

Using Music With Children in Mission Settings

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In mission settings, music is a powerful tool to captivate children's attention and to teach them of the love of God in Christ. Those who lead music should be prepared to do it the best that they can. Songs should be chosen wisely to suit the occasion and the children there.

Here are some suggestions. Many of the ideas in this outline are from *The Non-Musician's Guide to Children's Music*, Barbara and Charles Smith. (Glendale, Calif. International Center for Learning, 1977).

Enjoyable ways to use music with children:

1. Select a variety of songs.
2. Select appropriate songs.
 - a. Is the meaning obvious to children?
 - b. Is it easily singable?
 - c. Does the song relate to the children's Bible story or activity?
 - d. Are the words scripturally correct?
 - e. Does the song build positive attitudes?
 - f. Will the children enjoy it?
3. Teach new songs creatively.
 - a. Letter the words on a large chart with appropriate pictures.
 - b. Capture the children's interest before you introduce the song by using a puppet, by connecting it with a previous story, by listening for specific things in the song, by using missing phrases.
 - c. Present the song, emphasizing the melody. Children respond to natural voices better than operatic or trained ones. Play a tape or CD if a leader can't carry a tune.
 - d. Discuss answers to previous questions, explain difficult parts of the song, or discuss good features of the song.
 - e. Ask children to sing with you on the first stanza and chorus only.
 - f. Use the song again later to reinforce the learning and enjoyment of it.

Ways to make music more enjoyable:

1. Experiment with group singing.
 - a. Sing a song as a round.
 - b. Sing in two groups with responses (antiphonal songs).
 - c. Sing a dialogue or question and answer.

- d. Chant a psalm, as in Bible times.
 - e. Sing an *ostinato*-a simple melodic phrase that is played or sung over and over.
 - f. Sing songs in other languages, including sign language.
 - g. Add appropriate motions to songs, adding to, but not subtracting from, the song.
 - h. Choral speaking.
2. Use various instruments.
- a. A variety of purposes.
 - (1) To accompany the song.
 - (2) To provide background or sound effects for choral speaking or drama.
 - (3) To play an ostinato (see item 1.e. above).
 - b. Types of instruments.
 - (1) Autoharp (classic, electronic).
 - (2) Guitar, banjo, or ukulele.
 - (3) Keyboards.
 - (4) Human body—clapping, tapping feet, etc.
 - (5) Melody bells, other bells.
 - (6) Recorder, song flute, penny whistle, ocarina.
 - (7) Harmonicas.
 - (8) Percussion instruments (sticks, beans in a can, pie tins, sandpaper blocks, oatmeal boxes).
 - (9) Kazoo, nose flutes, slide whistles.
3. Create new songs.
- a. Fill in new words to a familiar song.
 - b. Create a phrase in a song.
 - c. Add a verse to a known song.
 - d. Set a Bible verse to music.
 - e. Write a Bible ballad.
4. Listen to music.
- a. To enrich learning activities.
 - b. To match tunes to words of a song.
 - c. To choose pictures to illustrate them.
 - d. To learn the sounds of different instruments.

Creative activities to use with music:

- 1. Art activities.

- a. Make a rebus chart of the words of a song.
 - b. Make an illustrated songbook.
 - c. Make a mural about the song.
 - d. Illustrate the meaning of a song.
2. Drama activities.
- a. Use puppets or masks for a choir.
 - b. Use puppets for song characters.
 - c. Pantomime a song.
 - d. Add songs and instruments to a Bible story drama.
 - e. Dramatize a time when Bible people sang—bringing the ark to Jerusalem, crossing the Red Sea, Deborah and Barak, Paul in prison.
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Some Songs for Children in Mission Settings

Music is a fun tool to use in working with children in missions. Some of the religious songs and fun songs, which I have found to be both effective and popular, are listed below. They may be found in many song collections in current use or may be known by your staff or volunteers. This list is a simple reminder for those who need a quick list to use on many occasions.

I have arranged the songs in each section in order of appropriateness for preschoolers to older children. These songs progress in general musical difficulty and textual complexity, beginning with the easiest. In addition, the songs in the religious section progress in theological concepts and spiritual growth as well.

Religious songs:

“Jesus Loves Me”

“If You’re Happy and You Know It” (clap, stomp feet, etc.)

“God is So Good” (create verses)

“Praise Him, Praise Him, All Ye Little Children”

“I Am So Glad That Jesus Loves Me”

“O Be Careful Little Hands”

“In My Bible Book Says that God Loves Me”

“This Little Light of Mine” (with actions)

“Deep and Wide” (with arm motions)

“He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

“Jesus in the Morning”

“Jesus Loves the Little Children” (red, brown, yellow, black, and white)

“I’m Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing”
“I’ve Got Peace Like a River”
“Hallelu, Hallelu Praise Ye, The Lord” (two groups, alternately standing)
“I’ve Got the Joy”
“Kum Ba Yah”
“Praise the Lord Together Singing Alleluia”
“Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart”
“This Is My Commandment”
“This Is the Day”
“Rise and Shine”
“My God Is So Great” (with motions)
“Go Tell It on the Mountain”
“Rejoice in the Lord Always”
“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”
“Glory Be to God on High” (Tune: “Michael Row the Boat Ashore”)
“Open Our Eyes, Lord”
“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”
“He Is Lord”
“Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”
“Wonderful Words of Life” (first stanza)
“Father, I Adore You” (sung as a round)
“Praise the Name of Jesus”
“Heavenly Father, I Appreciate You”
“Come and Go with Me”
“Love, Love” (sung as a round)

Fun songs:

“Little Green Frog” (with facial expressions)
“Itsy Bitsy Spider” (with hand motions)
“Old MacDonald Had a Farm” (animal sounds)
“Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes” (movements)
“B-I-N-G-O” (substitute clapping for letters)
“Do Your Ears Hang Low?” (with movements, delete words progressively)
“I Had a Little Rooster by the Barnyard Gate” (animal sounds)
“I Had a Cat and the Cat Pleas’d Me” (animal sounds)

- “In a Cabin in the Wood” (motions, delete words progressively)
- “Going on a Lion Hunt” (story with motions)
- “The Noble Duke of York” (stand and sit)
- “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” (sung simultaneously with “Three Blind Mice”)
- “I’m a Little Piece of Tin”
- “I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly” (repeat verses)
- “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean” (sit or stand on the letter “B”)
- “Father Abraham” (body movements)
- “Fast Foods song” (with motions, as a round)

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