

## REACHING CHILDREN

By

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### CHAPTER FIVE

#### SONGS FOR CHILDREN

THE DAY of the triumphal entry little children were crying, "**Hosanna to the son of David,**" and the chief priests and scribes asked JESUS to rebuke them. Instead, He commended them by saying, "**Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?**"

Perfect praise comes from the lips of little children when they sing unto their Lord.

We as teachers have a great responsibility in leading them in praising the Lord in song.

#### SELECTING THE SONGS

The message is of first importance in selecting the songs.

Because the music furnishes an additional way to teach the children, we want to make sure that the words in each song are worthy of the time it takes to teach and to sing them.

Will they impress more deeply some truth taught in the lesson, or will they indelibly print the words of a Bible verse on the child's heart?

We have the children such a short time that each moment of time spent in class must be used to the greatest possible advantage.

If some one unsaved hears the songs we have taught the children will he have a testimony of GOD's saving grace, or will he only hear foolish little nothings that we have unwisely selected to teach them? [ 93 ]

As well as having a message that would be a testimony to one who should overhear the child, the song should have in it that which means something to the child.

One beautiful little crippled child who had attended a Child Evangelism Class went to the blackboard at school early one morning and drew a cross as she hummed, "*On the Cross for*

*me.*" Underneath it she wrote her name, "Donna." The teacher asked her what it meant, and she explained, "It means that JESUS died on the cross for Donna." The message of the song meant something to her.

The melody should also be considered in selecting the songs.

Little children do not have a very wide range; that is, they are not capable of singing very low or very high, and a song which has a wide range is not suitable for the very little ones.

Primary children have a slightly wider range, and the Junior child has a range still larger.

Make sure that the song you want to teach is within the range of your children.

The intervals (the jump from one note to the next) may be difficult in certain songs, and we must consider whether a song is worth the extra time it will take to teach the melody. Frequently excessive drill is required to see that the children sing the correct notes, and this is most unfortunate, as there are many songs which have such lilting melodies that they sing themselves right into the hearts of the children. And then, the rhythm must not be too complicated for the group.

Of course as you teach the children song after song, they will be able to learn more difficult selections. [ 92 ]

Little children like songs with motions, which the older ones are inclined to think babyish, but they all seem to enjoy songs which have a phrase repeated over and over.

The "down in my heart" which is repeated in "*I Have the Joy*," makes it more attractive to children, as does the repetition of "rolling away" in "*All of My Burdens Went Rolling Away*."

Notice a song which contains much repetition, and nine times out of ten it will be a child's favorite. The chorus of "*JESUS Loves Me*" in Chinese or some other foreign language makes a big hit with children of all ages.

The following are a few of the many songs which children like.

### **Choruses**

*The B·I·B·L·E*  
*JESUS Loves the Little Children*  
*On the Cross for Me*  
*'Tis Simple as Can Be*  
*Into My Heart*  
*Out of My Life*  
*Safe Am I*  
*I'm So Happy*  
*I Have the Joy*  
*The Gospel Train*  
*Gone, Gone, Gone Rolled Away*

### **Prayer Choruses**

*Into My Heart*  
*Out of My Life*  
*On the Cross for Me*  
*Let the Beauty of JESUS Be Seen in Me*

### **Scripture Choruses**

*I Am the Door*  
*I Will Make You Fishers of Men*  
*I'm Feeding on the Living Bread*  
*Believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST*

*All of My Burdens Went Rolling Away*  
*Everything's All Right*  
*JESUS Is the Sweetest Name I Know*  
*V Is for Victory*  
*No One Ever Cared for Me Like JESUS*

*Ye Must Be Born Again*  
*For GOD So Loved the World*  
*Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart*  
*I am the Way*  
*I Am the Resurrection and the Life [ 95 ]*

### **Hymns**

JESUS Loves Me  
I've Two Little Hands  
We Are Little Soldiers  
Onward Christian Soldiers  
Fairest Lord JESUS  
Whosoever Surely Meaneth Me  
He Lives

Trust And Obey  
Standing on the Promises  
The Bible Stands  
Beautiful Words of JESUS  
In My Heart There Rings a Melody  
Holy, Holy, Holy  
Stand Up, Stand Up for JESUS

The teacher should have a few good chorus books such as "*Salvation Songs for Children*," "*Singspiration Song Books*," "*The Pinebrook Chorus Books*," and "*Radio Songs and Choruses*." If only one may be purchased, the first is to be preferred, as it is especially for children, while the others also contain songs for adults.

### **TEACHING THE SONGS**

Start to teach the song by presenting the words along with a story, to illustrate a point.

It may also be presented by some member of the class as a special number, or the pianist may use it as the music before or after class.

Do not suddenly announce that the group is to learn a new song, but rather plan an approach from the children's activities, the change in seasons, the last lesson's review, or something near to the heart of the child which shall make him desire to learn the song. The pianist may play the melody as the children gather, or while they are bowing their heads for prayer. When she plays it for them to learn it she should play the melody in octaves that they may hear it better. [ 96 ]

The rule of much repetition for learning applies to teaching songs as well as to memory work. We need to have as much variety here as there.

The teacher may sing the song first, then have her helper or a child sing it with her. Next she may sing it, having the children hum. Then try it slowly with the children trying to sing. Post the words before the children on the blackboard, or have them printed with black crayon or India ink on blank newspaper or shirt cardboards.

If the blank newspaper or cardboard is used, the copies should be saved for reviewing, or for helping new members learn the song.

It is generally better to have the words before the whole class rather than for each member to have a book. This way the children become accustomed to looking up, and consequently singing

out, and it is easier for the leader to direct them. Secure repetition by having the song sung by the first row, the last row, the ones who are six, seven, and eight, and the ones who are nine, ten, and eleven. Put in as many variations as you can devise.

No song should be taught without explaining the meaning.

One little boy told his mother that they sang about the cross-eyed bear at Sunday school that morning. She and his teacher were both puzzled until they found that included in one song was the phrase, "*The consecrated cross I'll bear.*" To make the meaning clear use pictures as much as possible.

Holman Hunt's, "*The Light of the World,*" is excellent to introduce "*Into My Heart.*"

Use a picture of a happy-faced child for "*I'm So Happy,*" or "*I Have the Joy.*" JESUS with the children of many lands is appropriate for "*JESUS Loves the Little Children,*" while the Bible itself serves for "*The B- I- B- L- E.*" [ 97 ]

Some songs lend themselves to illustrating each phrase.

In such a case a little booklet could be made and a child permitted to turn the page to show the picture as the song progressed.

"*Fairest Lord JESUS*" can be treated in this manner.

Fair are the meadows,  
Fairer still the woodlands,  
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;  
JESUS is fairer, JESUS is purer,  
Who makes the woeful heart to sing!

Most songs and choruses can be illustrated if a little imagination and diligence to find the pictures are employed.

### **LEADING THE SONGS**

Many women are hesitant about standing in front of the children directing the music. They feel that since they have never done it that it is better for them not to try. The children do not know it is your first attempt, if you do not tell them. The first time is the hardest, so jump in and get it over with.

However, there are some who just can't carry a tune. It is better for these to secure a helper, or to use the piano alone, or else have a musical child lead the singing.

It really is amazing what a child can do when given the proper instruction.

Perhaps some child in the group plays a musical instrument in a very acceptable fashion. He may lead with it. There are many ways for the teacher who is not talented to still have music in her

class.

The piano should be placed so that the pianist can see the leader in order to better follow her. If the pianist must also lead, the piano should be placed so that she can see the children. She should not try to lead with her back. [ 98 ]

It is of utmost importance for the leader to enjoy the singing.

One song leader stood in front of a group of children with a face as expressive as a stove pipe, her mouth tightly locked, while she beat out the rhythm perfectly.

The children were about as responsive as fence posts.

Others have not known how to beat out the rhythm but have entered whole-heartedly into the singing, and the boys and girls nearly burst their throats for them.

There are books on conducting which may be secured, and for the one who wishes to lead her own group it is helpful to remember that the first beat of every measure is indicated by a down stroke.

A theme - a thought around which the songs for a particular meeting or series of meetings are built makes the music period more profitable, and prepares the way for the story or lesson. If you desire to have the children enter into the selection of the music, allow them to guess the hymn or chorus of which you are thinking after you have given them a broad hint. Make the motions to a chorus and let them guess it. This allows the carrying out of the theme, and yet permits child participation which is always valuable.

Let your class be divided in two, to introduce a little spice.

One group starts the song, and in the middle the leader points to the other group, thus indicating that they shall carry it on. After a little practice you will be able to switch frequently from one side to the other to the keen delight of the children. This exercise may be used to emphasize the thought of the song. [ 99 ]

A special number by one member of the class, a duet, or a song by a small group all serve to make the singing more interesting.

Sing a few phrases in certain numbers softly and you will see that a more worshipful spirit results, and that more attention is paid to the message.

The prayer chorus can be of great value in bringing about an attitude of worship. Use the same chorus for several months each time before prayer is offered. The children should bow their heads and close their eyes while they sing the chorus slowly and quietly.

There has been a trend in fundamental circles to use loud, peppy choruses almost entirely.

A few of these do add zest, but we are robbing our children if our music is not balanced with the worshipful prayer chorus and the hymns of the church.

In leading the music, let us see that a rounded-out selection of songs is made, bearing on the message of the day. Let us use some to give pep to the meeting, while through others we seek to maintain a spirit of quiet worship. [ 100 ]

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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