

# BOB KAUFLIN

## PUTTING SONGS TOGETHER

### I. Introduction

- A. What principles should guide us as we select songs to sing in our congregational gatherings?
- B. More songs are available to us than any time in history.
  1. We can be grateful.
  2. We can be choosy.
    - a. Don't use.
    - b. Private use.
    - c. Could use.
    - d. Should use.

### II. Know why NOT to choose a song.

- This song always ministers to me.
- We've been doing this song for decades.
- Most people in my church like this song.
- My favorite worship artist just released an album and this is the song everyone is doing.
- I can play it without having to check my chord book.
- It's in the CCLI top 100.
- I wrote it.
- This song always get people into a worshipful mood.
- Great beat, really gets people engaged.
- It's in the same key as the other songs we're doing.

### III. Know Your Goals

Not aiming to simply move people emotionally, offer an appealing performance, or have a satisfying experience personally.

- A. To remember, proclaim, and celebrate God's worthiness, works, and word. (Ps. 145:6-7; Ps. 105:2; Ps. 119:172)
- B. To magnify God's glory in Jesus Christ in people's minds, hearts, and lives. To inform minds with gospel truth, move hearts with gospel implications, and motivate lives worthy of the gospel. (Col. 3:16-17)

### IV. Know Your Songs (cf. **Choosing Songs Wisely from WorshipGod 2004**)

- A. Be well acquainted with the lyrics of the songs you sing.
- B. Different ways to determine what a song communicates.

- C. Leading songs is a pastoral function before it's a musical one (Col. 3:16-17). To care for people's souls specifically, we need to move beyond thinking of songs in general but vague terms.
- D. Develop a "hymnal" approach to song themes:
- E. Learn the distinguishing aspects of songs with similar themes.
- F. If we're unsure what a song is saying, don't sing it.
- G. Seek to broaden the categories and themes of the songs you sing.
  - 1. indie ministries
  - 2. churches
  - 3. [worshiptogether.com](http://worshiptogether.com)
  - 4. [gettymusic.com](http://gettymusic.com)
  - 5. [igracemusic.com](http://igracemusic.com)
  - 6. [au.emumusic.com](http://au.emumusic.com)
  - 7. good hymnals
  - 8. writers in your church

#### **V. Know Where to Start (after praying)**

- A. What has already been decided?
- B. What has God already been saying?
- C. What is the theme of this week's message?
- D. What might be on everyone's mind?
- E. What song...
  - 1. Do you want to teach?
  - 2. Do you want to repeat?
  - 3. Do you want to bring back?
- F. What areas or themes is the church weak in?
  - 1. Lament
  - 2. Celebration
  - 3. Physical expressiveness
  - 4. Awe, etc.

#### **VI. Know Your Progression**

- A. Throughout church history coherency and progression have been the norm.
- B. If you don't know why your songs go together, don't expect the Holy Spirit to fill in the gaps, although often He does.

- C. Start with looking for a progression in each song.
1. When we lead people in singing we are putting words, emotions, thoughts, perspectives, and responses into their mouths. It should make sense.
  2. Use “fridge-magnet” songs sparingly, if at all.
- The Dadaist poets used to practice random poetry; they would cut up a book into separate words or sentences, throw them in the air and paste them together how they landed. Sometimes I suspect that many worship song writers use a similar approach. Throw a load of scripture verses in the air, let them land and then just glue them together. It's fridge-magnet poetry; not really lyric-writing, just rearranging verses to fit. (Nick Page, *And Now Let's Move Into a Time of Nonsense*, 89)
3. If the lines can be interchanged without really affecting the meaning of the song, that's “fridge-magnet” lyricism.
- D. Factors to consider when putting songs together
1. The gospel (adoration, confession, assurance of pardon, thanksgiving)
  2. Overall lyrical flow.
  3. Last line – first line
  4. Who the song addresses (Father, Jesus, Spirit, God, each other)
  5. Emotional progression (reflective, celebrative, reassuring, awe)
  6. Surrounding non-musical elements
  7. How much time you have
  8. Also, corporate vs. individual. (mention TO God vs. ABOUT God)

## VII. Know Your Transitions

- A. Spoken comments (from WG09 seminar, “What Are You Talking About?”)
1. Magnify
  2. Apply
  3. Clarify
  4. Inspire
- B. Prayer
1. Pray sincerely, not just to set up a song
  2. Pray biblically, not simply out of your emotions
  3. Pray corporately, not just for yourself
- C. Scripture reading
1. Leader

2. Leader/Congregation
  3. Read by others
- D. Musical
1. Often handled best by one or two people.
  2. Don't make these so long that people become more focused on the music than the word of Christ.
- E. Testimony
- F. Communion/Baptism/Offering
- G. None

### **VIII. Know Who You're Leading**

- A. Don't just think about songs - think about people.
1. You could have a great group of songs that doesn't serve the people you're leading.
  2. A song can be popular but not good for your congregation.
  3. Imagine yourself in the congregation being led in these songs.
- B. Some questions to ask:
1. How well do people know each song?
  2. How diverse is the congregation?
  3. How mature is the congregation?
  4. What does the congregation need to hear?
  5. What songs do you want the congregation to know well?
  6. What musical styles is the church used to?

### **IX. Conclusion**

- A. An art, not a science. Don't be looking for the "perfect" song choices, although some are much better than others.
- B. Work at building your repertoire rather than finding the latest song that "works."
- C. Wise to involve others in the process to make up for your biases and weaknesses.
- D. When you're clear on your goal, you may drift for a while, but you'll always end up back on course.