

3 SECRETS OF LEADING YOUNG CHILDREN

By Yancy



1. Remember Their Attention Spans.

Song length should be 1.5 to 2 minutes in length for preschool kids and 2-3 minutes for younger elementary. That being said there are exceptions. i.e. "Father Abraham" and songs like it with lots of repetition and variation. To move both arms, legs, head, etc. it takes 3 minutes to do the song. You can't shave it down to a shorter time but it still works well because of the repetition and the activity engagement. Also, slow songs have a slower BPM (beats per minute) therefore they take longer to go by. Most likely any slower song you choose to do would be closer to 3 minutes. Focus on the song being simple and easy enough for them to comprehend and participate with it.

Only do a couple songs back to back. If time allows for you to do more songs then spread more songs out throughout your time together. It can be a great way to change things up and keep attention spans engaged. Going from a super active song into a slow worship song can work really well. After a high energy song have the kids sit down and then re-direct their focus to sing a heart-felt worship song. The difference in dynamics can work well.

Yes, this age group can do slower songs. Strategically place them and teach kids how to respond and show their love to God through these types of worship songs.

2. To learn they have to understand.

Look for songs that speak your kids language. Vocabulary is important. A two year old has approximately 200 words. An adult has 10,000-15,000 words. It's important when we talk to the kids and choose songs to sing we choose words that they can understand. Remember to choose "concrete" vs. "abstract" words. As you lead them, speak their language in order to communicate well with them.

Get them involved in the songs with props that fit the message or theme. I've used everything from toy instruments that are foam and plush (not noisy!) to dress up items like superhero capes, princess crowns and party hats. Find items that fit the song's theme and don't be worried about having one for every child in the class. You

can choose only 2-4 helpers to come up and help you lead these songs wearing the props.

3. Creating Motions That Engage.

Having movement and motions can be a great way to engage and help this age group participate. When working on a new song I always ask “what is the obvious motion that comes to mind when you listen to the song?” If it's not obvious, it very possibly shouldn't be forced to be there. Simple movements like: Jumping, wiggles, movement of arms and legs, spinning work really well. General dance moves are always great verses turning the song into a mime routine. You want the motions to enhance the song not take away from the song.

Don't worry about having a motion for the entire song. Absence makes the heart grow fonder. It could work really well to have them clap their hands on one section of the song and then do motions on the chorus. If there is an instrumental section fill that with jumping or spinning in a circle. Utilize the time with something that can engage your group to participate.

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