



## How Well Can Your Puppet Sing?

By Tim Brown

Music is a natural part of a child's life. Children love to sing and advertisers, promoters, and others seeking to reach children work to take advantage of it.

Check out any children's programming, ads geared to children, and even movies and you'll see music used often and effectively. Many children have their own mp3 players loaded with their favorite songs. On school buses, you'll see children with ear buds in place listening to their favorite music instead of talking with friends.

### Music and the Learning Process

Music enhances the learning process. Once a child learns a song, it sticks with him for a long time. (I still remember songs I listened to over thirty years ago.) Advertisers understand this which is why there are so many commercial jingles. They know you only need to hear a jingle once or twice and you'll have it with you. Then you only need to see or hear about the product or something similar and the jingle will play in your mind. How often have you had an unwanted jingle run through your mind, unable to stop it?

In recent years, several popular singers devote most of their concerts and market themselves to children. Ones I've seen or heard about usually promote good values and character building principles through their music. They want to go beyond entertaining and influence the children for good which is exciting to see.

Since music is a natural part of the child's life, it makes sense to use it when ministering to or entertaining children, but that is only one reason.

First, it is scriptural to include music in our teaching. Colossians tells us that we are to teach each other using "...psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In the book of Psalms, we're told to sing praises with understanding (Psalm 47:6-7) and to come before God's presence with singing (Psalm 100:2).

Music reaches the entire child; his heart, mind, emotions, and will, therefore it's a powerful teaching tool. With that in mind, it is important to make wise choices concerning the songs you present to the class. You want to communicate godly truths and character building principles.

Using music with your puppet presentation gives children a chance to participate in the program. If they know the song the puppets are singing, they can join in, either out loud or in their mind. Either way, they are focused on the truths you want to present and aren't drifting.

When you use music in your presentation, truths are easily retained. Every time the child sings the song outside of class it'll reinforce the teaching that went on during class.

Since music is powerful and does influence children, it's important to choose wisely the songs you present. Select songs that communicate important truths and principles that will continue the learning process outside of class.

## Ministering with Music

Each week when I prepare the songs to sing in our Junior Church on Sunday, I start with a theme and pick songs that enhance it. Some songs are fun, many are praise and worship related, and some teach. We include different song styles to give variety and reach a larger audience.

Music is an important part of every Junior Church service. Sometimes, if the group is small, they don't feel like singing. We sing anyway. Whether the children sing or not, they still hear the songs and learn them. We've had children tell us that a particular song we introduced went through their mind the entire week.

Once, we introduced a song called 1-2-3 which talks about how much Jesus loves us. It's a short song with a catchy tune that the kids enjoyed. The next week, the parents of a four year old child told us their son sang that song all week. In fact, he sat his dad down and taught the song to him on Sunday afternoon. Every time he sang that song during the week, he reinforced in his mind the fact that Jesus loves him.

We use songs several ways in our puppet presentations. Each Sunday starts out with a puppet song we present to the children. We don't expect them to join in singing, but they often do. Other times, the puppets lead the singing and the children stand and sing with them.

Many of our plays have songs within them. The puppets act out the story and then one or more will sing a song that goes along with the action. The song enhances the play's teaching and goes home with the child, reinforcing the lesson throughout the week.

Finding ways to use music with puppets is easy. What's more important is that you use the right songs that will instruct and reinforce your teaching. You have a limited time each week or in your program to impact the audience, but you can make that time more effective by using the right songs.

Be intentional with the songs you use and don't get in the habit of just choosing ones that sound good. Look at the words and make sure they convey truths you really want the children to understand and apply. Are they Biblically sound and correct? Do they promote good actions or attitudes? Will they influence the child for good?

Music is a natural part of the child's life and the songs your puppets sing add to that. Are you using music and songs that will enhance the learning process and influence the children for good? Have you even thought about the impact your songs will make in the lives of the children you minister to? When you understand the impact of music in a child's life and plan accordingly, you'll have a greater influence in the lives of the children as you minister.