

Learning Two Chord Progressions (I-IV-V; I-ii-V)

- 6 pages
- 9 examples

OUTLINE	REPERTOIRE
Processes for Beneficial Learning	Father I Adore You
Triads	
Sevenths	

The worship chorus, *Father I Adore You*, contains two *indispensable* chord progressions (I-IV-V-I, and I-ii-V-I). Our goal is to obtain mastery of these two progressions and to pay careful attention to how chords function.

Using simple triads first and then major and minor sevenths, a major objective is also to become competent playing the progressions in different keys. Why? The act of transposition will help us (1) feel/absorb the tactile shapes of the various chord spacings, (2) serve to etch the sounds indelibly in our inner ear, (3) and prompt us to begin to "think in music."

In the next chapter, various strategies for obtaining variety will invite us to "get our hands dirty" and work at integrating techniques. The present chapter begins simply.

Processes for Beneficial Learning

Below, the example is written in C major. Once you can play it fluently in C, we'll learn to play it in the keys, D, E, F, G and A. E and A are favorite guitar keys which occur often in contemporary worship songs.

- To make your time maximally beneficial,
use your voice to keep your mind engaged:**
- a. Call out the bass notes as you play*
 - b. Call out the pop symbols as you play*
 - c. Call out the Roman Numerals as you play (most important)*
 - d. Sing the lyrics as you play*

These techniques will help you begin to "think in music."

Triads.

Harmony Restricted to Simple Triads (No Sevenths).

Example 1.1 *Father I Adore You*. Play it !

Fa - ther I a - dore You: Lay my life be - fore You. How I love You.
 C Dm G C C Dm G C C F G C
 I ii V I I ii V I I IV V I

Notice, the piece is broken down into two progressions that are two measure long: I ii V I occurs twice, and I IV V I occurs once. All the chords are simple triads.

Roman Numerals. If you don't understand the Roman Numerals written under the bass notes, consult the Appendix 2. It explains the advantages Roman Numerals have over Pop Symbols. Roman Numerals indicate the *scale degree* on which chords are based, using uppercase for major chords, lowercase for minor chords. (More about them shortly.)

Once you can play the example fluently in C, learn it in D.

Example 1.2 *Father I Adore You*. Use your voice. Keep Focused.

Fa - ther I a - dore You: Lay my life be - fore You. How I love You.
 D Em A D D Em A D D G A D
 I ii V I I ii V I I IV V I

Then move on to the key of G.

Example 1.3 *Father I Adore You*. Play it in G. Call out the Roman Numerals!

Fa - ther I a - dore You: Lay my life be - fore You. How I love You.

G Am D G G Am D G G C D G

I ii V I I ii V I I IV V I

Try it! Now close the book (or your eyes) and play *Father I Adore You* in the keys of C, D, G, A.

Sevenths

Below, the same progressions occur in the key of G, but now seventh chords are added.

Example 1.4 Play *Father I Adore You* in G Major. (With Seventh Chords)

Fa - ther I a - dore You: Lay my life be - fore You. How I love You.

G Am⁷ D G Gmaj⁷ Am⁷ D Gmaj⁷ G C D G

I ii V I I ii V I I IV V I

Roman Numerals. Roman Numerals are exceptionally helpful in learning to "think in music." Whereas Pop Symbols describe a chord situated in a *particular* key (e.g., F major chord in the key of C or Bb), Roman Numeral relationships are effectual for *all* keys. For instance, the Roman Numeral "ii" (indicating a minor chord on scale degree two) has the function of ii in every key. The Pop Symbol F major, however, is scale degree four in the key of C, but scale degree five in the key of Bb. Its function can vary with each key. It does not purport, in itself, to indicate any function. It is a description of itself.

The Roman Numeral concept is broader, more comprehensive, efficient. *Numbers have special properties*. They can relate to one another. Using Roman Numerals, we can talk about chords that are a third apart (I, vi, IV), or a series of fifth relationships ($vi \rightarrow ii \rightarrow V \rightarrow I$), and that description holds for *each and every* key. Roman Numerals reveal patterns and indicate functions whereas Pop Symbols do not.

For most of this chapter, however, simple Roman Numerals will be used ($I \rightarrow ii \rightarrow V \rightarrow I$). Even if the ii chord is actually a ii7 (a minor seventh), it may be stated as a simple ii (as in the example below). Why? It allows us to call it out (verbalize it quickly) without encumbrances.

Example 1.5 Play *Father I Adore You* in A Major. (With Seventh Chords)

The musical notation shows a chord progression in A Major. The treble staff contains chords: A, Bm7, E, A, Ama7, Bm7, E, Ama7, D, E, A. The bass staff contains a simple bass line. Roman numerals are written below the bass staff: I, ii, V, I, I, IV, V, I.

Do it! Close the book (or your eyes). Play *Father I Adore You* (containing sevenths) in the keys of C, D, G, and A.

Theory Reminders

Note 1. *Don't forget to play the major sevenths!* A major seventh occurs in measure 3 and 4. We want to establish that sound firmly in our ears.

Note 2. *Become comfortable not playing the melody.* The melody is sometimes omitted (let it go). In these beginning examples, I'm generally following the contour of the melody, but not every note. Maintain smooth chord connections—this is critical! Focus your attention on how the chords function and the harmonies sound to your ear.

Note 3. Parallel fifths and octaves, prohibited in "common practice" classical theory, occur frequently in popular keyboard music. Pay attention to the sound—do the parallel octaves or fifths (see measure one above) sound good?

Practice Suggestions

1. *Practice each chord progression separately (by memory) in several keys.* Again, the chord progression I-ii-V-I occurs twice. The chord progression I-IV-V-I occurs once. These are essential progressions you need to know really well.

Example 1.6 Play *Father I Adore You* in F Major. (With Seventh Chords)

F Gm⁷ C F Fma⁷ Gm⁷ C Fma⁷ B^b C F

Example 1.7 I-ii-V-I in F, G, and A Major
(Extracted progression from measures 1 & 2)

F Gm⁷ C F

I ii V I

Play the above progression in the keys of C, D, E, F, G, and A major.

Example 1.8 Variant Voicing of I-ii-V-I in F, G, and A Major
(Extracted progression from measures 3 & 4)

Fma⁷ Gm⁷ C Fma⁷

I ii V I

Play the progression in the keys of C, D, E, F, G, and A major.

Example 1.9 I-IV-V-I in F, G and A Major

(Extracted progression from measures 5 & 6)

F B \flat C F

I IV V I

Play it in the keys of C, D, E, F, G, and A major.

2. *Practice the progressions until you can perform the entire piece fluently.* If this is challenge, divide the piece into segments. Concentrate on the first two measures, then the first four together, and then play the full six measures as a unit. Divide and conquer.

3. *Close the book!* Play the song by memory. Let the chord patterns guide your thinking.

Next Chapter

In the next chapter we play the piece 12 different ways, using (for the most part) the same progressions.

*By wisdom a house is built,
and through understanding, it is established;
through knowledge its rooms are filled
with rare and beautiful treasures.*

Proverbs 24:3, 4