

# The Struggling Church Pianist's Chord Primer

Lesson #1 - Chords in Both Hands



Brought to you by [The Struggling Church Musician](#)

## Introduction

I get a lot of questions about what am I doing with my hands when I play piano. These questions usually come from people who can read basic piano music and might even know a smattering of chords.

I don't do much but it doesn't take much to make a difference. I put together this little e-book to show a little of what I do.

## Table of Contents

1. What's in this book
2. Chords in both hands, a look at What a Friend We Have in Jesus
3. Some other examples
4. Tips to help you succeed.

## What's in This Book

This book is for the beginning church pianist. You've taken your lessons. You know how to form simple triad chords. You might even feel a bit comfortable in front of people at the piano and accompanying people. But you would like to increase the sound you make at the piano. You don't have a lot of time but you know you can add a little more to your music. You don't necessarily want an extreme sound just something more. Well follow along and maybe you'll be able to use a little of what I use to embellish a song at the piano.

## Chords in Both Hands

One of the most basic things I do is play chords in both hands. If you're accompanying a group or even an individual they are supposed to be carrying the melody so there is no need for you to reproduce that sound on the piano. Sometimes this is very freeing as you may have not had a lot of time to practice a song. Or you play with sheet music as opposed to playing by ear and the music you have is more advanced than you would like but by playing the chords you can at least give it a good go.

While this can help you out of a jam it is also a good idea to be comfortable with piano scales. This is a very good reason to know your scales in all keys. I've added a copy of our free scale sheet to the end of this book if you don't have one. Spend some time learning the scales for all your major keys and in both hands.

To see what basic things we can do with simple three note chords let's look at *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* in the key of F. This is one of my favorite keys to play in. The Key of F that is. We know it because it has one flat which is Bb. The key of F includes the other major chords C and Bb

We'll use a version I worked up where the chord symbols are on the top and the chords for the right hand are written out in the treble clef.

If you are unsure about reading music download a copy of our [Easy Music Theory](#) guide. It is the basics on reading sheet music.

Okay so in this version of *What A Friend We Have In Jesus* we use chords in both hands which is the very basic of basics when playing the piano with chords.

Play the song through and sing along while you play (so you will know how it sounds when you accompany people).

Note that all the right hand is doing is playing the chords in different inversions. If you've ever seen, heard, or had piano lessons where your teacher is telling you to practice your chords in different inversions this is why it makes sense to practice your scales.

So let's look at *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*. In the right hand you will play the F Major chord in the 2nd inversion in measures 1,5,10,13, 15 and 16. Where the F note is in the middle.

Your F chord changes to a 1st inversion in measures 7 and 8 and then it is played in the root position in measure 10.

The Bb chord is played in the root position and in

the 1st inversion throughout the song and then the C chord is also played as a C7 (with a Bb added).

Now lest you think I remember all this when I'm playing I do not. It takes it being written out and describing it to someone before this registers. What I'm trying to say that with playing and practice this becomes second nature. So instead of trying to think about different inversions at the piano just play them. Have them written out for you, follow them on paper and just play them.

[The Complete Book of Scales, Chords, Arpeggios & Cadences](#) is an excellent source for triads (3 note chords) and their inversions among other things.

For the left hand I usually play the F chord in the 2nd inversion or with the F in the middle. This is because my second inversion of the F chord in the right hand has the C note right on middle C and I find it more

comfortable to move into Bb and C from this position.

You might find otherwise so find your comfort zone (meaning the inversion is up to you).

It is also very easy to play the F chord in the root position and then move into the Bb and the C chord just changing a few notes.

Download our [Primary Chords Chart](#) for a view on how the primary chords are created in each Major key. Both in their root positions and in the easy few as possible note change positions.

Now let's take a look at the sheet music for *What a Friend We Have in Jesus...*

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

Chord progression for measures 1-8: F, F, Bb, Bb.

2

Chord progression for measures 9-12: F, F, C, C7.

4

Chord progression for measures 13-16: F, F, Bb, Bb.

6

Chord progression for measures 17-20: F, F, C, F, F.

8

C C F F

10

Bb Bb C C7

12

F F Bb Bb

14

F C F Bb F

16

As you can see this is just the basics of double, or both hand chording for *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. I feel it is up to the individual pianist to flesh out the rest of the song.

This is where you let your style come through.

## Now some other examples are...

### 1. Playing the left hand chords in a rhythmic style.

Even though I have notated this particular song with mostly whole notes you could play a chord every beat of the measure in the left hand. This sounds besit if it is a hand clapping type Praise and Worship song. And it takes some work to get the timing right. If you are just starting to play piano your hands will want to play everything together and to get them to work seperately takes a little practice but just keep at it.

2. You could also arpeggiate the chording in the left hand or even the right. What this means is to play abroken chord. Try playing the seperate notes of the chord for every beat in the measure or as triplets in the measure..

## Tips to help you succeed.

In addition to practicing your scales you should be practicing your chords in each of the inversion (root, 1, 2). It's nice to do them right after you have playe a scale. For example the C scale practice the scale with both hands and then practice the CMajor, Cminor, Caug, Cdim and C7 in each of their inversions.

Don't be afraid to experiment. Double chord playing does not have to be dull..

As you play the song and also practice the scales you will find yourself wanting to add a note here and there or change the way you play the note. This is good and go for it!.

I hope this small lesson has been of some help to you.

God Bless and we'll see you back here for lesson #2  
Using Octave Notes For the Bass

## Other lessons by the Struggling Church Musician

- **#2 Using Octave Notes For The Bass**
- **#3 Filling Out The Right Hand.**
- **#4 Knowing Your Scales.**
- **#5 Learning Some Extra Chords**

C MAJOR SCALE

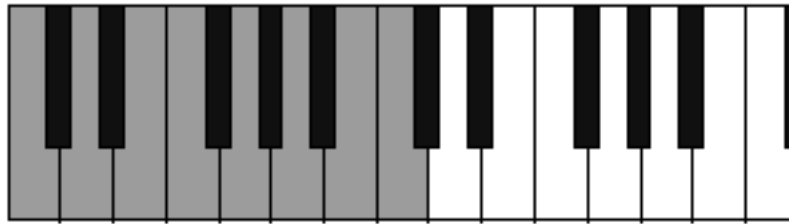


fig.20

C D E F G A B C

Right Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5

Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5

G MAJOR SCALE



fig.21

G A B C D E F# C

Right Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5

Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5

D MAJOR SCALE

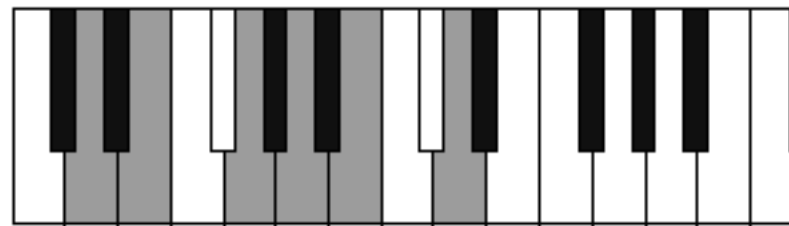


fig.22

D E F# G A B C# D

Right Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5

Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5

**A MAJOR SCALE**

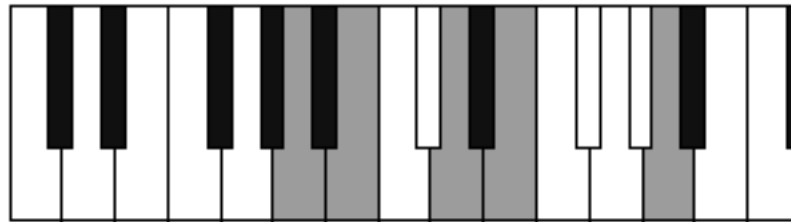


fig.23

**A B C# D E F# G# A**

**Right Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5**

**Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5**

**E MAJOR SCALE**

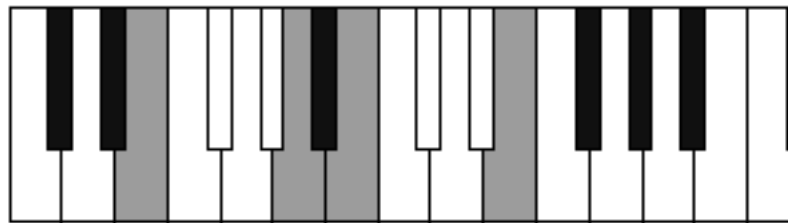


fig.24

**E F# G# A B C# D# E**

**Right Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5**

**Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5**

**B/Cb\*<sup>1</sup> MAJOR SCALE**

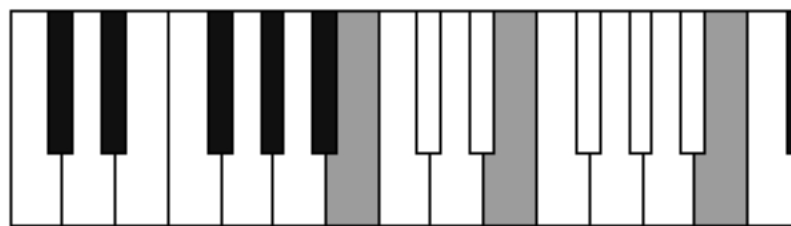


fig.25

**B C# D# E F# G# A# B**

**Right Hand Fingering-1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5**

**Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4**

<sup>1</sup> \*Enharmonic

F#/Gb<sup>2</sup> MAJOR SCALE

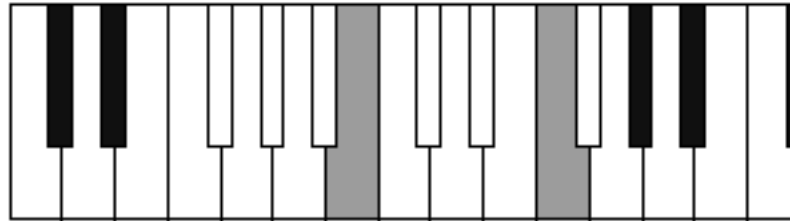


fig.26

F# G# A# B C# D# F F#

Right Hand Fingering - 2,3,4,1,2,3,1,2

Left Hand Fingering - 4,3,2,1,3,2,1,2

C#/Db<sup>\*3</sup> MAJOR SCALE

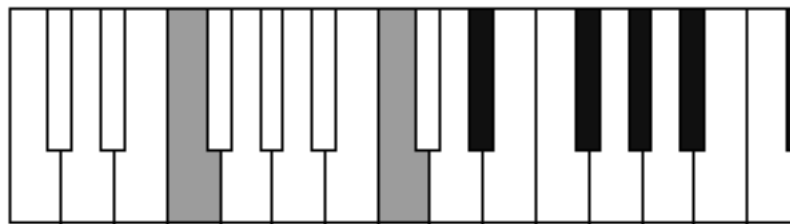


fig.27

C# D# F F# G# A# C C#

Right Hand Fingering - 2,3,1,2,3,4,1,2

Left Hand Fingering - 3,2,1,4,3,2,1,2

Ab MAJOR SCALE

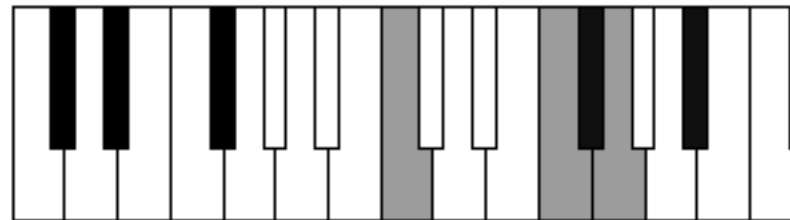


fig.28

Ab Bb C Dd Eb F G Ab

Right Hand Fingering - 2,3,1,2,3,1,2,3

Left Hand Fingering - 3,2,1,4,3,2,1,2

<sup>2,3</sup> \*Enharmonic

**E<sub>b</sub> MAJOR SCALE**

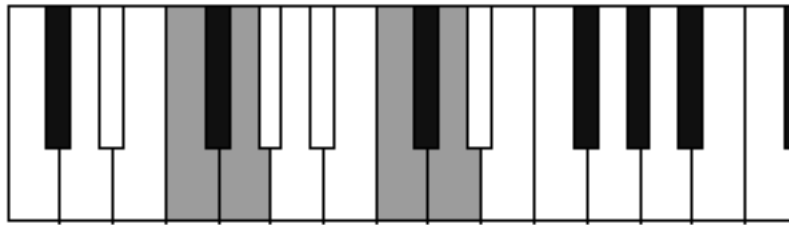


fig.29

**E<sub>b</sub> F G A<sub>b</sub> B<sub>b</sub> C D E<sub>b</sub>**

**Right Hand Fingering - 2,1,2,3,4,1,2,3**

**Left Hand Fingering - 3,2,1,4,3,2,1,2**

**B<sub>b</sub> MAJOR SCALE**

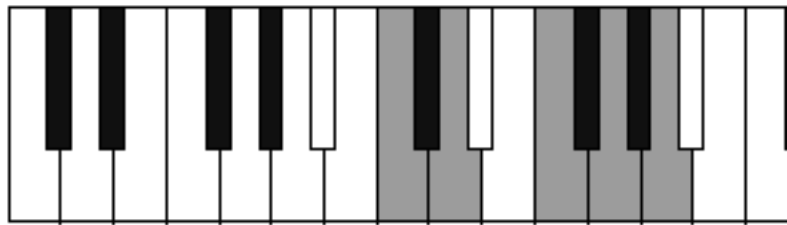


fig.30

**B<sub>b</sub> C D E<sub>b</sub> F G A B<sub>b</sub>**

**Right Hand Fingering - 2,1,2,3,1,2,3,4**

**Left Hand Fingering - 3,2,1,4,3,2,1,2**

**F MAJOR SCALE**

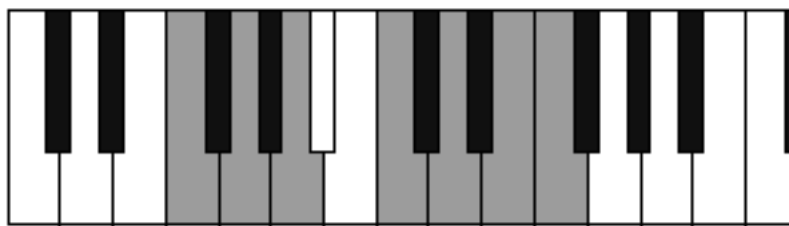


fig.31

**F G A B<sub>b</sub> C D E F**

**Right Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4**

**Left Hand Fingering - 1,2,3,1,2,3,4,5**