

To the Cradle Roll Leader

Of all the specific things a child may "take home" with him from his Sabbath School session, it is probably the songs which will be most useful to him spiritually throughout the week. He will likely not remember much of what is told him. He will remember more of what he sees, but may not be able to associate it with the spiritual lesson it was used to emphasize. He will certainly remember the activities, but more for the fun of doing them than for the lesson taught. While each of these teaching methods is valuable, it is the song which can clinch the point in the child's mind and stay with him when he goes home. A good song which the child has truly learned will be something he can sing around his house and at play anytime, every day. If he has understood its message, it will provide an important function for his daily life.

There are three ways in which you may help to develop effective singing by your Cradle Roll children.

1. Provide simple enough songs. What may seem like an easy tune to adults, may not be so to little children. High notes (above C# or D), wide ranges (more than five or six notes), leaping melodies (more than four scale tones at a time), tunes that are hard to catch on to, and uninteresting melodies, are usually too demanding for the novice singer and should be avoided. The child needs few words expressing few thoughts, lots of repetition and a melody which is comfortable for his limited vocal powers to handle. The songs in this collection are among the simplest in the entire Sabbath School repertoire for a small child to sing.

2. Let the children sing. Ordinarily the small child can concentrate on only one thing at a time. He should not be given something to hold or do at the same time he is expected to sing. Singing is a new skill for the little child and requires his undivided attention. If the songs are camouflaged behind a flurry of activity, he will be too distracted to sing and the music will lose all real meaning to him. Arrange your illustrations and activities so they occur before or after the child sings, not at the same time. Even action songs should preferably be learned first without the movements. If music is desired during other activities, let the piano play alone, but do not have the children try to sing while they are moving about. Try to go over every song at least twice. The younger the child, the more he will benefit from repetition. If Cradle Roll children are allowed to devote their entire attention to singing when they are supposed to, the songs will soon become a means of joyful and personal expression for them.

3. Teach the children to sing. Instead of using songs merely as bridges from one activity to another or as fillers for your illustrations, you should make a definite effort to teach the children how to sing the songs as important elements of the program.

A good way to help the children connect the message of the song with the points you are trying to reinforce, is to speak the words of the song just before singing it. Often, in the child's effort to sing a tune, the words do not register in his thoughts and are merely sounds to utter with the music. Saying the words, without the music, helps plant the message in his thinking so he will know what he is singing when he adds the tune. This procedure is, of course, especially helpful when learning new songs, but even the old favorites will likely go better when this is done.

When introducing a new song, try to allow time for extra repetitions. Pick out key words or phrases and help the children say them with you. This will especially help the babies who are just beginning to talk, and the mere saying of the words will help even the older children to articulate them in the song more easily.

A lot of the teaching must be by example. You and all of your helpers should sing out clearly and enthusiastically. This means you must be thoroughly acquainted with every song you use in your program. If the leader flounders with the tune or words, the children will certainly not catch on, and the song would be better left out of the program for all the good it does. Your interest and energy in singing will affect the children. Sing as if you truly enjoyed it, with a meaningful expression on your face. Do not sing to the walls or the parents, but directly to the children, and try not to be fumbling about behind the scenes preparing for the next item. If you treat singing as an important thing to do, you may find the children responding much more than you ever thought possible.

The use of a theme song is an ideal means of reinforcing your main points. Use a general song which deals with your overall subject and which expresses the one main thought you wish the children to remember when they go home. Introduce the song early in the presentation and repeat it four or five times throughout the program. This keeps the children from losing the essential thrust of your message in the many little details you use to elaborate your points. It brings him back to the important idea and gives perspective to all the other songs and activities of the program.

Your pianist is a very important part of your program and you should work closely with her. Prepare your music far enough in advance that you can provide her with copies to practice if she needs to. Even if she is an accomplished accompanist, it is not fair to throw new songs before her on Sabbath morning. Remember that if the piano playing falls apart it will be devastating to your program, no matter how much planning you have put into your part. Do not take your accompaniments for granted, and do everything you can to help your pianist.

In short, do everything you possibly can to make the singing in your Sabbath School a significant and pleasurable experience in which the children can actually participate. Take the time to teach them songs which will live on in their little hearts long after they leave your Cradle Roll division.

To the Cradle Roll Pianist

As pianist you are extremely important to the success of your Sabbath School program. A well-planned presentation can lose all of its effectiveness if the music is botched by the pianist. For all the songs it is up to you to "lead" the leader, providing her with a clear beginning and supporting her with a firm and correct accompaniment. You must also be sensitive to the response of the children who are trying to sing with you, not running ahead of their ability to follow and not dragging behind. Little undeveloped ears and vocal cords need all the help they can get in order to be able to sing, and your accompaniments can be a significant aid to them.

Some pianists who do not feel proficient at the keyboard may be at first frightened by the looks of some of the songs in this collection; but once tried, the actual simplicity will become apparent. A great deal of practice should not be required for any of them, but do spend whatever time is necessary to be sure you can play them correctly and confidently. If you come up to a piece which you feel you truly cannot handle, there is no need for panic--just play the melody and do not try to do the accompaniment. The children will learn the tunes much better this way and it may even provide a refreshing change. Where there have been keyboard problems during a program, work them out at home so you will not keep making the same mistakes over and over again.

Try to play the songs meaningfully. If you learn the words to every song and think of them as you are playing, it will help in your phrasing and expression. Follow the musical notations given and avoid fancy keyboard flourishes and filigrees which are quite out of character with the sweet simplicity of the songs. Play all pieces slowly enough to be sung comfortably by the children, yet energetically enough to maintain the musical flow. Keep a steady rhythm and play with a full, but not blustering, tone. Give particular emphasis always to the melody whether it is in the right or left hand. Should you become confused while playing, don't stop the song--keep going, if only with the melody line, until you can pick up the accompaniment again.

Leaders vary in their preferences for beginning a song. Most seem to like only a chord or single note to begin singing by. The first chord or melody note of a song will give the pitch and signal for singing and help to avoid that confusion which often exists at the start of songs. An introductory chord for the prayer responses has been written into those pieces, for such a chord will make for a smooth transition from the prayer to the song. In the few songs where the melodies are to be played with the left hand beneath the upper right-hand harmonies, you should first play the opening melody note (which is specified for you in the music) to help make certain that the children will hear the note on which they are to start singing. Some leaders prefer to have the pianist play through the song softly as she makes her remarks, and still others like

to have the pianist play a full introduction. Whatever method of preparation for the songs is decided on, be sure to follow it consistently so the leader and children will know what to expect.

We hope that your commitment at the piano will be helpful and an inspiration to the little children, and we hope that you will find personal pleasure and satisfaction from the music in this songbook.