

The church was crowded to capacity, and by the time our group arrived, there was standing (or sitting) room only. Our leader leaned against the wall at first, then he sat on the floor. After a while he stood up again. I sat when he did and stayed down until it was our time. I couldn't see much from there, but then, I wasn't sure I wanted to.

The funeral was for a man of forty, a husband who had survived his illness long enough to hold his newborn baby. He was a good man, as demonstrated by the packed auditorium and the many stories of his life that were told. The service was a tribute to what a great example and help he had been to others.

We had sung in similar situations for other people numerous times before. This was different, however, in that the man's father had requested a song that I had never even heard before. It was not a hymn, so there were no words or music for it in our books. I was simply given a recording the day before the funeral so that I could familiarize myself with the song. In the privacy of my home I listened to it, and could not keep from choking up as soon as it began. It was a beautiful song, but as it was difficult to find the pattern of the words in the way that the group performed the song, I began to seriously wonder if I would be able to sing it during the service.

I had listened to it several times during that day, and got the feel of the rhythm and harmony. Our group met that night to practice it. Fortunately, Tommy, who was our leader, had printed out the verses and choruses that we would use. We worked a little to further refine how we wanted to work the song and then went home. I felt good about the arrangement, but wasn't sure if my emotional throat would cooperate.

We were last on the program except to allow a final view of the body. So I sat on the floor of the church for an hour with my joints protesting to me. But it was not much to ask, really, if there was some measure of comfort we could provide to the family.

Finally it was time. Tommy sang the melody, and we provided backup support. We "oohed" or sang words as we had decided the previous night. The best and most profound part of the song was the phrase:

I love you...

But Jesus loves you best!

We all were able to sing through and finish on key. I was relieved, and know that even if my part was not musically very good, we gave our hearts and accomplished what had been asked of us. I wondered later about how much we all loved to sing, but the only real pleasure in singing in situations like this was that it helped and comforted someone else. I guess that is what worship is actually supposed to be all about.