

# GOSPEL MASTER CLASS

## WORKBOOK

Three Principles That Will Change the Way You Play Gospel Music

*“Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.” —  
Psalm 150:3*

Jermaine Griggs | Hear and Play Music | [HearAndPlay.com](http://HearAndPlay.com)

## HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

### Welcome, and God bless you!

This workbook is your written companion to the Gospel Master Class video lesson. It was created to go alongside the video, but it also works perfectly on its own. Whether you are brand new to the piano or you have been playing for a few years, these three principles will help you sound more like the gospel music you love and hear every Sunday morning.

### Three Big Ideas in This Workbook:

1. **Principle 1** — The Notes of the Piano, the C Major Scale, Building Chords, and the Four Gospel Chord Patterns
2. **Principle 2** — The Gospel Notes (adding that soulful, churchy sound)
3. **Principle 3** — The 8 Levels of Gospel Praise Style

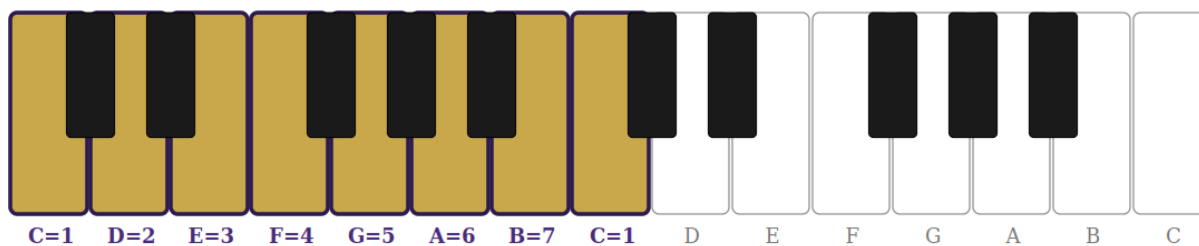
You do not need to read sheet music. You do not need years of training. If you can count to seven and you can find the note C on the piano, you can follow along with everything in this workbook. Take your time with each principle. Read it slowly. Go to the piano and try what you just read. Come back, read again, and try again. **That is how real learning works.**

The Word of God reminds us in Ecclesiastes 9:10, *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”* Give this your full effort, and the music will come.

► **Helpful Tip:** Always warm up your hands before playing. Gently stretch your fingers and wrists for one to two minutes. This protects your hands and helps you play better and longer.



### The C Major Scale — C D E F G A B C



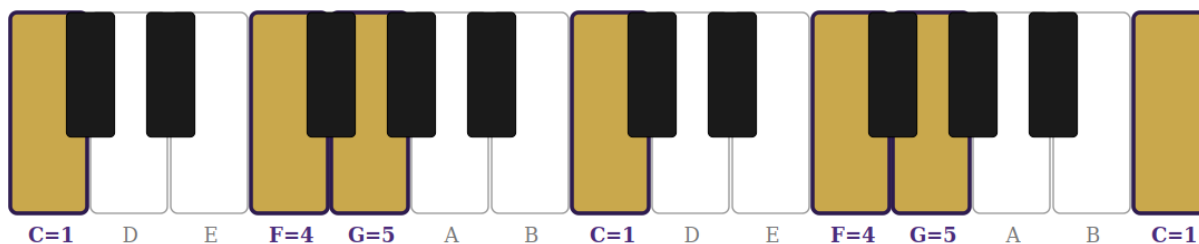
Now here is something very important: We give each note of the scale a number. C is always number 1. D is number 2. E is number 3. F is number 4. G is number 5. A is number 6. B is number 7. Then when we get back to C, it is number 1 again.

#### Why do the numbers matter?

These numbers are the foundation of what musicians call the **Number System**. Instead of saying “play the F chord,” a gospel musician might say “play the 4 chord.” This system works in every key — not just C. Once you understand it, you can play in any key without learning everything over again. That is the power of numbers over names.

Every C on the piano is always the 1. Every F is always the 4. Every G is always the 5. No matter where you are on the keyboard, those numbers stay the same within the key of C major.

#### Every C=1, Every F=4, Every G=5



## Part C: Building Chords – Taking Every Other Note

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Now that you know the scale, let us learn how to build a chord. A chord is what you get when you play three or more notes at the same time. Think of a chord like a word. Just like you put individual letters together to make a word, you put individual notes together to make a chord.

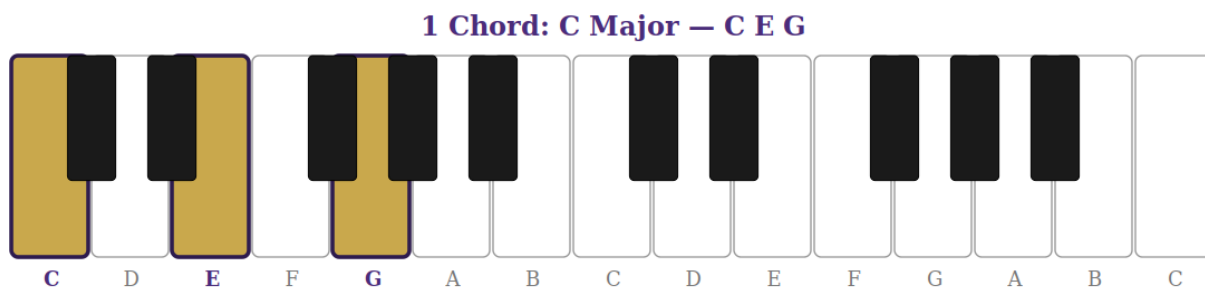
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Here is the simple rule: Start on any note of the scale and skip every other note. Play one, skip one, play one, skip one, play one. That gives you three notes – a chord!

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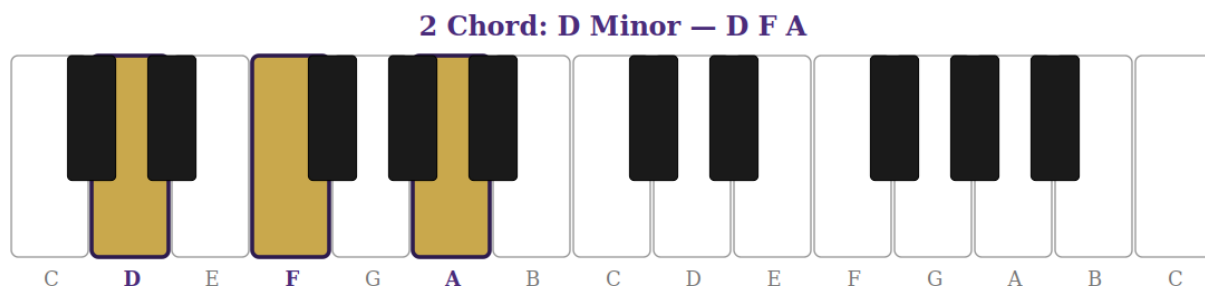
### The 1 Chord: C Major – C E G

Start on C (note 1). Skip D. Land on E (note 3). Skip F. Land on G (note 5). C – E – G played together = C major, your 1 chord.



### The 2 Chord: D Minor – D F A

Start on D (note 2). Skip E. Land on F (note 4). Skip G. Land on A (note 6). D – F – A = D minor, your 2 chord.



**Major vs. Minor – What Is the Difference?**

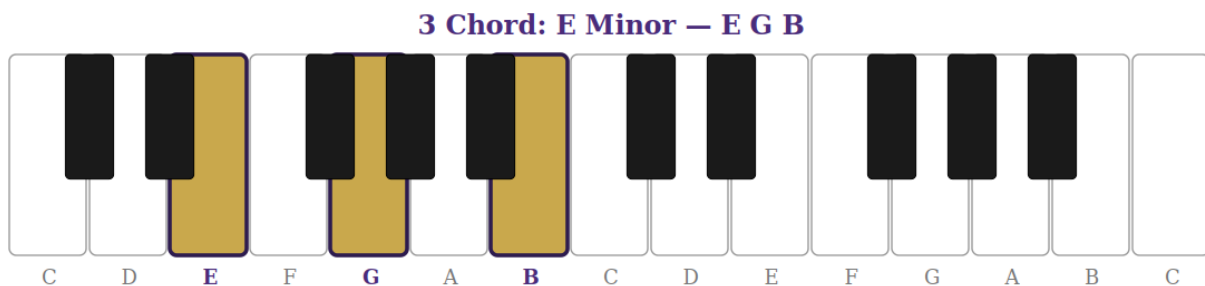
**Major chords** sound bright, bold, and joyful — like sunshine on a clear Sunday morning.

**Minor chords** sound softer, more tender, and emotional — like a heartfelt prayer or a slow hymn.

Your ear will begin to recognize the difference naturally with practice.

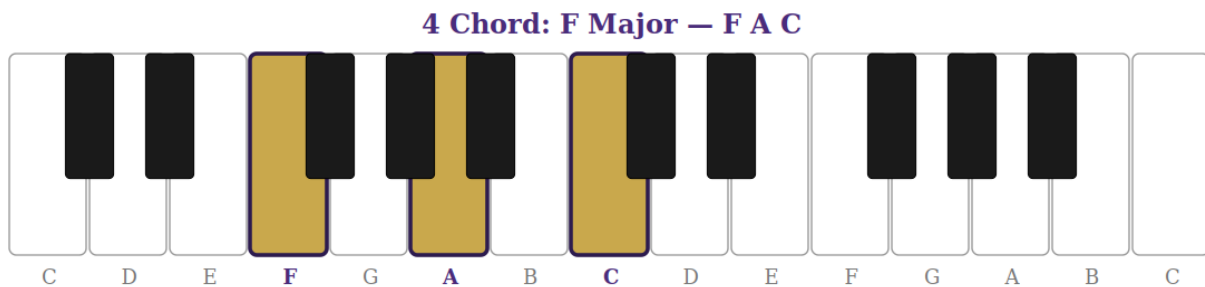
### The 3 Chord: E Minor — E G B

Start on E. Skip F. Land on G. Skip A. Land on B. E — G — B = E minor, your 3 chord.



### The 4 Chord: F Major — F A C

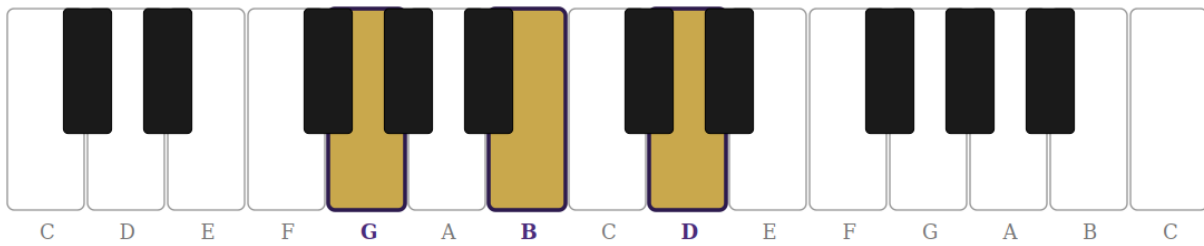
Start on F. Skip G. Land on A. Skip B. Land on C. F — A — C = F major, your 4 chord.



### The 5 Chord: G Major — G B D

Start on G. Skip A. Land on B. Skip C. Land on D. G — B — D = G major, your 5 chord.

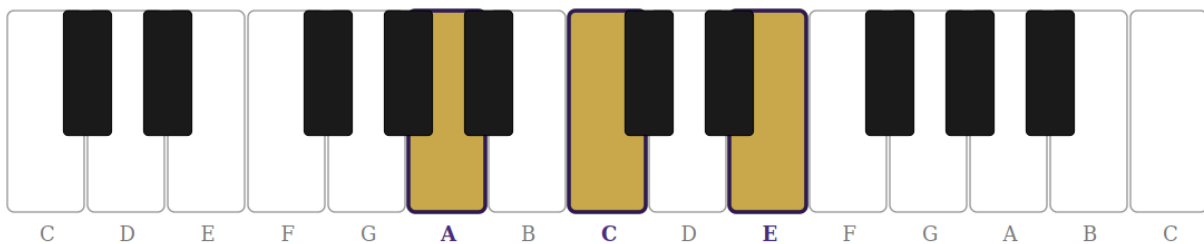
### 5 Chord: G Major — G B D



### The 6 Chord: A Minor — A C E

Start on A. Skip B. Land on C. Skip D. Land on E. A — C — E = A minor, your 6 chord.

### 6 Chord: A Minor — A C E



### The 7 Chord: B Diminished — B D F

Start on B. Skip C. Land on D. Skip E. Land on F. B — D — F = B diminished, your 7 chord. This chord has a tense, unresolved sound. It appears less often in gospel patterns, but it is good to know it is there.

### 7 Chord: B Diminished — B D F



## All 7 chords in one reference table:

Number	Chord Name	Root Note	Right Hand Notes	Quality
1	C major	C	C – E – G	Major (bright)
2	D minor	D	D – F – A	Minor (soft)
3	E minor	E	E – G – B	Minor (soft)
4	F major	F	F – A – C	Major (bright)
5	G major	G	G – B – D	Major (bright)
6	A minor	A	A – C – E	Minor (soft)
7	B diminished	B	B – D – F	Diminished (tense)

## Part D: Adding the Left Hand – Mirroring the Bass Note

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**The left hand plays a single bass note — which is the lowest note of the right hand chord we are playing.** We simply “mirror” that bottom note in the left hand, playing it deep and low on the keyboard. For example, if the right hand plays C – E – G (the 1 chord), the lowest note of that chord is C. So the left hand plays a low C in the bass. If the right hand plays G – B – D (the 5 chord), the left hand plays a low G. Always mirror the lowest note of the right hand chord in your left hand bass.

► **Helpful Tip:** When playing the bass note in your left hand, aim for the lower half of the piano — the deeper sounding section. A rich, deep bass note underneath your right hand chord will instantly make your playing sound fuller and more professional.

## Part E: The Main Pattern — 1-5-6-4

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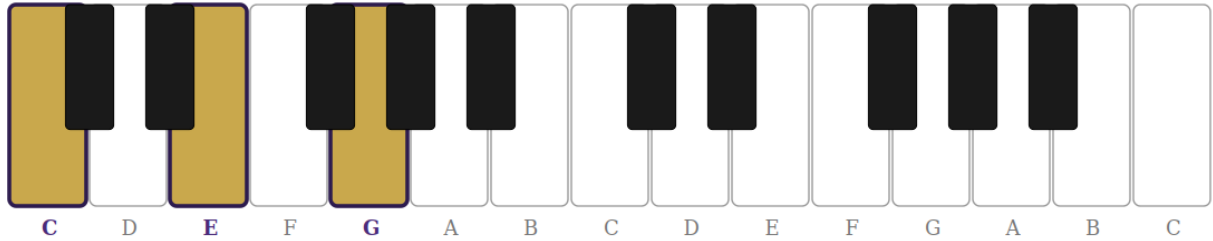
Now that you know your chords, it is time to talk about the most important chord pattern in all of gospel music: the 1-5-6-4. This pattern is the secret behind hundreds of gospel, praise, and worship songs. Once you learn it, you will start hearing it everywhere — in church, on the radio, on your phone, even on television.

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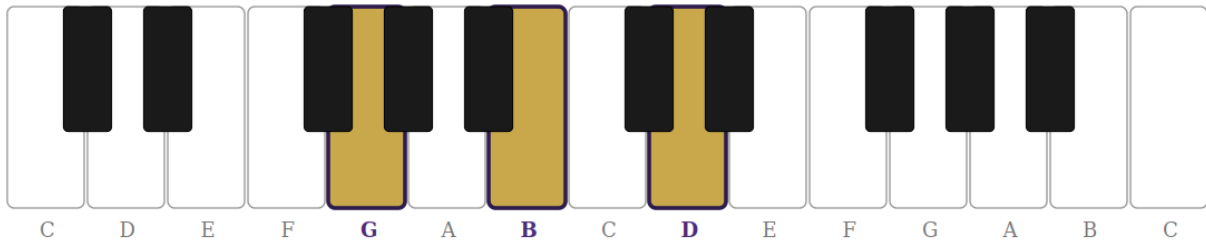
Step	Chord	Left Hand Bass	Right Hand Notes	Chord Name
1st	1	Low C	C – E – G	C major
2nd	5	Low G	G – B – D	G major
3rd	6	Low A	A – C – E	A minor
4th	4	Low F	F – A – C	F major

## The Four Key Chords Illustrated

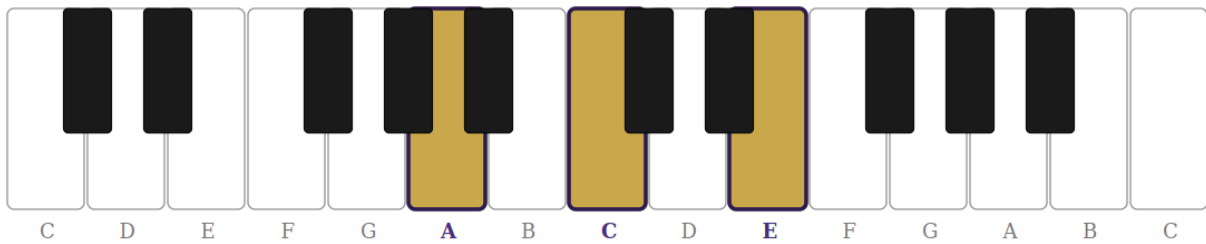
**1 Chord (C Major) — Left Hand: Low C | Right Hand: C E G**



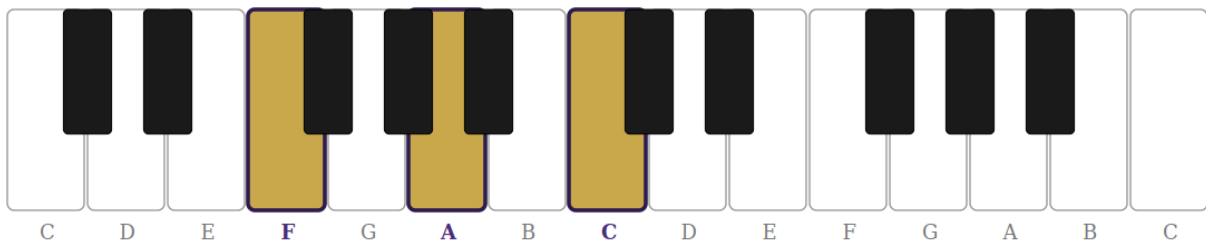
**5 Chord (G Major) — Left Hand: Low G | Right Hand: G B D**



**6 Chord (A Minor) — Left Hand: Low A | Right Hand: A C E**



**4 Chord (F Major) — Left Hand: Low F | Right Hand: F A C**



## Songs That Use the 1-5-6-4:

Song	Pattern
He's Able	1-5-6-4
Here I Am to Worship	1-5-6-4
What a Beautiful Name It Is	1-5-6-4
Majesty	1-5-6-4
I Give Myself Away	1-5-6-4
Open the Floodgates of Heaven (Let It Rain)	1-5-6-4
My God Is Awesome	1-5-6-4
You're Amazing (So Amazing)	1-5-6-4

## Part F: Rotations — The Same Chords, Different Starting Points

A rotation means we take the exact same four chords and simply change which one we start on. Think of four singers standing in a row — rearrange them and it is still the same four voices, just in a different order. The sound changes, but the ingredients are the same.

### Rotation 2 — The 5-6-4-1

Take the 1 off the front and put it at the back. Now the 5 chord leads.

5 chord	6 chord	4 chord	1 chord
G major	A minor	F major	C major

**Song: Jireh, You Are Enough**

### Rotation 3 — The 6-4-1-5

Now the 6 chord (A minor) leads. This rotation has a deeper, more emotional feel.

6 chord	4 chord	1 chord	5 chord
A minor	F major	C major	G major

**Songs: Break Every Chain • Promises (Though the Storms May Come)**

## Rotation 4 — The 4-1-5-6

Now the 4 chord leads. This rotation sounds bright and forward-moving.

4 chord	1 chord	5 chord	6 chord
F major	C major	G major	A minor

**Song: Way Maker**

## Bonus Pattern — The 1-6-4-5

This popular variation starts on 1, jumps to 6, then 4, then 5.

1 chord	6 chord	4 chord	5 chord
C major	A minor	F major	G major

**Songs: Every Praise Is to Our God • How Great Is Our God**

**Remember the Big Picture:** All patterns use the same four chords — C major (1), G major (5), A minor (6), and F major (4). You are simply starting on a different chord each time. Learn these four chords well, and you have unlocked the door to hundreds of gospel songs.

## Transposition: Playing in Any Key

Gospel music is sung in many different keys. Transposition means moving the same pattern into a new key. The good news: the number system stays the same. You just find the new 1 chord and the rest follows.

Key	1 chord	5 chord	6 chord	4 chord
C major	C major	G major	A minor	F major
G major	G major	D major	E minor	C major
F major	F major	C major	D minor	B ♭ major
B ♭ major	B ♭ major	F major	G minor	E ♭ major
E ♭ major	E ♭ major	B ♭ major	C minor	A ♭ major
A ♭ major	A ♭ major	E ♭ major	F minor	D ♭ major

*“Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.” — Psalm 33:3*

## PRINCIPLE 2 — The Gospel Notes

### From Plain Chords to Gospel Chords

Have you ever played a chord and thought, “That sounds nice, but it does not sound like gospel”? You are not alone. The chords from Principle 1 are correct, but they are plain. What turns them into true gospel chords is one simple addition: the Gospel Note. Adding just one extra note to each chord instantly transforms its sound — from plain to soulful, from ordinary to full-on gospel praise.

The gospel note goes at the bottom of the right hand, just below the root note of the chord. One note. That is all it takes.

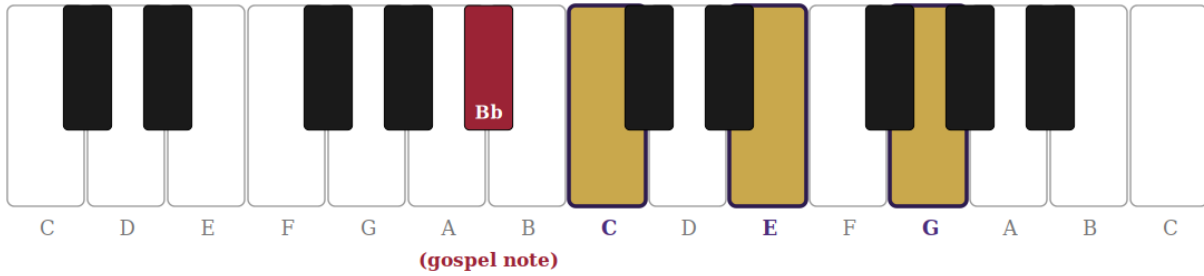
### The Four Chords: Before and After the Gospel Note

Chord	Regular Version	Gospel Version	Gospel Note Added
1 chord (C major)	Left: Low C Right: C — E — G	Left: Low C Right: Bb — C — E — G	Bb — added below C
5 chord (G major)	Left: Low G Right: G — B — D	Left: Low G Right: F — G — B — D	F — added below G
6 chord (A minor)	Left: Low A Right: A — C — E	Left: Low A Right: G — A — C — E	G — added below A
4 chord (F major)	Left: Low F Right: F — A — C	Left: Low F Right: Eb — F — A — C	Eb — added below F

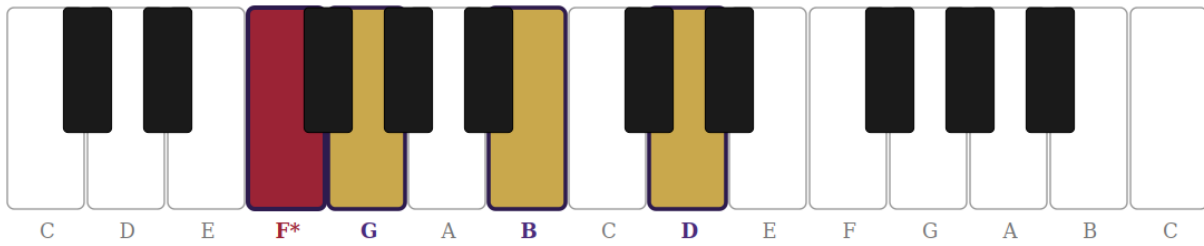
Do you see the pattern? In each chord, the gospel note is added just below the root note of the right hand. One note below the root — that is the gospel secret.

# Gospel Chord Illustrations

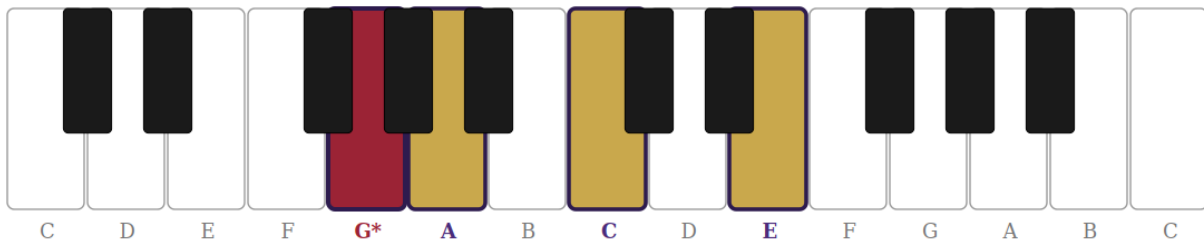
1 Chord + Gospel Note: Bb C E G



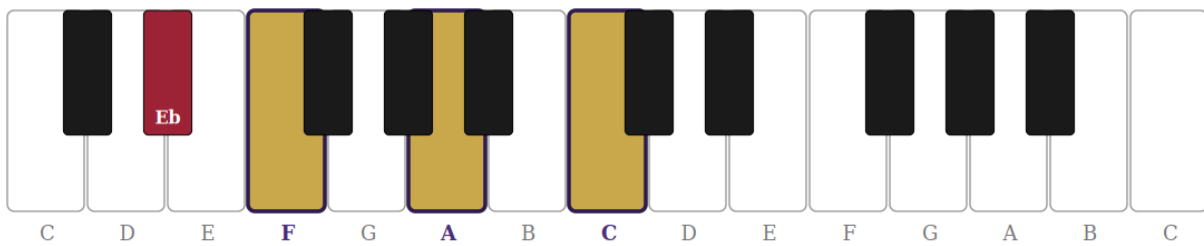
5 Chord + Gospel Note: F G B D



6 Chord + Gospel Note: G A C E



4 Chord + Gospel Note: Eb F A C

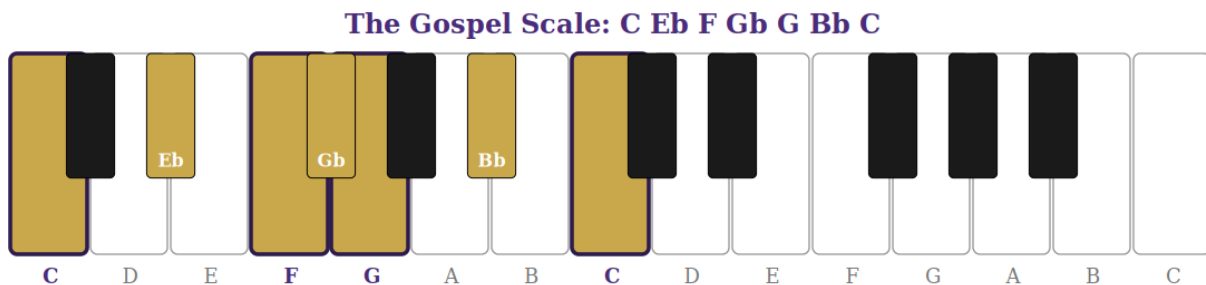


► **Helpful Tip:** Play the chord first without the gospel note. Listen. Then add it. Listen again. Do this slowly, one chord at a time. Your ear will quickly fall in love with that gospel sound.

## The Gospel Scale – Seven Notes That Set You Free

Now that you have the gospel chords, let us talk about how to improvise over them. Improvising means playing notes freely in between the chords — adding color, feeling, and expression. There are seven special notes that sound wonderful over these gospel chords. We call them the Gospel Scale.

Note 1	Note 2	Note 3	Note 4	Note 5	Note 6	Note 7
C	E <sub>b</sub>	F	G <sub>b</sub>	G	B <sub>b</sub>	C (high)



Here is the most wonderful truth about these seven notes: you cannot play a wrong note when you use them over the gospel chords. Mix them up in any order. Play them fast, play them slow. Play them high, play them low. As long as you use these seven notes, it will always sound like gospel music. God gave you that freedom — use it!

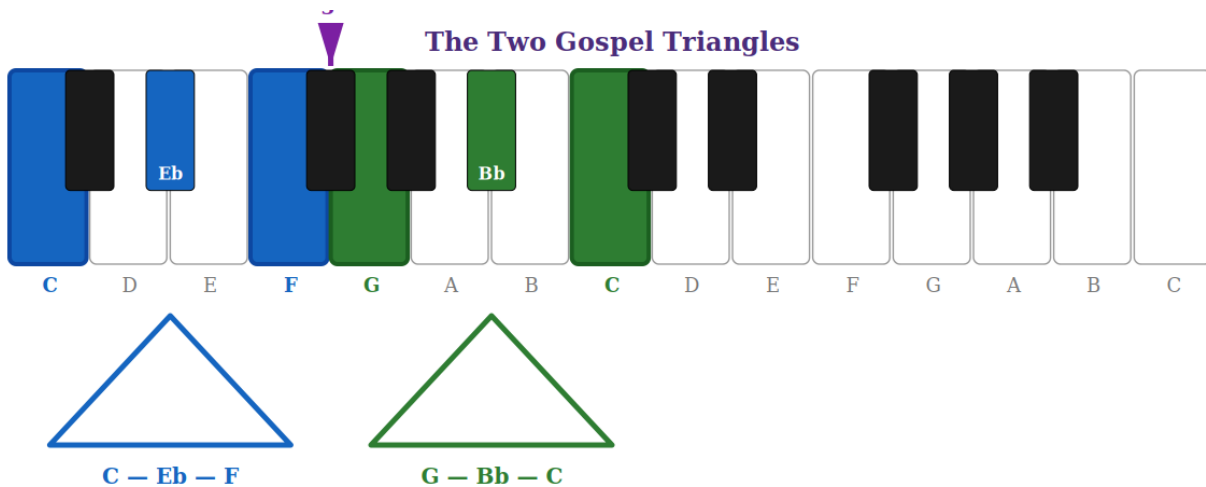
## The Triangle Method – An Easy Way to See the Gospel Scale

The notes of the gospel scale group themselves into shapes that look like triangles on the piano. Once you see the triangles, you will always know where to find your gospel notes.

**First Triangle (C — Eb — F)** — The black key Eb sits between C and F, rising up like the top of a steeple. Eb is the peak; C and F are the two bottom corners.

**Second Triangle (G — Bb — C)** — The black key Bb sits between G and C (upper). Bb is the peak; G and C are the two bottom corners.

**The Bridge Note — Gb** — Between the two triangles sits one note: Gb. This black key connects the two triangles together, sitting perfectly in the middle between them.



To use the triangles, practice each one until your fingers know the shape. Then practice sliding from one triangle to the other using Gb in the middle. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11, *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”* Be content to learn one triangle at a time. That patience will take you far.

*“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” — Psalm 100:1–2*

## **PRINCIPLE 3 – The 8 Levels of Gospel Praise Style**

### **Building the Gospel Bump – One Level at a Time**

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**In Principles 1 and 2, you learned the chords and the gospel notes. Now in Principle 3, we take those tools and build what gospel musicians call the Gospel Bump – that beautiful, rhythmic, bouncing gospel praise style you hear in churches all across the country. We will build it level by level. Do not skip ahead. Each level prepares you for the next one. We work in the key of C on the 1 chord (C major) to start.**

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#### **Songs to Sing While You Play the Gospel Bump**

“Walk with Me, Lord, Walk with Me”

“Down Through the Years, You Know the Lord Has Been Good to Me”

“He’s Been Good to Me”

“I Will Trust in the Lord”

“Yes He Will” (from “I Know the Lord Will Make a Way”)

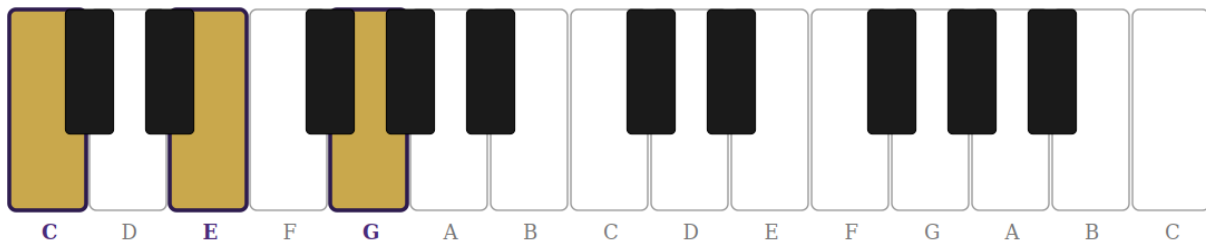
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## The Plain Chord — Your Starting Point

This is where everything begins. A plain, simple chord. No gospel yet. Just the basic 1 chord in C major. Play it, hold it, and listen to how plain it sounds. This is your foundation.

- **Right Hand:** Play C — E — G (C major chord) at the same time
- **Left Hand:** Play a deep C note in the bass
- Hold the chord steady and listen. This is your foundation.

### Level 0: Plain C Major Chord — C E G



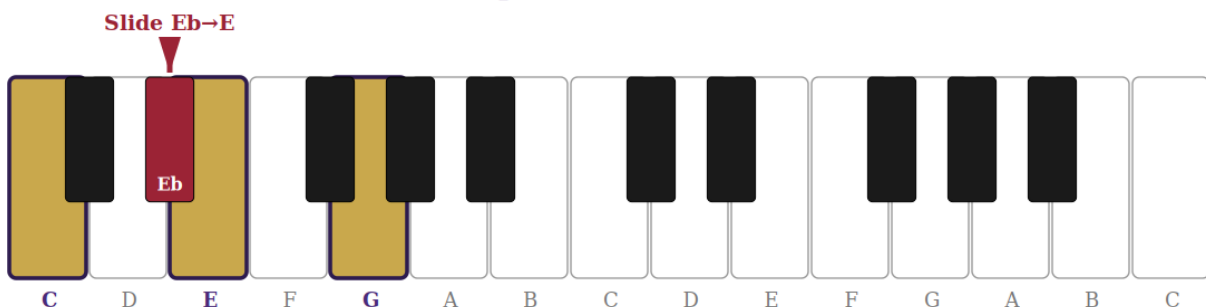
# 1

## The Gospel Slide — Your First Taste of Gospel

Now we add the very first gospel flavor. We are going to slide into the chord using the gospel note Eb. This slide is what gives gospel piano its signature sound.

- The gospel note for the 1 chord is **E<sub>b</sub>** — the black key just to the LEFT of E
- To do the gospel slide: place your middle finger on Eb, then slide it forward onto E as you land on the full chord C — E — G
- It feels like a quick, smooth slide: Eb → E as you land on the chord
- Left hand plays the deep C bass note at the same time
- **Practice goal:** Do the slide 10 times slowly. Then 10 times a little faster. Listen for the gospel sound appearing!

### Level 1: Gospel Slide — Eb slides into E



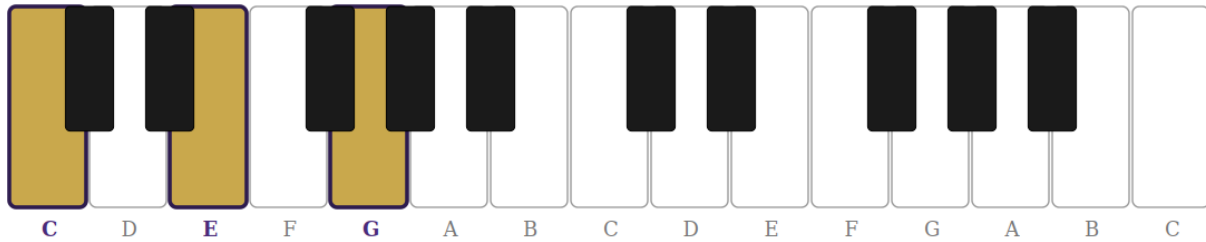
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## Add Neighbor Notes — The Sound Fills Out

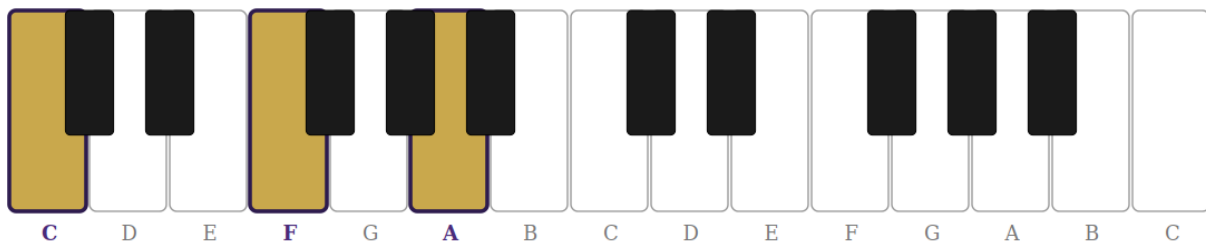
Now we make the chord move. We add neighbor notes — a second chord that lives right next to our home chord. This adds motion and warmth to the sound.

- **Home chord:** C — E — G
- **Neighbor chord:** C — F — A (only the top two notes change; the bottom C stays!)
- Alternate: C-E-G → C-F-A → C-E-G → C-F-A...
- When you come **back home** to C-E-G, use the gospel slide (Eb) from Level 1
- Right hand only for now. Left hand stays on the deep C bass note.
- **Practice goal:** Alternate the two chords smoothly. Use the gospel slide when coming home.

### Level 2: Home Chord — C E G



### Level 2: Neighbor Chord — C F A



### 3

## Bounce the Right Hand — Now It Grooves

Now we add a bounce — a rhythm. This is where the music really starts to feel like gospel praise.

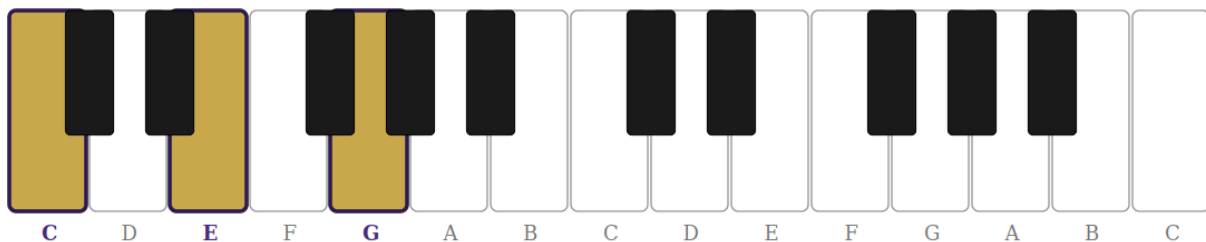
- Give each chord **two short, bouncy beats**: One — And — Two — And
- The dotted rhythm leans slightly on beat 1 and beat 3, making it swing and groove
- Still right hand only. Left hand is resting for now.
- Tap your foot while you practice to keep the beat steady
- **Practice goal:** Right hand bounce should feel natural and relaxed. Think of a rocking chair.

### The Dotted Bounce Rhythm:

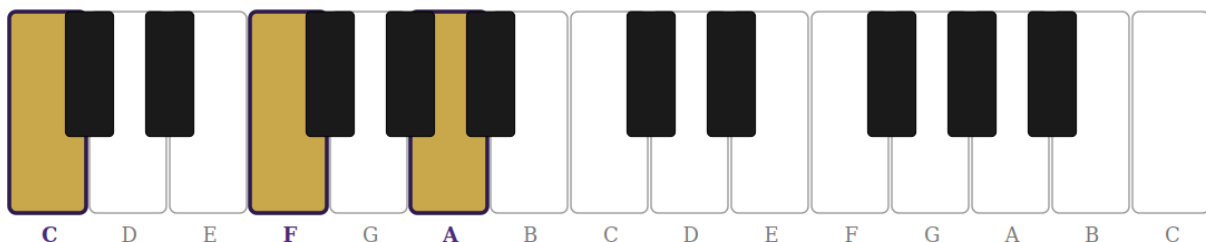
**1 . and . 2 . and . 3 . and . 4 . and**

Lean extra weight on the **1** and the **3**. The “and” notes are lighter and slightly rushed. Think of a rocking chair — steady, gentle, and rhythmic.

#### Level 2: Home Chord — C E G



#### Level 2: Neighbor Chord — C F A



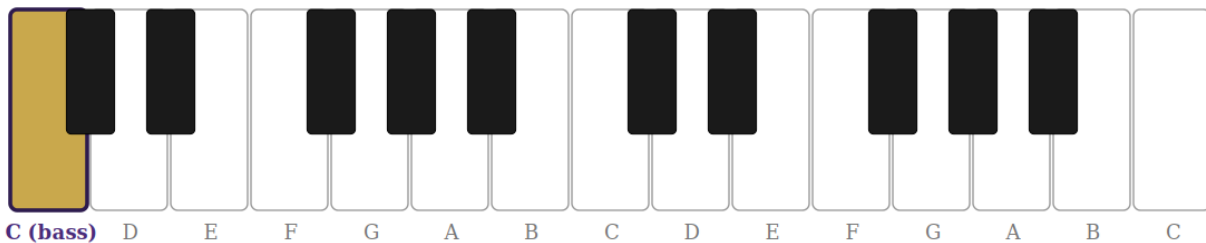
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### Left Hand Bass Note — Single and Simple

Now we bring in the left hand — but we start very simply. One single bass note, bouncing with the same rhythm as the right hand.

- Left hand plays a single deep **C** note, bouncing with the same 1-and-2-and rhythm
- Right hand keeps doing what it learned in Level 3
- Practice the left hand **completely alone first**. Just bounce that one C until it feels natural.
- Go “turtle speed” — much slower than you think you need to. Speed will come with time.
- **Practice goal:** Both hands bouncing together on the same rhythm.

#### Level 4: Left Hand — Single Deep C Bass Note



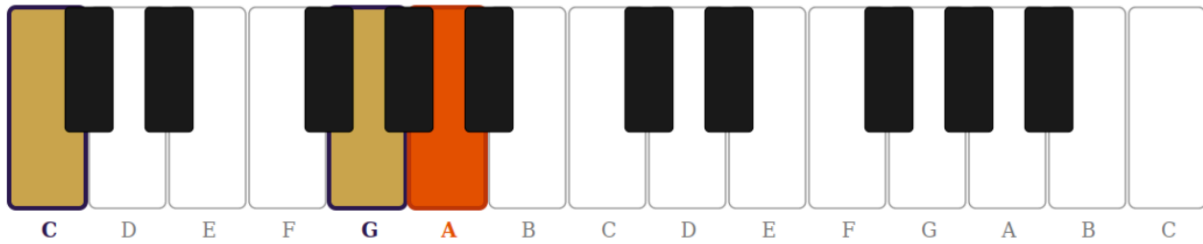
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### Left Hand Neighbor Notes — Coordination Time

Now the left hand gets its own neighbor notes. This is a big step in gospel fullness — but it requires real coordination. Take it very slowly.

- The left hand now alternates between two combinations:
- **Combination A:** C + G (two notes together in the left hand)
- **Combination B:** C + A (two notes together in the left hand)
- Alternate: C+G → C+A → C+G → C+A...
- Learn the left hand **alone first**. Practice until it is smooth on its own. Then add the right hand.
- *Proverbs 21:5* — “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”
- **Practice goal:** Left hand alternating cleanly alone. Then slowly add right hand.

### Level 5: Left Hand – C + G alternates with C + A



## 6

### Gospel Note in the Left Hand – Both Hands Get the Gospel

Now we add the gospel note to the left hand as well. When you get this, both hands will have the gospel sound, and your playing will truly come alive.

- The left hand now cycles through three combinations:
- **Combination A:** C + G
- **Combination B:** C + A
- **Combination C (the gospel note):** C + Bb
- The pattern: C+G → C+A → C+Bb → C+A → C+G → repeat
- The C stays constant! Only the top note changes: G → A → Bb → A → G
- **Left hand alone first.** Master that pattern. Then add the right hand slowly.
- **Practice goal:** Cycle through all three combinations smoothly. Then add right hand.

### Level 6: Left Hand – C+G, C+A, C+Bb (gospel note in red)



## 7

## Add Left Hand Rhythm — The Song Breathes

Now we add a rhythmic pattern to the left hand. This is the final coordination challenge. When you get this, the music will feel like it is breathing on its own.

- As you come down from C+Bb, add an alternating rhythm between C+A and C+G instead of going straight back
- Think of it this way: the top note of the left hand alternates **A — G — A — G** in rhythm
- Since C stays constant, you are really just bouncing the top note between A and G
- Combined with the right hand bounce and gospel notes, this creates the full gospel praise groove
- This is the level that makes your family peek into the room and say, “What are you playing?!”
- **Practice goal:** Full left hand rhythm pattern. Then both hands together at turtle speed first.



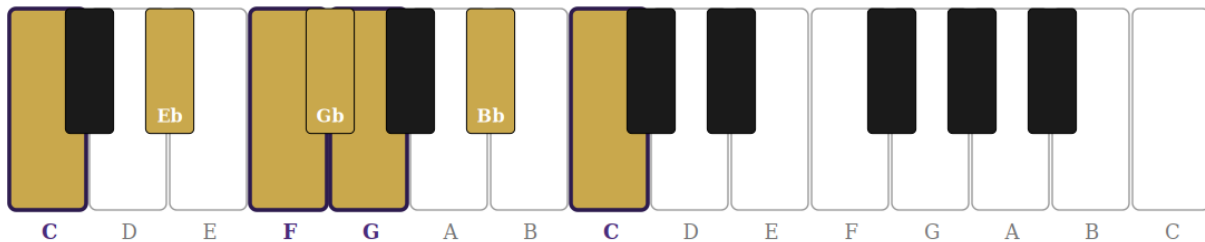
# 8

## Gospel Fills and Singing — Make It Your Own

You have reached the top level! Now it is time to express yourself freely. There are two wonderful things you can do at Level 8, and both make the music come alive in worship.

- **Option 1 — Gospel Fills:** Use the gospel scale (C Eb F Gb G Bb C) from Principle 2 to fill in spaces between the chords. Run the notes up and down the keyboard. Put them wherever you feel led. There is no wrong answer!
- **Option 2 — Sing!** As you play the gospel bump, begin to sing the melody of a hymn or praise song. Let your playing support your voice. This is the truest form of gospel piano.
- Try singing: “Walk with Me, Lord” • “He’s Been Good to Me” • “I Will Trust in the Lord” • “Yes He Will”
- The goal is not perfection — it is **praise**. Play from your heart. God honors a willing spirit.
- **Practice goal:** Combine the full gospel bump with gospel fills or singing. Let the music flow from your spirit.

### The Gospel Scale: C Eb F Gb G Bb C



## The 8 Levels at a Glance

Level	Name	What You Do
0	Plain Chord	Play C-E-G with left hand bass C. Your starting point.
1	Gospel Slide	Slide from Eb into E as you land on the chord. First taste of gospel.
2	Neighbor Notes	Alternate between C-E-G and C-F-A in the right hand.
3	Right Hand Bounce	Add the 1-and-2-and dotted bounce rhythm to the right hand.
4	Left Hand Bass	Add a single bouncing C note in the left hand.
5	Left Hand Neighbors	Left hand alternates between C+G and C+A.
6	Left Gospel Note	Add C+Bb to the left hand cycle. Both hands now have the gospel sound.
7	Left Hand Rhythm	Add the A-G alternating rhythm in the left hand.
8	Fills and Singing	Improvise with gospel scale notes, or sing while you play.

### A Word of Encouragement:

You now hold in your hands three powerful principles that have helped thousands of gospel musicians grow in their playing. Do not try to learn everything in one sitting. Spend a week or two on Principle 1. Spend time on Principle 2. Then work through each level of Principle 3, one level per practice session.

The Lord placed music in your heart for a reason. This is your season to develop the gift He has given you. Keep this workbook nearby. Come back to it often. Remember the words of Colossians 3:23: *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”*

Play heartily. Play prayerfully. And enjoy the journey.

***“And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.”***

**— 1 Chronicles 13:8**