

Songwriting Article #7 For Country Gospel Connection E-zine

We've talked about a lot of different things so far; form, meter, the length of intro, where the "hook" comes in time-wise. One thing we haven't talked about is chord structure. Everyone knows that you can play piano on a 60's song if you know the 1, 4 & 5 chords, but let's talk about some chord structures that can be used to enrich a simple song and give it a more polished feel. We can take the following structure and it will be a nice chord progression:

4/4 time, Key of C: /C /F / G/ F -- A good example of a song that uses this chord structure over and over successfully is "La Bamba", written by Ritchie Valens. This uses the 1, 4, 5, 4 chords.

Now let's complicate it a little and use more chords within the key
4/4 time, Key of G: / G / Bm / C, D7 / G – The song that begins, "Operator, O won't you help me make this call," uses these chords to start. This song uses 1, 3 (m), 4, 5-7 and back to 1. It is helpful to remember that the 1 chord, 4 chord, and 5 chord (5-7), will always be Major chords within a Major Key. The 2-chord, 3-chord, 6-chord and 7-chord will always be Minor within a Major Key.

Now let's talk about some chord progressions that we are commonly used to in hymns. Let's analyze "Leaning On the Everlasting Arms", first as it is written and then as it is most commonly adapted.

4/4 Time, Key of F:

F **F7/A** Bb **Gm7** F/C **Dm7** **G7** C7
What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms;
F **F7/A** Bb **Gm7** F/C **Dm7** **F/C** C7 F
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms.
F **F7/A** Bb **Gm7**
Leaning (on Jesus), leaning (on Jesus),
 Dm7 **G7** **C7**
F/C C7 F/A C7 F C7
Safe and secure from all alarms;
F **F7/A** Bb **Gm7**
Leaning (on Jesus), leaning (on Jesus),
F/C **Dm** **G7** C7 F
Leaning on the ever lasting arms.

Alternate chords are in red. Try this with one of your songs and you will be surprised how it "freshens it up." We will talk more about this next time and even give you some melodies and chord progressions to experiment with.

Our friend John Herschenberg of Tx Christian Songwriter's Assoc. says, "Songs never written bless no one." So, until next time, keep writing.