

복음 Matthew 12:3-9 씨를 뿌리는 자가 뿌리러 나
새 더러는 길 가에 떨어지매 새들이 와서 먹어버
는 흙이 니하므
나오나 으므로 말
는 가사 라서 가
그 더러는 좋은 땅에 떨어지매 흑 백배, 흑 육십배
새의 결실을 하였느니라 귀있는 자는 들으라 하시니
mer went out to sow his seed. As we was scatterin
some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate
fell on rocky places, where it did not have much s
g up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But whe
ame up, the plants were scorched, and they witi

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Those In-Between Words: Spoken Transitions in Worship

Paul Ryan

“In-between words” are those little words and phrases in worship that welcome members and guests, introduce songs, and prepare us for prayer. Scripture readings, sermons, and songs take up most of the time in worship, but it is often what happens in between them that makes all the difference for encouraging full participation in worship. Many times, however, when we don’t think about the words we say, we can end up communicating messages that are inhibiting, inaccurate, or even hurtful.

We are all guilty of speaking miscues in worship at one time or another. Often, without intending it, worship leaders say something very different than what they mean. Their words are utterly confusing. They suggest that worship is routine. They mock another church. They signal that worship is not all that important. They blame someone else for a mistake. None of these comments focuses on the meaning or purpose of what is happening. They are barriers rather than enablers of worship.

How do we avoid speaking transitions that inhibit rather than empower our worship? Begin by asking a few discerning questions: Are my instructions about the mechanics as concise and clear as possible? Does the transition link two acts of worship, showing how they are related? Does the transition avoid being pedantic or preachy? Is the tone of the transition warm and inviting or cold and inhospitable? Are there especially poignant lines in a song or hymn that I could highlight in my introduction?

It is important to remember that the sermon, songs, scripture readings, and prayers are the focal points in our worship services. Our “in-between words” are intended not to be focal points themselves (which often happens when we make miscues!), but to help the congregation participate more fully in each worship element. In this way, speaking “in-between words” is like serving as a guide in an art museum. Guides assume that the visitors have an interest in art and

are eager to understand and experience the paintings and sculptures before them. Guides, therefore, want the art to speak for itself. Yet a few simple words unlock various meanings for the viewers. Guides also point visitors to other rooms and artists in the museum. They make a brief connection between the two artists, yet distinguish them. Again, they let the art speak mostly for itself. In a similar way, worship leaders are guides as they use “in between words” to lead the congregation on their journey through the service.

There are several “guiding” principles to leading a congregation in this way.

1. **Worship’s dialogue.** Keep in mind the nature of each worship action. Who is talking to whom? Are we speaking to God? Is God speaking to us? Are we addressing each other? One way to welcome a congregation to worship might be, “Welcome to the worship of the Lord. It is our privilege to be before him together. Today, our conversation with God is built on the very powerful eighth chapter of Romans. He has great things to say to us, and we will want to respond.”
2. **Prioritize hospitality.** How can an introduction welcome more people to participate actively? Generally, words of *invitation* are more enabling than words of instruction. “I invite you to turn to...” But polite instruction is also appropriate. “Please stand and lift up your voices with joy singing...” When we prioritize hospitality and invite people to participate we are making space for them to enter into the worship action. Hospitality is particularly important at the opening of the service, during the time of confession, and prior to a prayer of intercession.
3. **Brevity.** Is an introduction only as long as it has to be? This decision will depend on the service for the week. Some services are sparse and more time can be taken for introduction, whereas others are full and too many words can bog down the service. The personality of the congregation and the spirit of the week will also effect the length of your words.
4. **Children.** How can words engage children? We so easily forget to invite the children to participate in worship. How can “in-between words” be inclusive to the youngest among us? At various moments in the service try using simple language. For example, “In our prayer of confession we say to God, ‘We are sorry for not being good children.’ Let us pray.”
5. **Teach, but not too much.** Spoken transitions are excellent opportunities to subtly teach about our Christian faith. With concise, well-worded transitions this can be done without

taking away from the worship experience. Imagine speaking a transition between Psalm 84 (“How lovely is your dwelling place...”) and the hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” A transition that subtly teaches about the atonement might read like this, “We have access to the glory and beauty of God because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. When we come to God, we come because of Jesus his Son.”

6. **Have the end in view!** As you prepare transitions, have in mind the theme and goal of the service. Be careful not to preach the sermon before the sermon – or after the sermon – but strive to connect your words to the theme of the day, thinking about where you want the service to end up even as you begin the service.
7. **Tempo and Rhythm.** Services need a balance of energy and rest—some things that move forward and some things that allow us to linger. There are times when “in-between words” do not need to be spoken, perhaps during an exuberant time of praise. There are other times when we need to speak our words slowly, allowing the congregation to pause and consider. Similarly to the principle of brevity, tempo and rhythm will depend upon the service for the week and the personality of the congregation.
8. **Gestures.** Gestures can be used to complement non-verbally our words. A smile during a welcome, a bowing of your head in prayer, and a raised hand at your side in invitation to sing are some examples of gestures that can impact our words. In fact, well-placed gestures can also save words, especially with respect to sitting and standing.
9. **Pastoral Sensitivity.** Even in our times of enthusiastic praise there are those who are experiencing deep hurt and pain. In worship it is freeing for some in the congregation to have the worship leader acknowledge the not-so-visible needs of heart and spirit that are present. Consider these words as an introduction to a song, “Some of us gather for worship this morning with great joy. Some of us gather with tears. Our opening song is based on a Psalm that expresses both joy and honest pain.”