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WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU'RE NOT SINGING

I. Introduction (Lk. 6:45, Prov. 4:23)

- A. Our first focus is not what we say in public, but what we pursue in private.
 - 1. Saying the right things without having the right heart leads to hypocrisy.
 - 2. We shouldn't expect the church to be affected by truths that we ourselves haven't been affected by.
- B. There are no clear Scriptural guidelines for how much to say when leading the church in corporate worship.
 - 1. These notes are the product of years of my own failings as well as personal observations, hopefully informed by biblical principles.
 - 2. The musical leader doesn't *have* to do the talking.
 - 3. We can always become better than we currently are.
 - 4. ***What words can inspire people to worship God as we sing, and what words might hinder them?***

II. Common Characters

- A. The Teacher
- B. The Emoter
- C. The Mute
- D. The Reporter
- E. The Wanderer
- F. The Cheerleader
- G. The Philosopher
- H. The Mystic

III. Why Say Anything?

A. Magnify (Ps. 34:1-3)

1. Magnify as with a telescope, not a microscope.
2. Music may move people's emotions, but it won't necessarily direct people to focus on the greatness of God in Christ.
3. People come in distracted, thinking about everything but God, viewing God as smaller than their problems.
4. In addition, our minds are "prone to wander." God needs to become bigger in our eyes.

B. Apply (Col. 3:16)

1. We want to help people see why the truths we're singing should make a difference in their lives.
2. Connect God's word and the gospel to people's situations.
 - a. What lies do they believe about God?
 - b. What temptations do they face?
 - c. What common experiences do they share?
3. Specific application is usually better than broad.
4. Seek to make your comments *pastoral* and *persuasive*.

C. Clarify (1 Cor. 14:7-8)

1. Explain what people might not know or bring theological weight to words and actions that people might miss.

Today, in an age that seeks to simplify everything—songs, sermons, readings, and ritual of the service—the clear and powerful proclamation of sound biblical doctrine and practice in every part of the service will give spiritual depth to worship and demonstrate the vitality of the faith in the lives of the worshippers. (Allen Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, p. 506)

2. Transitions

- a. Why did we sing the last song?
- b. Why are we singing the next song?
- c. Why are we doing something besides singing?
- d. Why are we doing something other than what we normally do?
- e. What just happened?

3. Lyrics
 - a. Explain uncommon words or phrases.
 - b. Explain common words or phrases.
 - c. Help people understand the overall flow of a song
 - d. Share the story behind a song.
 - e. Share why so many of our songs talk about Jesus dying.
4. What you're doing
 - a. Why don't we do this by ourselves at home?
 - b. Why do we sing?
 - c. What should we be doing with our bodies?
 - d. What are we learning about as a church?
 - e. When things go wrong.

D. Inspire

1. Seek to inspire faith in God, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6)
2. Seek to inspire hope in God, because we are called to abound in hope (Rom. 15:13)
3. Seek to inspire love for God, because loving God is the greatest commandment (Mt. 22:36-38)

IV. The Practicals

- A. Recognize that God's words outlast ours.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb. 4:12; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16)

1. Have a Bible with you when you lead.
2. Don't read Scripture casually or quickly.
3. Memorize, or at least be very familiar with, any Scripture you refer to.

- B. Plan the progression of songs so you don't have to say that much.

1. Speaking sooner is usually better than later.
2. Consider how last lines and first lines connect.
3. Start with the chorus if it makes a better transition from the last song.
4. Ask if the first line of a song really needs any introduction.

- C. Behold the beauty of brevity.
 - 1. Say what you need to say: one thought, one Scripture, one application.
 - 2. If you have trouble following what you're saying, your listeners won't fare much better.

- D. Brief phrases (spoken or sung) between lines of a song can accomplish the same goals as longer comments.
 - 1. Repeat, contrast, expand on a thought, add to a thought
 - 2. Don't interject phrases so often that people grow immune to your comments.

- E. Varying the length, timing, sources, etc. of what you say can keep people from checking out mentally.

- F. Don't underestimate the value of preparation.
 - 1. Two minutes of speaking can take two hours of preparation.
 - 2. It can be helpful to write down what you plan to say. That will help you to organize your thoughts, avoid rambling, run it by your pastor, and keep it from going too long. But don't read it!

- G. View testimonies, personal illustrations, and non-biblical quotes like spices – use them sparingly or they ruin the meal.

- H. Don't assume you have to play your instrument while you're speaking. Ask someone else to play or go without musical accompaniment.

- I. Prayer is speaking, too. The same principles apply.
 - 1. Consider thinking through how you'll pray.
 - 2. Root your prayers in God's promises, not simply our responses.
 - 3. Remember you're praying for the group, not just yourself.
 - 4. Use phrases from songs to deepen their impact.

- J. While there's no "rule" that says we can't say something between every song, it's generally not a good idea. You only need a road sign when you turn.

- K. Ask others for feedback to find out how you can grow.