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The making of an evangelist

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Someone has said that one of the hallmarks of Christianity is the joyful music. It is a dynamic force offering participation for all whether good singers or not. It is unifying and draws the congregation into a place of praising with one voice. While expressing personal feeling, and attuning our hearts to God, it also helps our character to grow and our doctrinal knowledge to expand. It also gives an opportunity to exercise a talent.

We need to obey some biblical injunctions as found in some of the Scriptures. For example, Colossians 3:16: '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'.

Another exhortation is implied in 1 Corinthians 14:15 which says: 'I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also'. That is saying that we should sing with the voice, spirit, but understand what we are singing. If the unlearned do not hear us sing in accordance with 1 Corinthians 14:14(b), then how will he be able to say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks (in song - verse 16).

Also in Ephesians 5:19, where it says, 'Speaking to yourselves, in psalms and spiritual songs, singing and praising (making melody) in your heart (lit. 'the heart').

The passages above tell us what Christian singing is all about.

* It is Bible based from a richly 'Word-filled heart'.
* It needs to be applied with the wisdom God gives.
* Its purpose is to teach and admonish, and to sing not only out of a joyful spirit, but with the understanding also, because of the enlightening of the Holy Spirit as we sing. Other purposes are to enlighten the unlearned in the things of God, and to give thanks in song.

In 'hitting the right note' and using the right music, I am indebted to various lecturers and schools of music in which I have been involved, but it is impossible to give credit to those under whose guidance I have been like a 'seed picker by the wayside'.

Types of music (see Colossians 3:16)
1. Psalms. Scripture to music.
2. Hymns (ode of praise) to praise God.
3. Spiritual songs - relating to others.

Types of services
1. Evangelistic. To reach the lost and revive dedication of life. Use experimental Gospel songs. Don't get in a rut.
2. Worship. Use a good accompanist. One in sympathy with gospel music. Organist and pianist should be in place 15 minutes early. Play prelude using familiar gospel songs. Have a choir for crusade meetings. Use attendance cards ensuring a full choir for each night. Have the choir prepare special music.

If is a good idea to have your own music team (both instrumental, vocal and song leading). It makes for smoother running of the program.

Some notes on leadership of music can be very valuable to those who are organising the music program. These set out below are tried and tested ideas.

**Music Director**

Use outside one if possible. Carefully select.

1. A leader of congregational singing.
2. A director of the choir.
3. Some don'ts for Music Director. Don't over-conduct; don't get funny; don't get mad; don't talk too much; don't be a 'smart Alec'; don't get sarcastic; don't use tricks; don't chide the people; don't assume a superior attitude; don't miss the tempo; don't be tactless; don't embarrass your accompanist.

*Note:* Jesus was a gentleman and so should we be. David Livingston said he was a 'perfect gentleman'.

**The gospel singer** must love Christ and souls. Can be used as a leader of congregational singing or a leader of the choir.

1. Deeply spiritual and consecrated.
2. Abundance of patience, tact and common sense.
3. Know his/her Bible and be a soul-winner first. (Rev. Cliff Barrows of World-wide Song Leading fame not only knows music but he also knows the theology of the Gospel.)
4. Must know music.
5. College, university and theological education will help.

**Song service**

1. It is a part of the service, not a preliminary.
2. Good to work out a theme. This may be around a verse of Scripture (for example Ephesians 2:8-9).
3. Make the singing spontaneous.
4. Use unison occasionally.
5. Use some choruses if required. Choose the ones with a real message of salvation or to remind us of the terrible lost state of mankind.

**Special music**

1. Should be evangelistic.
2. Should have variety in voices. One male, one female, one instrumental. Stay away from controversial music.

**Music in the invitation**

1. Evangelist will probably select the hymn to be used.
(a) Use suitable well-known invitation songs.
(b) Use songs which invite. Some soloists believe that some music by virtue of its wording makes it hard to use an invitation hymn after it.

2. The choir and the invitation:
   (a) The choir should lead the congregation in singing.
   (b) The choir is sometimes used to sing the invitation hymn.

Ú Ú""Practical suggestions•œ

1. Can't sing their best when cold or hot.
2. Nor when church is dim or gloomy.
3. Nor if they don't have a book.
4. Nor if scattered.
5. Singing must focus on activities of the pulpit.
6. Invitation needs careful attention. Everyone needs to know arrangements. Those moving to positions should move as smoothly as possible.
7. All music should be prayerfully and carefully prepared in order to give a first-class program. (Note: Only the best is good enough for the Lord.)

Ú Ú""Some general notes and observation on music in evangelism•œ

In one of our training programs in our INSTEP seminar, a lecturer with great musical training and experience spoke on the subject of 'using music with purpose'. He said:

1. Christian music is applied music.
2. To apply music properly, we must define carefully the purpose for which the music is to be used in any situation.
3. Music should form a link between our purpose and those whom it concerns.
4. To complete this link our music should be flexible.
5. We must train our churches to be flexible enough to use and respond to music.

The lecturer was evangelist Don Streten and the points above were checked carefully to see that this summed up the true gist of his lecture on the purpose of music.

It is my opinion that music should be a heart offering to Almighty God. If this is done then we are 'hitting the right note', although in some cases, it may only be 'making a joyful noise to the Lord'.

In those who are soloists, instrumentalists, or in the choir, from a presentation point of view, especially in evangelism, it is essential to make sure we are 'hitting the right note' - both as a heart offering and a technique offering. Gifted musicians should always remember that only the best is good enough for the Saviour. To present the best it means: prayer, practice and studied and spiritual presentation.

Just as the preacher spends a long time praying over his message, and considering prayerfully the people who will hear him, so the musicians should remember that God does not expect shoddy or ill-prepared presentations - especially when souls are at stake.
I have been given to understand that the musicians on the Billy Graham team (and not only the organist and pianist, but also the soloist and song leader), spend much time each day in order to provide each evening with an excellence only fitting for a presentation to the Lord.

There are many things to take into consideration, especially when seeking to reach a very large crowd seated out in the open-air. The P.A. system must be put in place by sound experts; the lighting must be so arranged so that people can read the hymns; and the song leader has to overcome skilfully the 'time lag' in sound reaching the distant part of the auditorium, as he seeks to use his talent to beat time and to get the voices as if they are one.

Great skill needs to be used, and much prayer should ascend to God for all arrangements, so that a crowd of 50,000 or more is not a lot of isolated units, but is drawn together by the Holy Spirit working through skilled and well-prepared music as that 50,000 people react 'as one'.

Hints for gathering a choir for a special occasion

In seeking to recruit a crusade choir, or the like, seek about three times as many as you need. For example, a choir of 100 could need 300 recruits so as to offset illness; having to work some nights; family problems, etc.

Also, the larger number helps to build a crowd. It has been estimated by some (skilled in this field) that for every one involved in a crusade, there could be a total of four people interested. For example, husband or wife, or both; children; relatives; close friends, etc.

Some hymns also have very interesting backgrounds, and the stories behind them help the congregation (and choir) to understand the hymn better. For example, 'Abide with Me' was written by Bishop Henry Lyte in answer to a prayer he made when he knew he was dying. He asked God to let him write a hymn which would preach a message long after he was dead. The words are the words of a writer facing death; its fears and victories have blessed countless thousands.

Another hymn was sung by monks in the form of a question and answer as they worked over from one another. That hymn's question is 'Art thou weary, are thou languid, art thou sore distressed?' The answer is, 'Come to me said one and coming, be at rest'.

For appeal hymns, it is essential to study some of the great evangelists appeal hymns which arose out of great crusades. Among the older type look under the index in 'Alexanders'; in 'Sankeys'. These were born in evangelism.

Two more modern ones are the Billy Graham Crusade hymn and choir books; the "Hymnal: (Baptist which has sections for evangelism; "The Southern Baptist Hymnal: (USA) with sections on evangelism.

There are other books on evangelistic music around. See Christian bookstores. Make sure they are really Gospel-based.