to the forefront of my mind when I think about what is essential in our worship services. Each element, preaching, prayer, and praise, should be anchored firmly in the word of God, for it is in God's word to us that we know Him and understand our purpose in life, which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever!

As music ministers, we should never allow the message of God's word to be eclipsed by other considerations. This is not to say that nothing else matters, however! In my mind, our selection of songs or hymns for our worship services should adhere to these three principles:

- The lyrics are theologically correct
- The music does not overwhelm or overshadow the singing
- The song is singable by the congregation

Now, the first item is paramount, but if the other 2 are not attended to properly, the message of the lyrics can be lost due to distraction!

Theologically Correct Lyrics

The importance of theologically correct lyrics cannot be overstated. Because of the nature of music and how our brain works, it is the songs that are the most likely element of the worship service to reverberate in a congregant's mind in the hours, days and even weeks after Sunday morning. Therefore, we should consider each song for its *instructional value*, and ensure that the lyrics align with, if not actually repeat, scripture itself. A song that corresponds with the sermon or theme of the service will have its instructional impact on a congregant multiplied.

Capable Musicians

We practice and rehearse for a variety of reasons, including

- To offer God our best
- To give glory to Christ
- To better enable the congregation to sing praise to our God.

The music is not meant to make the musicians look good; its purpose is to encourage and magnify singing praise to our Lord! Song structure, vocal range, sound levels, and more need to not only be pleasing to the ear, but encouraging to the voice.

Sing!

Music can be a form of entertainment, and at ██████████ we have many gifted musicians, but we must not let our worship devolve into performers and audience. *We are all commanded to sing!* (Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19) The Psalmist says, “Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.” (Ps. 96:2) Congregational singing allows us to *own and affirm the Word of God, it engages our emotions with God’s Word, and our singing demonstrates and builds unity within the Body.* (From 9MarksJournal, May-June 2014) The role of the worship leader/team is to encourage and enable participation of each person in the singing during our worship services.

Conclusion

We are blessed to live in a free society where we are not inhibited by outside forces in our expressions of praise, and this age is a wonderful time when the selection and availability of sacred music is enormous! The Church’s hymnody is vast, neglected hymns are being resurrected with new arrangements and melodies, new songs appear daily that offer contemporary compositions combined with timeless truths, and even ancient songs from the early church (Odes of Solomon) have been rediscovered! The challenge we have is to select only songs that measure up to the three principles stated here. Let us not be satisfied with merely singing good songs; may our church be known for singing only the *best* songs, with Spirit-filled exuberance and conviction, to the glory of Christ!