Songs To Worship By





BY MONIQUE TUTE

Have you ever had one of those Sundays when you were sure that your musical set list was personally inspired by the breath of God – only to spend the next 40 minutes of worship wishing that your platform had a trap door that could magically swallow you up and whisk you off to a tropical island?

While there are many factors that influence any given worship experience – many completely out of our control – some practical guidelines for planning a worship set can help:

Pray and worship. Your own relationship with God needs to be growing and current for your worship leading to have integrity.

Use familiar songs as the staple of your set list – remember that it takes much longer for your church to "own" a song than it does for you.

Choose songs that make God famous. Elevate Him above human experience to create a sense of awe and wonder at the greatness and diversity of God.

Vary your themes. We all have favorite songs that we will tend to over-use. Is it time to celebrate? To listen to God? To cry out to Him? A good working relationship with your pastor and leadership team enables you to hear God together.

Use songs and arrangements that are appropriate for the skill level of your band.

Sing songs that "work" for your people. While we want to avoid emotional manipulation in our song selection, it is good to find the songs that set people's hearts free.

Keep spoken introductions brief and focused on Jesus. Focusing on personal experiences can be distracting. Say whatever is helpful for fixing our eyes on God, and then step away.

Don't "overlead." Let the Holy Spirit do the leading, and let the songs have their impact.

Be tasteful with instrumental solos. While musicians love them, make sure not to lose your congregation in the process.

Rehearse intros and transitions. In other words, know how you are starting and ending any given song. While deliberate silence can add to a worship experience, people get nervous if they sense that you don't know what you are doing. Make transitions as smooth and as short as possible.

Know your congregation's age and style preferences. While you want to give room for your church to grow in their expression, know what kinds of music create a resting place for their hearts. Some things that you long to try out in worship may have to be the exception, and not the rule.

Take calculated risks when you feel God is asking you to.

Show restraint from doing all that you could do musically and creatively. If it doesn't serve God and help your church to worship, it is not essential to the worship set.



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