



## Teenage Youth Worship Leaders: Wisdom for Teenagers and Those Who Mentor Them

### Workshop Overview

- Definitions, disclaimers, observations, and questions
- Four models of worship with teenagers
- Advice for teenage youth worship leaders and those who mentor them
- Resources for the task

### Two Disclaimers

Intergenerational worship practices are among the best models of worship congregations can foster for all ages involved, including teenagers.

Age-specific ministries are vital, necessary, and if done well, can contribute to the spiritual well-being of all ages, particularly teenagers.

### Two Observations

Teenagers are often overlooked entities in the broader world of worship. This is particularly true in scholarship, where teens are lumped with children, or they are lumped with college students. Yet, teenagers are unique in their physical, emotional, and spiritual formation.

Most youth groups and Christian high schools have worship services in their mid-week gatherings. Yet, most youth ministers, chaplains, and music teachers have not studied worship. In these settings, the many responsibilities of worship fall on a single adult: the youth minister, chaplain, or music teacher. These adults often rely on one, two, or more teenagers for help.

### Two Guiding Questions

How do we encourage teenagers to engage as full, conscious, active participants in worship?

How do we best equip teenagers, and adults who mentor them, for the worship leadership roles in which they find themselves?

### Four Models of Worship with Teenagers

|                    | All Church Worship  | Student Worship  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Adult Leadership   | <p><b>MODEL 1 //</b><br/>Adults lead all-church worship, where all ages are worshipers, and teenagers represent a minority in the worshipping community.</p>    | <p><b>MODEL 2 //</b><br/>Adults lead student worship (youth group, Christian school, small group, etc.), and teenagers represent a majority in the worshipping community.</p>    |
| Student Leadership | <p><b>MODEL 3 //</b><br/>Teenagers lead all-church worship, where all ages are worshipers, and teenagers represent a minority in the worshipping community.</p> | <p><b>MODEL 4 //</b><br/>Teenagers lead student worship (youth group, Christian school, small group, etc.), and teenagers represent a majority in the worshipping community.</p> |

#### Questions for Reflection

What model best represents your situation, and why?

What opportunities does that model present?

What challenges does that model present?

## Wisdom for Teenage Youth Worship Leaders and Those Who Mentor Them

*Wise is the teenage youth worship leader who ...*

... invests in their personal relationship with God, call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and pursues spiritual growth through the dedicated study of scripture, prayer, and quiet to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit.

... realizes the significance of their unique leadership position in the church among their peers, and exhibits confidence, humility, and conviction on and off the platform.

... searches for one or more adult mentors who can provide teaching, accountability, encouragement, and opportunities for reflective learning.

... builds meaningful relationships with others, including those on the worship team and those in the broader worshipping community.

... pursues excellence in their craft as a musician, speaker, and minister through practice and purposeful learning.

... acknowledges the time demands that come from school, family, extra-curricular activities, church, and more, yet still reserves concentrated time for the tasks of planning and leading worship.

... leans into mistakes, learns from them, and adheres to a gospel of grace when worship does not go as planned.

... incorporates disciplined play into the worshipping community.

... addresses serious issues of the day with careful, thoughtful language informed by examples found in scripture, such as the book of Psalms.

... commits to learn from different cultures and represent their voice in worship.

... promotes contagious leadership among all ages in the church by regularly sharing a personal testimony of “why I like worship” or “why I like church.”

... teaches the who, what, why, and how of worship when called upon with grace, passion, and poise.



## Resources for the Task

### Books

Nancy Beach, *An Hour on Sunday: Creating Moments of Transformation and Wonder*

Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*

Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams*

Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*

Bob Kauflin, *True Worshipers: Seeking What Matters to God*

Rory Noland, *The Heart of the Artist: A Character Building Guide for You and Your Ministry Team*

Greg Scheer, *The Art of Worship: A Musicians Guide to Leading Modern Worship*

Greg Scheer, *Essential Worship: A Handbook for Leaders*

Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*

Robert Weber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*

### Summer Programs for Teenage Youth Worship Leaders

**Animate** | June 26-30, 2017

*A five-day summer program in worship leadership for teenagers and their adult mentors.*  
Samford University | Birmingham, Alabama

**Awakening** | June 11-16, 2017

*Nurture student's gifts and passions for worship and the church*  
Hope College | Holland, Michigan

**One Bread, One Cup** | Various

*Liturgical leadership focusing on the Word, Sacrament and Mission of Roman Catholic Church*  
St. Meinrad College and Seminary | St. Meinrad, Indiana

**Urban Doxology** | Various

*Songwriting and Internship Program*  
Richmond, Virginia

## Websites

### *All About Worship*

Podcasts for worship leaders

<http://www.allaboutworship.com/home>

### *anima: the Center for Worship and the Arts at Samford University*

Teaching videos, sample worship services, and blog

<http://anima.samford.edu>

### *d365.org*

Online daily devotion with scripture, prayer, and reflection

<http://d365.org/>

### *Reformed Worship*

Resources for planning and leading worship

<http://www.reformedworship.org/>

### *Worship Leader*

Articles, reviews, and technology

<https://worshipleader.com/>

## Contact

Eric L. Mathis, PhD

Assistant Professor of Music and Worship

Director, *anima: the Center for Worship and the Arts*

Samford University | Birmingham, Alabama

[emathis@samford.edu](mailto:emathis@samford.edu) | 205.541.9399

“Worship with adolescents never reduces to issues of style. Young people desire a subjective encounter with the Passion of Christ, a sense of divine immediacy that is mediated through God’s majesty and mystery as often as through interpersonal identification with Jesus Christ. Without the ability to point beyond itself, to convey God’s give-and-take with creation, worship lacks the power to engender an existential surrender. It is too simple to reduce concerns about worship and adolescents to marketing: What will appeal to the youth? How will we get them to come? What should we avoid so they won’t leave once they get here? Hundreds of resources are produced each year to answer such questions, all of them obsolete within a week. Media-saturated, information-overloaded, advertising-savvy adolescents don’t really care what we do to attract them, or how we do it.

**[Teens] care that when they worship, God is present, and that something ‘happens’ because God is there.”**

Kenda Creasy Dean

*www.animatheforum.com*

## MY TOOLBOX // FOR WORSHIP PLANNING

### **BASIC INFORMATION // date, time, and place**

When and where will worship take place?

### **MAIN IDEA // of worship**

What is the main idea of worship?

### **SCRIPTURE // the guide**

What scripture passage(s) will be guiding worship?

### **SERMON // the theme**

Is there a sermon and what themes will it have?

### **OTHER INFORMATION // about worship**

Will something special be happening (communion, etc.)? Are there certain elements you know in advance have to be present?

### **REFLECT // on scripture**

Read the scripture passages listed above. What do they say? What themes do you see? What words and phrases stick out?

### **OBSERVE // the world**

Spend time thinking about the world outside of worship. What is happening in the lives of worshippers? The church? The local community? The county? The state? The country? The world?

### **PRAY // for wisdom**

Ask God to help you make good choices as you plan this worship service. You may want to write a prayer below.

### **BRAINSTORM // all the possibilities**

Now, you are ready to begin brainstorming. Use scripture, the sermon, and other components of worship as a guide. With the categories on the next page, brainstorm all the possibilities that could happen in this worship service. The sky is the limit! Later, you can choose what to keep and what to save for another time.

### **MAKING SPACE // for worshiping**

How might you prepare the space for worship?

### **FINDING ART // for seeing**

What paintings, photos, or other visual images might you use for worship?

### **CREATING DRAMA // for hearing**

How might you present scripture in an inviting and engaging way?

### **CHOOSING MUSIC // for singing**

What songs match the themes of worship?

### **WRITING POETRY // for praying**

What might worshipers need to say to God? What might God want to say to worshipers?

### **LIVING WORSHIP // for doing**

How might worshipers live their lives differently after this time of worship?

### **MAKING DECISIONS // for implementing**

Look at your brainstorming work above. Circle ideas you think align with scripture and the theme of worship.

Cross out ideas that may distract from scripture, detract from worship, or be impossible to implement.

On a blank sheet of paper, determine a structure and order for worship. You might use the structures below as a guide.

#### **STRUCTURE 1**

A four part structure used in many traditions.

Gathering  
Word  
Response or Table  
Sending

#### **STRUCTURE 2**

A four part structure based on Isaiah 6.

Praise  
Confession  
Word  
Sending

#### **STRUCTURE 3**

A two-part pattern used in many traditions.

Word  
Table

#### **STRUCTURE 4**

Have we missed something?  
Create your own structure!