

Unless otherwise indicated, song numbers are from Hymns for Worship.

1. How should ability factor into song selection?

You cannot lead a song you do not know. The congregation cannot sing a song they don't know. If the ability of either you or the assembly is limited, choose songs without separate parts in the chorus and stick with simple tunes you are very familiar with.

2. How should lyrical soundness factor into song selection?

Paul commanded, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Colossians 3:16). Singing is a form of teaching, and we are accountable for what we teach (James 3:1), so hymns that impart accurate information are required.

3. What are some common doctrinal errors in hymns?

- 1) Prayer to Jesus is frequently taught. Sometimes, it is done egregiously, like in "Just a Little Talk with Jesus" (Sacred Selections #646, Songs of Faith and Praise #959), but more often it is subtle, like in "Sing and Be Happy" #683: "Look to Jesus and pray" in the fourth line of the chorus. This is contrary to direct instruction concerning prayer (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17) and Jesus' own prohibition against praying to Him (John 16:23).
- 2) Sometimes, touches of premillennialism get mixed in, such as in "I Know Whom I Have Believed" #350: "Nor if I'll walk the vale with Him, Or meet Him in the air" in the third verse. These lyrics imply that some souls will remain on earth while others ascend, but that is not so (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17).
- 3) Misapplying the words from the Song of Songs relevant to the beloved as if they are epithets for Christ Jesus is very common. "Rose of Sharon" and "Lily of the Valleys" are not referring to the Savior (Song of Songs 2:1), yet many songs so use those phrases that way: "The Lily of the Valley" #594 and "Jesus, Rose of Sharon" #445. Doing this may not be sinfully wrong, but using terms

of romantic endearment to describe the Lord will strike those aware of it as quite awkward.

- 4) Whom Jesus prayed and wept for in the garden on the night of His betrayal gets confused in some songs, too. "Weeping there for you and me" in the third verse of "In Gethsemane Alone" #170 does not accurately convey the fact that His repeated prayer that night was "*Let this cup pass from Me*" (Matthew 26:39).

4. When is it appropriate to skip verses?

- 1) When a verse, but not the whole song, contains error.
- 2) When certain verses, but not others, are apropos to the topic at hand.
- 3) When time is short in a rented facility.
- 4) When an additional song is being sung while a respondent to the gospel is preparing for baptism and that person is now ready.

Otherwise, do not make a habit of leaving out portions of a song. This can sometimes disrupt the narrative if the verses tell a story in order. It can also frustrate the member whose favorite hymn we are singing!

5. When is it important to sing topically appropriate hymns? When is it helpful, but not necessary? And when is best to sing general sings of praise?

- 1) The song before eating the Lord's Supper really ought to be focused on the death of Christ or the Supper in which that death is memorialized.

The song immediately following the exhortation should provoke hearers to answer the gospel call.

- 2) The song before taking up the collection could be about giving or thankfulness for blessings, but this is not essential.

The song before the exhortation could be about preaching or even on the topic about to be addressed, if it is known.

The song prior to dismissal can be about God protecting us while we are apart, or about implementing the lesson learned, but this is not required.

3) Opening songs are most appropriate for general songs of praise. Also any songs that are between other songs and not leading directly into a different aspect of worship are suited for general praise.

6. Be ready with a song or verse for each of the following topics:

a. Prayer

"Sweet Hour of Prayer" #73

"Did You Think to Pray?" #62

b. Collection

"Upon the First Day of the Week", verse 3, #177

"True Worship", verse 1, #178

"Count Your Blessings" #392

c. Exhortation

"Give Me the Bible" #500

"More About Jesus" #406

"Psalm 19" #439

d. Invitation

"Prepare to Meet Thy God" #297

"Nothing But the Blood" #269

"Let Him Have His Way with Thee" #343

e. Lord's Supper

"He Bore It All" #666

"Hallelujah! What a Savior!" #161

"The Lord's Supper" #171

f. Dismissal

"God Be with You" #512

"Be with Me, Lord" #72

"Abide with Me" #74

7. How should each hymn be announced?

Announce it three times:

1) Announce the song number one way: "One-Three"

2) Announce the title: "Alleluia"

3) Announce the song number another way: "Number Thirteen"

"Thirteen" and "thirty" can sound alike, so be careful to present the number in more than one way.

Once the hymnal is opened, someone may forget which page we are singing from, so announcing the title prevents confusion.

It is not necessary to say, "All found?", but it is appropriate to look and listen in order to confirm pages are no longer turning and the whole congregation is ready to sing.

8. When should the "invitation song" be announced?

This song gets announced before the exhortation is preached, not afterward. We want the congregation ready to immediately and enthusiastically invite sinners to be saved after the preacher has done so without any delay. Make sure, then, to encourage everyone to use the bookmark, so they're ready at the appropriate time.

9. Provide examples of obscure lyrics which deserve to be defined.

*"I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding"* (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:15). All should comprehend the meaning of the words that are sung.

1) "Ebenezer" means "stone of help" (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 7:12) in "O Thou Fount of Every Blessing" #420.

2) "Ebon Pinion" means "dark winged" in "Night, with Ebon Pinion" #162.

3) "Diadem" means "crown" (Isaiah 28:5) in "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" #434.

The song leader would do well to briefly explain the meanings of these words or phrases before asking the congregation to sing them.

10. If the congregation assembles where water is prepared for baptizing, what would be a good idea for the song leader to be ready with?

It would be prudent to have songs about salvation and baptism prepared both while the congregation waits for the one to change clothes to head into the water and while the congregation waits for that one to dry off and return.

If the church does not gather in a place that has a baptistry and will have to go to a lake or pool elsewhere, then the assembly can proceed as otherwise planned and those songs can be sung at the place of water.

The foregoing is intended to bring to light certain scriptural necessities relative to song leading, as well as certain practicalities that might be overlooked. Information about musical notation, pitching the song, and keeping the beat can be taught by someone knowledgeable in those things.