

The Studio

EPISODE // INTRODUCING A SONG

Introducing a new song can be an intimidating feat—one that is accompanied by many questions: "Will anyone know the song already?"; "Will they feel comfortable enough to join in?" and, "How long will it take for them to learn the musical and conceptual facets of the song?"

I led the music at a worship youth camp a couple of years ago and had to teach the youth a number of songs that would be the set for the week. I, not thinking about the fact that they wouldn't know the songs and not addressing how to teach them, just sang them as usual. It took almost two full days for the students to catch on to the music and start to sing along. This was valuable time that could have been used more wisely.

As I've grown as a leader, I've learned some better ways to teach new music. The following techniques are a few ways that can answer some of the questions I brought up earlier and can make introducing a new song easy, effective, and even fun.

- ✦ **Use technology.** The advancement and spread of technology has allowed for a few new options. The first and probably the easiest suggestion is to announce the song the week before in a bulletin or send the name out electronically, either on the website or in a newsletter, so the church members can listen to the song on any music streaming application or purchase it. This will prepare them to sing in the upcoming week's service.
- ✦ **Use new songs as background music.** There are a few times in most services where the congregation isn't expected to sing, like during the offering, a postlude, or times of presentational song. These times are opportune for letting them hear the song before they have to join in. Assign the song to a soloist or have them stay seated while you sing.
- ✦ **Get up and teach new songs.** The last and, probably, the most intuitive way to introduce a new song is to teach it directly. This can be done by asking them to listen as you sing a section of the song the first time and then ask them to join in once they've heard all of the pitches and rhythms. For example, solo out the verse and teach the chorus only. Then, invite the congregation to sing the chorus. Repeat it enough with them singing so it becomes engrained in their minds. You could even, in some circumstances, sing it responsively, asking them to sing after you. Teaching a song this way specifically helps to instill confidence and fosters a different, more intentional relationship between the leader and the people.

Scripture says in Psalm 96:1, "Sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth!" We should heed this call and keep the musical culture of the church alive and growing!

I hope you've learned some new ways to introduce a new song that will make you more intentional and comfortable.