

Getting beyond groove in worship planning --"Pick a song, (not just) any song!"

Fred J. Heumann

In the rush and pressure of planning, it is temptingly easy to just go with the new "hot" song, or to stick to our favorites. Even easier is to purely pick songs that fit our particular style or preference or just fit, period!

No matter what our service structure or focus, no matter what kind of time budget we have for worship songs, we as worship leaders have a pastoral responsibility to create services that really lead people into an encounter with God and into becoming growing followers of Jesus.

These 60-70+ questions are designed to stimulate your thinking as you plan for worship. Not all of them apply in every given situation, but cover points you will need to consider often. Always prayerfully allow the Holy Spirit to guide your decisions as you plan. Be sensitive to His leading both before and during the worship set. Be open to Him changing the agenda as well!

I. Song

- A. Does the song speak to me?
 - 1. *Does it bring me to an encounter with God?*
- B. Is it brand-new?
- C. Is it over-used and worn out?
 - 1. *If so, can I revive it or adapt it?*
- D. When did we last sing it?
- E. Do I have the people who can play and sing this well?
 - 1. *How does it compare to the songs we already use?*
- F. Does the congregation know it?
 - 1. *If not, how easy is it to learn?*
 - 2. *How will I teach it?*
- G. How are our people likely to respond to this/these?
- H. What does the song say?
 - 1. *Most people get their theology from what they sing...*
 - 2. *Is there high theological content, or is it more of a responsive love song?*
 - 3. *Not just head assent, but individual response*
 - 4. *Not pure emotion, but Biblical content*
- I. Do I agree with what the song says?
 - 1. *Is it Biblical in it's content?*
- J. Are these the kind of words I want to put in the mouths and hearts of our people?

II. Scripture

- A. What other Scriptures relate to this?
- B. Are the song lyrics taken straight from Scripture?
- C. Are they a paraphrase?
- D. What Scripture can I read as part of the set?
 - 1. *or have the people read aloud together...*
 - 2. *or read antiphonally?*
- E. What version would be best?

III. Set

A. Start

1. How much time do I have?
 - *Figure 5-6 minutes per song minimum for initial planning*
2. Where do I want the people to end up?
3. Are there songs we've taught in the past that need reinforcement?
4. What concept do I want to teach?
5. Is it time to teach a new song?
 - *How will I teach it?*
 - *Sing only the melody first, don't belabor it, but learn it right*
 - *Does the team know it?*
6. What new song is it time to teach?
 - *Do I have the charts?*
 - *Are the lyrics in a projectable format?*
7. What hymn would fit in with this set?

B. Analyze

1. Have I covered "spirit and truth"?
2. Have I left room for the Holy Spirit to move?
3. What's the content/direction of the set?
 - *intercessory songs*
 - *intimate worship songs*
 - *prophetic declarations*
 - *psalms*
 - *hymns*
 - *other*
4. Have I beat the topic into the ground?
5. Musical
 - *Are the songs singable?*
 - *Are they in singable keys?*
 - *Effective range--C-C*
 - *Lowest note--A-Bb*
 - *Highest note--D-Eb*
 - *Is there a progression of keys?*
 - *Is there variety in tempo, texture?*
 - *Where would I put an instrumental verse or solo?*
 - *Who will do the transitions?*
6. Emotional
 - *Direction or "worship attitude"...*
 - *Are the songs in the right order?*
 - *Would changing them around help?*
 - *Do they still make sense?*
 - *What physical responses are appropriate?*
 - *Do the songs relate topically, or is there a trite repetition of the same thought over and over?*
 - *Graph the set 'emotionally'*
 - *Play through them yourself--is there a thought flow?*

7. Spiritual

- *How do these relate to Scripture?*
- *Where does this lead emotionally/theologically/doctrinally?*
- *Can these songs transition easily?*
 - Put yourself in the situation.
Read through the lyric in sequence.
What links are there?
- *What can I say/should I say to exhort the congregation in their response?*
- *Does this lead people to an encounter with God?*
- *What is the Lord saying about the ministry impact of this set?*
- *What will this look like when I'm done (in faith)?*
 - What will have happened in the hearts of the people, in the room, in the heavenlies?

8. Have I covered both input and response?

9. Are the songs horizontal or vertical?

10. Have I considered unity in theme; variety and progression in mood

- *"Something old, something new; something borrowed, something blue..."*

11. Where is repetition needed/possible?

IV. Service

- A. What is the purpose of the meeting?
 - 1. *Why are we gathering together in this particular instance?*
- B. What's the sermon/message about?
 - 1. *What's the heart of the teaching?*
 - 2. *What is the main application point?*
- C. What Scriptures are to be referenced?
- D. What is the season of the Church year?
 - 1. *Advent/Christmas*
 - 2. *Holy Week/Easter*
 - 3. *Pentecost/Ascension*
 - 4. *Other...*
- E. What is the desired response?
- F. What might the emotional response be to the truth presented?
 - 1. *How do I encourage that?*
 - 2. *How do I allow for that?*
- G. What immediately proceeds/follows the worship set?
- H. Have I allowed room for response?
 - 1. *What will we do in response?*
- I. What other songs should I have ready, just in case?
- J. Are there liturgical elements that I can add?
 - 1. *set prayers*
 - 2. *creed*
 - 3. *responsive reading*
- K. What has God done in recent services?
- L. What has the Lord been speaking to you about recently?

V. Additional simple ideas for growth through your worship

- A. Some principles to teach
 - 1. *Singing!*
 - 2. *Intimacy*
 - 3. *Celebration*
 - 4. *Physical-ity/posture*
 - 5. *Passion and reality*
 - 6. *What kind of worship does God call for?*
 - Not purely personal preference
 - 7. *Personal worship*
- B. Create a "repertoire reservoir"
 - 1. *Have a back list of songs that you plan to use or would like to teach*
 - 2. *Do the research needed to find or write them, if necessary*
 - 3. *Have your team getting familiar with these in advance (mp3, music)*
- C. Do a cross-reference/index of songs
 - 1. *Topical*
 - 2. *Keys*
 - 3. *Feel*
 - 4. *Tempo*
 - 5. *Scripture*
- D. Keep track of song usage
 - 1. *For CCLI reporting*
 - 2. *To avoid over-repetition and under use*
- E. Plan for introducing new songs
 - 1. *Two a month*
 - 2. *Use them for three times to establish them*

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