

## **Music and Children** By Dick Gruber

“Lord, be glorified, in the life of your servant.” I could hear sweet voices singing praise to our God. It was Sunday morning. I was on my way to one of our children’s church services. The song was drifting down the hall from our Sonshine Service. The Sonshine Service ministers to children Kindergarten through second grades. Before I arrived they were already worshipping Jesus.

Children are learning to worship Jesus in our children’s churches. Worship time in the children’s church is a time of preparation for fifty or sixty years of meaningful corporate worship, should Jesus tarry. Children are encouraged to take an active role in the body of Christ.

Have you ever wondered why so many adults simply sit and do nothing in church? I believe a big reason for this is that as children they were trained to sit and be quiet while the lesson was taught. The children’s worship service of today is a vibrant, living service where each child can find a place of ministry. Children are allowed, encouraged, and trained to minister one to another.

Worship in the children’s church or Sunday school class must stretch beyond hand raising and song singing. These are an important part of the formula. In our children’s church we play slow worship choruses creating a mood of respect and awe as children enter. Music is woven throughout the service as we praise Him in song, learn from Scripture, and respond at the altars.

Music plays a great role in leading the children into praise and a lifestyle of worship. Children love to enter the presence of God and music is a grand tool enabling this to happen. Let us look together at five great reasons to practice worship in the children’s church.

**Inspiration** is the most obvious reason to incorporate music in children’s worship. I get inspired hearing musak at the grocery store. I find myself singing along with those easy listening tunes. Music in church is all the more inspiring as it has a base in sound theology and Christian inspiration. Music has a profound affect on our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. A song can lift your spirit when you are depressed. It can change your heart towards one who has offended. Music can inspire you to turn your life over to Jesus.

Children seem to wear their emotions so close to the surface. Music can calm and soothe their spirits or hype them into a frenzy. Selecting the correct music to open a children’s church service can do much to inspire and direct the course of the entire time you have with those children.

I have found specific songs which the children of our church look forward to singing. Most of these are slow worship choruses. When we begin such a song, kids immediately raise their hands and begin praising God. I have watched as five through twelve year olds stood weeping in God’s presence, inspired by a worship chorus.

Music in a children’s worship service will do much to usher boys and girls into God’s presence. I find that if a song inspires me, there is a good chance it will also inspire the children. For this reason, most of the music we use in children’s church would more likely be associated with an adult or youth service.

**Declaration** is another important aspect of music in the children's worship service. We choose music that will encourage children and adults together to declare the greatness of the Lord. We tell God who and what he is in our songs. We declare the mighty wonders of our God. Children need to learn to declare God's goodness. They can proclaim the greatness of His power and grace. With no shame or embarrassment children of my church declare through song and testimony, the glory of God.

Repetition in choruses serves to burn an image of God into the hearts of boys and girls. I don't mind singing about God's holiness, power, or love over and over again with the children. By repetitive declaration of who God is and what He has done for us, we are establishing life long patterns of worship in our children.

My son, Timothy began singing a song from church at the shopping mall one day. At first I felt like quieting him, but then joined in singing. This boy had learned to declare God's goodness in song at church. Boys and girls who pick this up in children's worship, are more likely to declare God's goodness when leaving church property.

**Cooperation** is a great reason to include songs, both fast and slow, in children's worship. One children's church leader told me that she would lead the kids in a few rousing action choruses to get the bugs out of them. (I assume that meant she had the impression two or three rounds of Father Abraham would wear her kids out.) I think you know that no amount of action singing will wear the kids before you drop over with exhaustion. The reserve of energy boys and girls have will outlast even the most fit children's church leader.

Action and fast choruses can be used to draw the kids together. Encouraging children to sing and do the actions to a song will bring unity to the body. The typical children's worship service hosts thirty or more children ages five through twelve years old. There are variations on this, but generally speaking you serve a diverse audience on Sunday morning.

Getting them to cooperate can be a chore unless you do it with music. I have found that once cooperation in singing has been achieved, it is readily maintained during the rest of the service.

**Presentation** of the Gospel is of primary concern in our Pentecostal churches. Music is one of the best ways, that I have found to present the Gospel to boys and girls. Children love to learn scriptures and stories when presented in a musical format. When Scripture is presented musically, children seem better able to retain and restate key points of the story of verse.

It is not unusual for me to tailor my children's service around a specific song by the Donut Man, Mary Rice Hopkins, Alan Root, or other Christian children's musicianaries.

At one time each of our oldest hymns was nothing more than a new song presenting God's Word to the people. The theology of songs like A Mighty Fortress, or Blessed Assurance, is inescapable. These two and so many others have presented the Gospel for so many years.

When choosing music for children's worship, read through the lyrics carefully. What is the purpose for this song? Do the lyrics convey a message that is both understandable theologically accurate? It is not enough to choose music according to the fun level. Music must be chosen with the message of the day in mind. It must be picked knowing that the possibility exists that

children will repeat the song over and over again. I am very careful that the songs we sing are those that include lyrics that we want kids to repeat.

**Dedication** or consecration is the final of the big five.

I don't think that I've ever heard Billy Graham end a crusade without the chords of "Just As I Am" playing in the background. Music seems to draw a response from the toughest street kids. I would never think of having a response time without some soft music playing. Many times, I find a song which reemphasizes the message that we have been preaching. We taught Sunday on Seeking God. During our altar time we sang, Seek Ye first

Will you ever use a song as a bridge, or filler between service segments? Its possible. When you do, make certain, the song has something to do with the theme of the day. We have no time to waste in our time with Gods kids.

Let me bring a finish to this. In the church, we are always teaching children something. A rushed, disjointed, meaningless song time teaches children that music is not important. A well planned, meaningful, song service, where each song builds on the message of last shows thought and spirituality. Songs introducing the theme of your service, show children that music is a living, vital part of the church experience.

Pray as you choose music today.

**Let the music in your church or classroom bring inspiration, declaration, cooperation, presentation, and dedication.**