

BY TERRY BUTLER

Making Worship Team Pie:

Key Ingredients In Building And Nurturing The Worship Team



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My favorite dessert is my wife's pecan pie, and it is a recipe that has been passed down from generations past. The smell of it at Thanksgiving wondrously fills our house, and I know that soon I'll be adding some of it to my waistline (some of you are getting extremely hungry for dessert right now!). Adding the right ingredients to a pie is essential. Putting too much of one thing in, and not enough of another, spells disaster. Forming or leading a worship team also requires essential "ingredients" in order for an environment of unity, growth and passionate worship to be evident.

Humble Pie

I'm sure you are like me in that you want your worship team to be humble of heart and open to taking direction and correction. One thing is for sure: if we don't model humility and live humbly, we're hindering the chances of it happening on the team. God showed me at one point that *whatever I sow into the team is what I will reap later*. The task of leading others requires a servant heart, after the model of our Lord Jesus. Philippians 2 is what comes to mind:

"Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of Himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what" (Philippians 2, The Message).

Our worship team knows me well. They already know my weaknesses. When I admit my need for help, they respond. When I hide behind a mask of spiritual pride, things go sour quickly. Oh, the joy of being real community, not hiding behind masks of self-reliance! If we truly humble ourselves, God is attracted to our brokenness and honesty. Together with Him, we are then ready to go where He is taking us!

1) Take Extra Care In The Kitchen

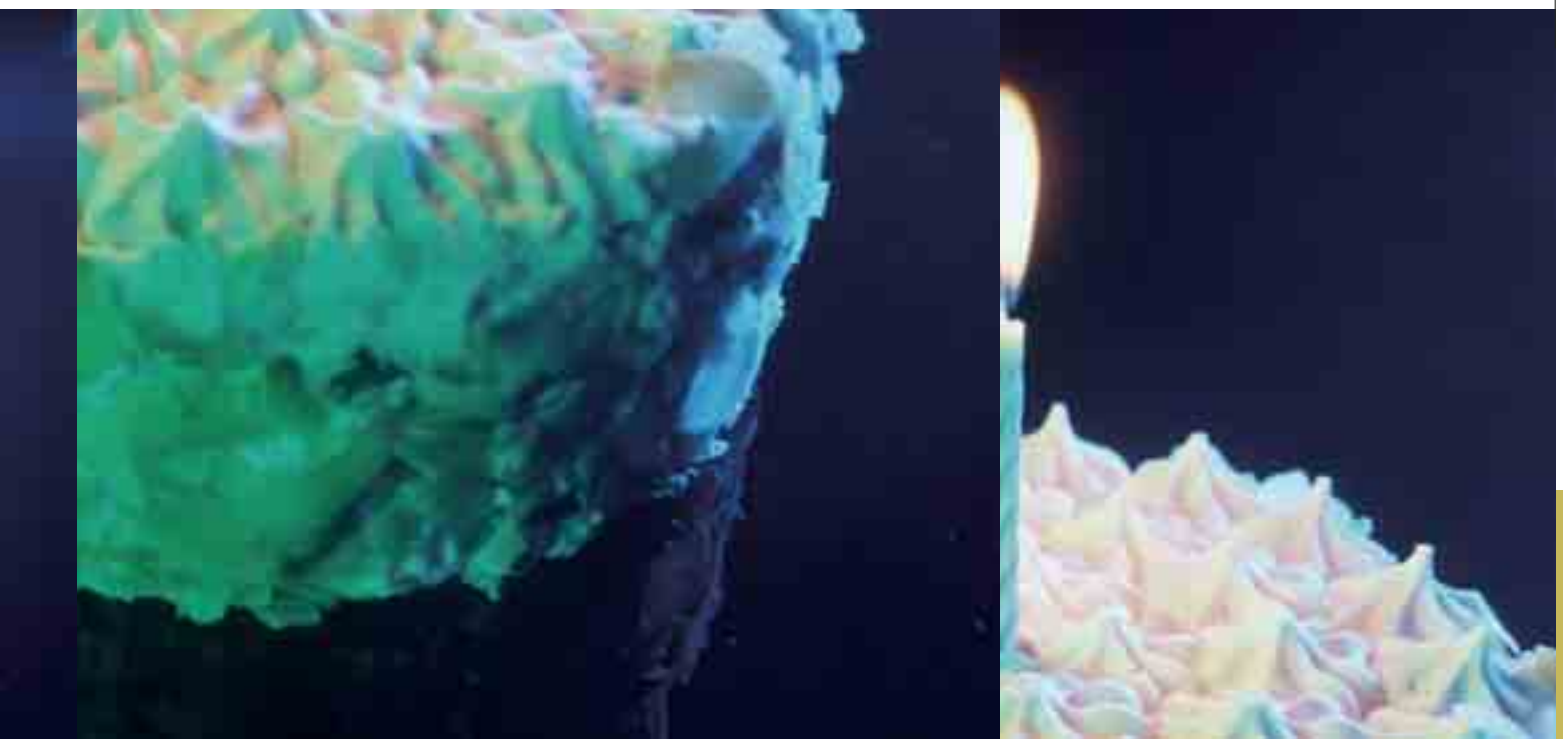
I remember God speaking to me one day about a certain member of our team. He said, "Terry, Joe (not his real name) is a bass player on your team. What else do you know about him?" "Well Lord," I said, "not a whole lot." He replied, "Get to know him. Find out about his family. You know, he's more than a bass player to fill in a slot on your team." Even though we had regular once-a-month gatherings, I had to admit to God that I saw Joe and others on the team sort of...one dimensionally. I started to hang out with the team members and ask questions about their lives.

My love for them grew. I started sending out birthday cards to them (with administrative help from another team member). I started calling them during the day at their work to see how things were going and to encourage them or even pray with them on the phone. It was contagious! The team became *family* to one another.

Mutual care helps team members be less territorial with the "part" they play on the team. The drummer defers to the "new kid on the block" and gives her encouragement as she prepares to play with the team for the first time. The vocalists thank and bless the sound person who is helping them get the monitors just right. The whole atmosphere is different when we care for, and are gracious to, each other.

2) Depend On The Master Chef In The Kitchen

A while back, God spoke something to me about worship ministry that really helped me get greater perspective on how he wants things to be done for the kingdom. He said, "Do you want *efficient* ministry or *effective* ministry?" I had been grappling for some time trying to get everything running more smoothly, and there seemed to be no end to problems and challenges arising. People on the team needed spiritual and emotional support. We were hav-



ing sound issues and we had integral people moving across the country.

I sat down and began to think on what God had spoken to me, and wrote out these differences between efficiency and effectiveness:

Efficiency means... all the "forms" and "machinery" of ministry are in place.

- Everything is *already* decided in terms of scheduling, order of service, etc.
- Little time is spent listening for God's voice as to what He may want to do. We begin to pay more attention to form instead of the substance. We start caring more about the PowerPoint slides looking great than we do about God showing up!
- There's not much of a desire to "think outside the box" or include new people.
- There is little expectation of God breaking in on our gatherings and rearranging things.

Effectiveness means... we hold our plans and our "forms" much more loosely.

- We usher people into God's presence and then we get out of the way.
- We are engaged in the process of seeking God wholeheartedly realizing that He may ask us to do something totally out of our comfort zone – or may tell us *not* to do something we planned.
- We let needed change come into the middle of the ministry. We avoid holding on to the past. Ideas are welcomed and issues are brought out into the open.
- The focus is on God's glory instead of on what we get out of worship. There's anticipation and intercession for God to heal, deliver and save.
- There is recognition on the part of the leader, and the team, that real growth and fruitfulness often spring from messiness and brokenness.

Let's face it. We can't do this thing we are doing without Him! We must always be looking for what the Father is doing (Jn. 5:19). Jim Cymbala said it this way: "The work of God can only be carried out by the power of God. The church is a spiritual organism fighting spiritual battles. Only spiritual power can make it function as God ordained."

3) Let Others Help In the Kitchen

What a relief it was for me to realize that others on the team could make up for the areas where I am lacking. No one has ever accused me of being too organized! Others help me with administration, organizing the once-a-year worship team retreat and our monthly "All Team Night." Great ideas have come from my talented and gifted team members.

I have also realized that the vision I have for worship in our congregation is not complete without input from the team on what they feel God is saying and doing (especially from the more mature, seasoned veterans).

The other critical component of all this is being *intentionally inter-generational*. How will the young get plugged into ministry without being invited, "initiated" and integrated by the leader and team? My team has helped me do this for several years now, and it's working well. Presently, we have three high school youth participating on the team. The heart of the Father is to let the children come!

Mmm...Mmm...Good!

Making this "pie" called worship ministry is a wonderful, daunting, messy, intense and extremely rewarding journey. It requires faith (risk) and full-on radical dependence on God. He desires that we stick very close to Him so that He is always taking center stage in His church. Happy baking!