wildpear

DAN WILT

HOW TO LEAD WORSHIP

AN 8 WEEK STUDY

WITHOUT BEING A ROCK STAR



HOW TO LEAD WORSHIP
WITHOUT BEING A ROCK STAR

An 8 Week Study For All Experience Levels

Dan Wilt



© 2013 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-1-105-12096-1

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to every worship leader,

in every setting,
in every denomination,
of every ethnic background.

On a weekly basis, you say:

"Christ invites us to worship, and
I'll create a space for us to respond to that invitation."

Week after week after week, you serve the highest call of the human being – to respond to God's loving pursuit, and to embrace the new creation life.

Here's to you, and the privilege God has given us to be leaders of gathered worship.

With humility, and for all the right reasons, let's lead.

Scripture quotations from *The Message*. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

CONTENTS

	Introduction	3
1	Why We Do What We Do	5
2	Defining Our Worship Values	21
3	The Character Of The Worship Leader	37
4	Effectively Leading Worship	45
5	Leading A Worship Band	69
6	Pastoral Relationships & Mentoring Skills	81
7	Becoming A Great Worship Leader	89
8	An Honorable Task	101
9	Endnotes	104

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To acknowledge all of those who have contributed to the insights in this book would take far too many pages.

I'll just thank a few, and leave the rest to hear my ongoing, personal gratitude face to face.

To my beautiful wife Anita, for decades of grace as I work out my calling to lead people in gathered worship

To my incredible children Anna, Abigail and Benjamin, who daily fill my life with sacred moments and shared stories that will last – truly – forever

To the global Vineyard family of churches, in whose arms I was nurtured as a leader of worship

To those mighty men and women (you know who you are) with whom I've served as a developer of resources for the 21st century Church

To my worship leading peers who have chosen to lay down other vocational options to serve this generation's call to worship. You've mentored me as I've watched you make decisions; you've inspired me with the new song in your heart

To every person who has given me the honor and privilege of leading us together in gathered worship over these 20+ years, and

To my living Lord, Keeper and Friend – I will do this forever if it pleases You.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *How To Lead Worship Without Being A Rock Star*.

You've chosen an exciting and dangerous task.
This little booklet is your survival manual.
Do you accept your mission?

What's so exciting about worship leading? Using the medium of the music we love, we have the privilege of leading people in the greatest adventure a human being can undertake – the journey into reverent, intimate, transforming and surrendered relationship with God.

This study is about leading worship through music. It is only one of the ways we lead people in worship, but it has proven to be a very important way across history. In our day, new songs of worship have been put into the heart of the global church, and this book is about leading worship effectively through the gift and experience of music – without being a rock star or a musical superhero.

Let's get our calling straight as worship leaders – when we lead one person in musical worship, we are setting them up with a lifetime of songs, words and ways of talking with God that will forever strengthen them through the years. When we lead one person in worship, we are helping them to open up to the God who alone can heal and restore fragile human lives.

When we lead a community in worship, we are leading generations to come, through them, as we strengthen their legacy of faith. That's the point. Our up-front persona takes a back seat to the call to lead worship.

What's so dangerous about worship leading? In a culture that idolizes musicians, seeks personal glory and elevates emotions, we stand in front of people, behind a microphone, up on a stage, influencing them. Our own hearts sing louder than our musical instruments, and our true character touches people in ways we never before thought possible.

Excitement and danger – that is the privilege of worship leading.

So, now that I have your attention, never fear! The Holy Spirit is on our side, continually shaping and forming our hearts into the likeness of Christ as we rise to the high calling of worship leadership. Indeed, it is a calling, a vocation, and a privilege. It is God's to give that calling, and ours to respond.

This study has been designed to help you along in your quest to serve your church community with your passion to lead worship, and to grow in the skills and values that make a song leader into an effective worship leader. Serving, loving and leading in a local church is where the "rubber meets the road" of our discipleship. It's where we learn to be givers in this life instead of takers, followers of Jesus instead of self-sufficient or self-absorbed leaders.

As 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, each one of us is given "a manifestation of the Spirit" for the shared good of our community. We are given gifts and callings not for the service of our own visibility or personal sense of fulfillment – we are given the gifts we have to serve the others around us, while being energized by that service at the same time.

Welcome then, to the humbling, exciting, transforming, enlightening, shocking, challenging, artful world of worship leading. Please – *fasten your seatbelt.*

SESSION 1
WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

"Again there is this element –
How do you present a God Who is beyond presentation?
How do you explain a God who is beyond explanation?

How do you sing, how do you pick a song that best describes either who God is or even how we feel? It's always just slightly beyond us, and so there is always that feeling in the pit of my stomach saying, 'What did I do?
How did I get talked into this?'

And then I remember, 'Oh yeah, God, you called me to do this.
Okay, I'll do it again.'"[1]

Brian Doerksen *(Come, Now Is The Time To Worship)*

Head On: Addressing The Rock Star Paradigm

In every time period in history there are common associations with stages (stages are everywhere, and they elevate people), up front celebrities (how

many of us have our name known by our community, but their names are not always known by us), and public affirmation (it's intoxicating to have people like you).

Our age is no exception, and with the dawn of great sound systems, lit stages, and ambient visuals – in churches as well as arenas – we can get confused. We can confuse the values held by the *rock stars and celebrities* of our day with the values we must hold to as *worship leaders*.

Even if you think you've "been there, done that" on this topic, let's take a moment to check our hearts as we begin our study. There is nothing inherently wrong with being a hero, standing on a stage, and creating musical magic. People are called to many different things. However, the difference between the "rock star" value system and the "worship leader" value system is *massive*.

This simple chart will help us.

The Worship Leader	The Rock Star
Leader/Community Focus	Star/Audience Focus
Experiencing God's Presence	Experiencing Moving Music
Pastoral Leadership & Disciple Care	Celebrity Leadership & Fan Care

Spelling Out The Difference

The chart is clear. A worship leader headspace recognizes that we are leading a community of faith, through the vehicle of music, art and liturgy. Our goal is a living encounter with Christ and the formation of disciples.

The rock star headspace sees the congregation as an audience to some degree, desires to move people (maybe even in a sacred way), and yet is ultimately concerned with one's public persona and fan attraction.

Before we quickly move on, let me say this – this is not an "either/or" attitude. There have been many, many times in my own worship leadership career that I have been on one side or the other of the middle line, wrestling with God for attitudes that are formed by Christ rather than by my need for people to value "me and my music." It's true. Our souls are not static, they *move* according to our environments and circumstances.

We are always making choices to align our attitudes with the attitudes of Christ, having the same mindset as Jesus – the true hero we emulate (Phil. 2:5).

The Call To Pastor People In Worship

It is the *call to pastor people through the vehicle of worship music*, the worship arts, and the worship forms we choose, that sets the worship leader apart from the rock star.

The world is full of stages, and they each mean something to us. Know what the stage has meant to you in the past, and is meaning to you now. Get honest. What do you want others to notice about you on the stage, or to think about you when you're finished leading? Is your internal "stage set up" feeding all things good and right in your church?

The rock star age in which we live separates the artist from the crowd. Worship leaders resist this gap, and empower community as they lead in worship. They value being "accessible to their community," not "available to their audience." Our overemphasis on the musical expression of worship pushes us to "produce" in ways in which we were never intended. I.e. Relax. You're important, but not *that* important. It's a big story of

worship going on out there.

We all have different kinds of worship leaders and musicians that we emulate. Be aware of your role models as a worship leader, and ask if their pastoral call is what leads you to like them. If we don't talk about these differences in values on an ongoing basis, we may continually filter our worship leadership values through the sparkling stained glass of the stage hero. Why? Music, sound, visuals – and affirmation – mean something to all of us. Let's check our egos at the door, and, as Paul told Timothy, "examine our life and doctrine" with a close eye (1 Tim. 4:16).

Now, we're ready to move on. Before we talk about *what* we do as worship leaders, we must talk about *why* we lead worship.

The Worship Sandwich

You have been asked to make a sandwich. All of the meats, cheeses, vegetables, seasonings, breads and sauces are laid out in front of you.

With no further direction, you begin to bring together all of the culinary elements to make your sandwich the most delicious it can be. Then, just as you are putting the finishing touches on your edible masterpiece, someone stops you. "By the way," they say. "The sandwich isn't for you – it's for the guy sitting over in the corner."

Oops.

Someone told you *what* to do, but they never told you *why* to do it.

Why "Why" Is So Important

Why is a word that changes everything. Without a clear *why* behind what

we do, we assume the *how* and the *what*. In fact, we tend to assume that the *why* is about us – our own preferences, experience and tastes.

However, when someone clarifies why you are doing something, it changes both what you are doing, and how you are doing it. *Why* gives meaning to what we do.

You can't learn how to do something until you have a firm grip on why you are doing it.

In other words, there is no use talking about *how* to lead worship, until we have at least taken a moment to talk about *why* we lead worship.

In the sandwich analogy, without being given any context, you and I would tend to make the sandwich above according to our own purposes (and our own tastes).

However, the preferences, needs, desires, inspirations, tastes and even allergies that we think about when we know why we're making a sandwich – in this case, to serve another person – guides us to make a very different kind of sandwich than the one we might naturally make.

Mimicking Style Without The Content

Let's make this practical. Today, many worship leaders are working very hard to learn the 'how' of worship leading from other worship leaders who represent their tastes in music, their style preferences, and more. This isn't bad in itself; we all need role models and heroes, and we can learn much from each other.

However, the worship "sandwich" can become about us.

I see many worship leaders working very hard to mimic a style of useful, passionate worship that they are seeing and hearing from mp3s, concerts

and conferences. I see those same worship leaders, in some cases, lacking a strong sense of the *content* behind that *form or style* they are trying to mimic.

They are missing the why behind the what.

In other words, they are re-creating someone else's sound without fully embracing their story. That might not be a problem – we actually get better at what we do when we mimic others who do it well.

But here is the problem when we are busy learning *how* to lead worship without taking the time to reflect on *why* we lead worship in the first place. When we are just focused on *how* to lead, our own preferences win every time. We get up on stages, and we perform (with a touch of honest worship leadership making it feel right).

However, when we are focused on *why* we lead, our own preferences are submitted to the needs of the community, the context we are leading in, and ultimately, to God's direction for our entire local church.

That congregation is no longer our audience; they are our family. We are serving them, and doing whatever it takes to create a space in which they can worship. Sometimes we'll get to do what we want; other times we'll be called to do what the congregation needs.

What We Want Isn't Always What We Need

Our local church community may not *need* that style or form you and I love right now. They may, but they may not. They may need the heart behind it, a taste of the story behind that worship expression we'd like to mimic. More than anything, however, they need opportunities to worship that actually work for them. They need for us to be authentic, and for us to be aware of who they are and where they are coming from.

Opportunities to worship must be delivered to them in a form that they can access – so that their intimate exchange with God in worship is served. If I walk into an old folks home, I may want to do all my favorite songs. What I need to do, however, is to find out what songs bring them life (and maybe me to some degree), and lead those.

In other words, when you are in front of people leading worship, the sandwich is not ultimately for you. The sandwich is not for me. When you are a worship leader, the sandwich is for the congregation (or group) you lead. You are serving them by the songs you choose and the way you lead them; they are not there to serve you as an audience.

A fellow pastor once said to me, "Dan, I finally figured out what it is about certain worship leaders that makes me love being led in worship by them. I feel like they are there for me. I feel like they have come to serve my need to meet with God in worship. I am not their audience; I am their family."

The Styles We Love

The styles you and I love are important to God, but they are not more important than what your congregation needs. Sometimes, there is a complete match. Other times, the worship leader must learn how to lead in a way that connects with their congregation.

If your style (and perhaps way of seeing worship) doesn't match your congregation, then you need to decide who you are serving – and make a sandwich that works for your community.

The Spearhead

Let me use one more analogy before we look at the *why* of worship leading. It's like a spearhead – the point breaks through the barrier, but it's the

weight of what comes *behind* the point that really opens things up.

The "point" in this metaphor is the "style" we lead in, the songs we love, or our unique "way" of worship leading. That style may be cool, and may even break through an initial barrier (say, getting people to sing with you or creating energy in the room), but if the weight of the biblical worship story is not behind it, and if the weight of your own local church's story is not behind it, the spear won't do any holy damage. It will just poke through and maybe leave a buzz.

For worship leaders, our shared worship story is the real weight of the spearhead. Backing up the style (or form) of your worship leadership is the "content" of your worship leadership. This is the "why" of worship. We may think the point is the music, the sharp tip, and that we should spend all our time honing it. Isn't that what musicians do?

In my experience, however, the weight *behind* our style is what is most important. Without a strong worship story, a strong *why* leading us, it's all just song leading. "A dull axehead," someone once said, "will chop a tree down faster than a sharp razorblade." You get the picture.

So right off the top, we're beginning to understand that song leading is not the same thing as worship leading. Song leading is a musical task. Worship leading is a spiritual vocation expressed in musical leadership.

We're ready now to think about *why* we're leading worship, and *who* we are leading in our gatherings. Then, we can spend the rest of our time talking about how we lead worship.

Why #1 - God Invites Us To Worship, So We Respond To Him

I used to believe that when people gathered to worship, I was the one inviting them. I led the band, I called the meeting, and I set the stage. I was the host. I rehearsed to make it happen, did the planning, and showed

up.

But no. It's just not right, true or accurate to think that I invited this group to worship.

The true Host of any worship gathering is God. The Father of all creation sets the stage. The Son makes the invitation, and builds the bridge of wholeness in relationship. The Spirit empowers human beings to respond to God's all pursuing Love.

In other words, Jesus is the lead worshiper, and we are those who respond to His invitation to worship. The worship leader builds a set of songs with which we can all respond to God's invitation, and leads us in that response.

God reveals Himself to us, and we respond.

That is why we lead worship.

Why #2 – God Has Made A Vow To Us, So We Renew Our Vows

To lead worship is to play the part of the Best Man, or the Maid of Honor, in a wedding. In a wedding, the Bride and Groom are sharing vows – words of commitment that will help them to always *remember* their utter surrender to the love of the other.

I call what we do on a Sunday morning, or in our small group, or at the Youth Conference, *gathered worship*. Gathered worship is what happens when we welcome God's people to gather in response to God's invitation, in the Name of Jesus, and remind them just Who has made a way for us to meet with God in that place. Then, we facilitate that shared interaction of love.

We build bridges, through lyrics and music and sound, to amplify that

relationship between Bride and Groom. Then, the analogy changes, and we join in with the Bride of Christ in worship.

How strange it would be for the Best Man or Maid of Honor to begin making goo-goo eyes at the bride or groom! Yet, sometimes worship leaders do just that – we think it's about us (as the Best Man) and try to impress the bride, or (as the Maid Of Honor) ignore the bride altogether and blindly pursue the groom on our own! Neither works. We have a job to do in this wedding, and we are at our best when we're doing it.

A worship leader is most accurately a "facilitator" of worship – which is always more than just the music. Using the elements of music, scripture reading, creativity, and many other liturgical tools, we create spaces in which a community can meet with God.

We create spaces for our local church to meet with God, and to renew our vows before God.

That is why we lead worship.

Why #3 – God Has Pursued Us, So We Remember His Story

"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you:
Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.

Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God.

You'll be changed from the inside out."[6]

Romans 12:1-2 (*The Message*)

What Is Worship?

Worship is a living act that encompasses all of our lives, offered to Jesus in complete and utter surrender. Whether we are singing songs on a Sunday morning, taking the bread and cup in communion, handing clothes to someone who needs them on Wednesday, or choosing how we'll spend our work paycheck on Friday, every act of life has the potential to be an offering of worship.

In other words, capital "W" worship is about our *life worship*, surrendered and responding to God with every activity in the human experience. The language of allegiance, love, loyalty and surrender are all words that capture this "whole life response" to God. Small "w" worship, in contrast, is our *gathered worship*. It has to do with the ways we express that worship, and how it feeds (and shapes) our capital "W" worship over a lifetime.

Worship Is A Response To God

The early Church father, Iranaeus of Lyons, put it this way, "The glory of God is a human being, fully alive." When Romans 12:1-2 defines worship, it describes worship as a "living sacrifice" on the part of the worshiper.

In other words, we put God at the beginning, middle and end of our every thought, choice and action.

God Is The Subject Of The Worship Sentence

However, are we the Subject of the worship sentence? No. God is the Subject of the worship sentence. He acts out the verb toward us, the Object of his love, care, healing, discipline and power.

When we put ourselves at the beginning of the worship sentence (and many worship leaders do), then we do the work, and God is responding to what we do. No. This should never come from our lips again. God acts. We

respond. Then God responds to our responses, and so on. Welcome to the exchange of love that is our life with God forever.

When we turn all of life into a simple response to the love of God (1 John 4:19), we are truly becoming the worshipers for whom the Father is searching (John 4:24). God is pursuing us, and we respond. This is the fundamental premise of worship, in all of its forms.

Creating Space For People To Respond To God

As a worship leader, your job is create a space for people to respond to God – not to do enough religious gymnastics so that God sees how hard we are all working and smiles on us.

Lighten your load, and take the burden off your back to hit a spiritual homerun every gathering. *Lead us in simply responding to God*, and lose the sense of need to "make something happen." Songs are a powerful media – lead them well, and let them do what they do best. We are there to respond. Lead us in that corporate response to God.

What Does Music Have To Do With It?

If worship is a whole life response to the love of God, then what does music have to do with worship?

Brian Doerksen, respected contemporary worship leader and songwriter, explains it this way:

> *"…Why do we sing songs in the first place? We do it because it is something that we can do together. There are probably other things that we could do to express our love and our worship to God that would be, in one sense, just as valid, but they're not easy for us to do together.*
>
> *Yet we can get ten people, or a hundred people, or a thousand, or a*

> *hundred thousand – whatever number we choose – and we can all get together and sing a song.*
>
> *That song reflects what is going on in our hearts and our minds, together. There is truth that we're affirming, but there's also affection that we're expressing. That's why I think that singing as an expression of worship has stood the test of time."*[7]

In other words, when we use the power of poetic lyrics, blended with the power of music, we are literally creating a place where God can meet with people, and people can meet with God.

Songs are indeed a place to which we go. I don't mean this literally, but just as the Internet is a "place" we go for certain encounters, so too songs are a "place" we go to meet with God. They are an encountering ground where our prayers can take flight on the wings of words and melodies.

As a worship team, when we select, practice, prepare and perform songs in the tapestry that we call a "worship set," we are literally creating a "place" for people to encounter God.

People come to a time of worship saying in the quiet of their hearts what the psalmist said in Psalm 42:2 – "When can I go and meet with God?" The worship leader responds, "How about here? How about now?" and leads us to that place of meeting.

The Role Of The Worship Leader

Suddenly, learning parts from a CD, preparing set lists, rehearsing mid-week for a few hours, getting up early on a Sunday morning to set up gear and to sound check, choosing to love in relationships and playing for two or three services a week takes on a context.

We are serving the people of God, with the gifts and passions that energize us, by creating a "place" for us all to encounter God.

In some beautiful way, this reality makes all the hard work seem to be a grand privilege – that we would get to enjoy our love for music in such a way that leads others to a more beautiful place with God than they had been before.

We lead worship because all of creation is caught up in responding to God's love, and we are designed to do the same.

That is why we lead worship.

A Review: Why Do We Lead Worship?

So, to drive this foundation thoroughly into the ground, why do we lead worship? Worship is our response to God's love. Plain and simple.

We are in the role we are in, as lead worshipers, to make a way for people to respond to God, and to create a space where simple songs can put wings to the prayers of those who have gathered to worship.

We usher people gently to a place where they can respond to the love of God – it's as simple as that. If any other motive, any other purpose, begins to get in the way, we have lost our way in the journey of worship leadership.

Yes, it's fun to play our instrument, sing, and lead in songs we love. Yes, leading a small group, or a band, or playing in front of many in a worship context is energizing, but it will never be – must never be – the point.

God began the worship pursuit; it is ours to respond and remember. A worship leader leads a group of people in:

1) responding to God's invitation to intimacy,

2) renewing our mutual vows and commitments with God, and

3) remembering God's pursuing love and transforming story.

That is why we lead worship.

Now, with this in mind, we can begin to talk about *how* we lead worship.

Session 1
Reflection Questions

If you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

    Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.

    How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship leading is really all about?

2. Why do we lead worship?

    In your own words, write out the reasons that a worship leader exists, and what our primary role is when we step up to a microphone.

SESSION 2
DEFINING OUR WORSHIP VALUES

"Within a few years of coming (to the Vineyard), I began leading worship in a Friday night believers' meeting. It wasn't quite a full band, but we had a keyboard and a couple of guitars, and sometimes a bass.

In those days, we were afraid of using drums because the Vineyard worship community was born with a desire to avoid any kind of performance mentality.

We wanted people to focus on God, not the band.
It wasn't until 1983 that we started using a drummer
consistently, and I remember asking him
to just play quietly.

Looking back, it's pretty comical."[2]

Andy Park (*In The Secret*)

In this quote, worship leader Andy Park is talking about the unique church situation he was leading in – the Vineyard. In this case, one of *his* worship

"values" was that of his *community of churches*. Wanting to avoid any type of performance mentality, they originally kept drums quiet on the stage. A value was in place that would mark the way worship leaders in this movement led worship for decades. While the Vineyard family of churches did eventually give drums a more prominent place (in a big way), the value behind Andy's early hesitation has remained important to that denomination and to almost every worship leader within it over decades.

In other words, the primary value of avoiding a disconnected sense of performance in worship leadership affects how every Vineyard worship leader does his/her job all the way to today.

Now, let's begin to think about *your* church, *your* group, and the values that will shape how *you* lead worship.

Who Is Your Church In The Church Of Today?

How we go about leading worship is greatly affected by the values behind our church's or denomination's story.

Many worship values in local churches are biblical values, such as the ones we looked at in the first chapter. However, many of our values (and this is a good thing) come from the unique immediate family of churches of which we are a part.

Let's begin with a key question that will lead us to many others:

"Who is your church in the Church of today?"

In other words, what

values,

traditions,

theological ideas,

approaches to faith and

approaches to the world around us

beat at the heart of your local church?

If you don't know the answers to these kinds of "who are we" questions yet, it would be good for you to ask these questions when beginning to lead worship in any setting in that community.

Here are some other questions that may help trigger your own.

Who are we as a church?

Where did we come from, and where are we going?

What values sit at the heart of our community,
our wider immediate family (denomination or movement)?

In what ways does our church, and our denomination, model something special about worship for the wider church?

How Was Your Church Or Movement Born?

Are you Methodist? If so, you should know something about the vibrant holiness teaching of John Wesley, and the immense body of songs Charles Wesley wrote before you jump into worship leading in your church.

Are you part of the Assemblies Of God? Then you should know something about the Pentecostal revivals that occurred early in 20th century America, and the part that gathered worship had to play in the rise of one of the largest denominations on the planet.

Are you Anglican? Charismatic? Lutheran? Presbyterian? Are you a part of a more recent denomination or church movement?

Do you know how your local church started, or how your denomination began? Understanding this can revolutionize the way you think about worship leading now in your local church.

My Denomination As An Example

I'll use my own church stream, the Vineyard, as an example of how I might go about answering these questions. Apply what I say to your own church situation. How do you think my denomination's worship story affects my values as a worship leader, and how does yours affect your values?

> *The Vineyard movement was essentially born in spiritual desperation. A small gathering of worn-out leaders were moved to deep repentance before God in the 1960s, and began to spend time worshiping through music and praying together in a living room in Yorba Linda, California. John and Carol Wimber were a part of this group.*
>
> *Songs of intimate worship became a primary lifeline for these people in the brokenness of those early days, and after leaving the Quakers where John was a church leader, and then Calvary Chapel, this growing group linked with an existing network of churches called Vineyards. Over time, these Vineyards, who were equally committed to the Holy Spirit being given specific opportunity to speak, touch and minister to them when they gathered, eventually recognized John's leadership. The Vineyard movement was born.*
>
> *John Wimber's influence on the worship renewal movements of the late 20th century cannot be overstated – he was a man with a heart for God, for the whole of the Church, and for the Holy Spirit's activity in our world. He was also a professional musician, producer and artist –*

who had a profound encounter with God that led him to bring leadership to the Vineyard movement.

Over the first ten years of John's life as a Christian he led hundreds of people to Christ. Christianity Today magazine called him a "beer-guzzling, drug-abusing pop musician, who was converted at the age of 29 while chain-smoking his way through a Quaker-led Bible study" (Christianity Today, Editorial, Feb. 9, 1998).

John was involved with the famed group The Righteous Brothers, and was a respected producer as well as being a studio-caliber musician on a wide variety of instruments. After laying down his highly successful music career to follow God's call on his life as a spiritual leader in the Church, John began to radically give himself to reaching people for Christ. As his influence grew, John began to teach courses at Fuller Theological Seminary, and he and Carol eventually planted a Calvary Chapel church in California.

Through the influence of George Ladd's writing, John embraced the "Kingdom of God" as he believed Jesus taught it – the in-breaking presence of God's active rule and reign. His dramatic encounters with the Holy Spirit, and the activity of the Spirit in healing, deliverance, miracles and "power evangelism," led John to join, and eventually lead, the Vineyard churches.

John and his own congregation experienced God in profound ways through times of intimate and honest worship, in contemporary sounds and language. Vineyard gatherings were packed with young people, many out of the Jesus People movement of the 1960s, and "come as you are" dress codes and the soft-rock musical styles of the day marked their gatherings.

The songs were written "to God," as opposed to just "about God," and a fresh wind of intimate interaction with their Lord Jesus through worship music began to stir the hearts of many across the globe.

> *They taught the Bible, and welcomed God to act in their midst. There was no hype, no charismatic worship leader trying to stir up the emotions of the crowd in those early days – just simple, honest worshiping, led by a band and a pastoral worship leader with a heart for God.*[3]

Can You Feel The Values?

Clearly, I've done a bit of homework. So should you.

Knowing something about my church movement's worship story may give you some perspective on why Vineyard worship leaders generally have the values that they do when leading worship. Respected names like Brian Doerksen, Brenton Brown, Kathryn Scott, Andy Park, David Ruis and others grew up in this "values" soil, and have had a great influence on the ways that worship leaders around the world lead.

Something else unique in the Vineyard's worship story is found in its leader's background as a professional musician. John had a profound spiritual experience where he saw a vision of hundreds of "garage bands" (a term for informal bands that rehearse in someone's garage, typically playing drums, guitars, bass, etc.) called to lead people into living worship. In the 1960s and 1970s, this was crazy talk to many churches.

But everything was changing, and a renewal in the church's worship expression was occurring. Truly, a "new song" was being put into the mouth of the church, with fresh ways of expressing that new song.

Studies have marked the Vineyard as one of the first truly postmodern church movements of the last century. Other movements, such as New Wine and Soul Survivor (from the Anglican traditions), attribute their beginnings to the significant influence of John Wimber and Vineyard worship expression, as well as others.

Your church family has a story like this, somewhere. *What is that story?*

The Worship Roots Of A Family Of Churches

After exploring your denomination and church's general history, we must understand the roots of the *worship expressions* of our particular denomination or church.

Let's look again at my church movement as an example to unpack the kinds of questions you might want to begin to ask about your church.

> *In the fertile soil of the Vineyard's call to worship, worship leaders and songwriters were both attracted to, and prolifically added to, the worship community of the movement. Songs such as* Isn't He, Faithful One, Change My Heart O God, Refiner's Fire, Only You, I Lift My Eyes Up *and many others began to powerfully impact the common worship life of the contemporary church.*
>
> *People beyond the Vineyard were singing directly to God, and not just about Him.*
>
> > *"Up until the 1960s, liturgy and traditional hymn singing dominated the worship landscape of churches across the Western world. When the 1960s came around, a fresh poetic voice was being heard from the American counter-culture. Guitars, long hair and heartfelt lyrics began to burst onto the social scene. As a generation of the aimless and searching began to encounter living truth in Christ, fresh songs of indigenous worship began to reflect such brutal honesty and hope. Churches began to center their entire worship service around extended times of singing and responding to God through song."*[5]
>
> *In review, my own movement was born in a living room, where a few people had gathered out of a deep hunger to encounter God*

intimately. Over the course of just a few decades, the Vineyard Movement has grown to be international, with nerve centers of Kingdom activity scattered across the globe.

Vineyard worship expression has always emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit among us as we sing, the belief that God is very present to minister to us in our broken state, and the undergirding value that worship leadership be gracious and pastoral, not marked by hype or unchecked emotionalism. Care for the poor is often represented in the lyrics of the songs chosen, and a hunger for God to act in society as well as in the church.

Guiding Values

In the Study Questions at the end of this chapter, you'll be asking similar questions about your own movement. How do the roots of your denomination or church affect your values related to biblical worship, and your unique musical expression of worship?

Explore the story of your church, and understand the gifts that lie beneath the surface. If you do this, you may find a strength in your worship planning and leadership that seems to go beyond your own abilities. Of course, God's Spirit is behind you in that work. But sometimes, having our church's history behind us is a powerful wave on which to ride.

To remember our past is to understand our present, and to lead with confidence into our shared future.

What Is Your Unique "Values Heritage" In Your Local Church?

Every church, even in a denomination, is very different. We all stand on some heritage of community, faithfulness, integrity and rich experience as

we come to lead worship in our local community.

In many cases, we weren't the ones to pay the price to see our church planted, or come to life. Who did pay the price? Why is your local church unique because of the price that was paid?

In the United Methodist Church in which I was mentored, we were led by a pastor with a passion for God's word, and a heart to see us as youth come into our own as spiritual leaders. When we began a small, contemporary worship team, he encouraged us as to how we could serve our peers that were our own age, as well as our silver-haired church members. He encouraged us to lead worship in other local churches as well.

We sang songs in ways that ministered to them instead of jarring them; that involved lyrics and sounds with which they could identify.

You may see your church's heritage in worship as a great gift to you, or a great hindrance to you leading worship effectively! Whatever is the case, knowing that heritage will guide you as you seek to care for your group as a worship leader.

Values Will Keep You Centered As A Worship Leader

Today, a multi-million dollar industry has now formed around the precious jewel of worship, and brought a whole new set of character challenges, musical challenges and leadership challenges to today's contemporary worship leader.

This challenge, and other challenges in what we uniquely inherit in our local church community, demand "big stone values" to keep us rooted and established in God's love (Eph. 3:17b-19) as we lead in worship.

Values are what keep us centered, focused and faithful. Primary values are the big stones, those values that form the basis for everything we do. Secondary values are ways we *express* our primary values – and those can vary from church to church, generation to generation.

We're going to take a brief look at what I believe are five primary worship values that apply to any community. These values, hovering near the center of our worship leading practices and principles, will ultimately help us to create disciples of Jesus who understand how to connect with God, and (more importantly) how God is connecting with them, in the midst of corporate worship.

We'll look at creating worship spaces that are 1) Intimate, 2) Accessible, 3) full of Integrity, 4) Culturally Connected and 5) guided by Kingdom Expectation.

Defining Primary Worship Values

Hopefully we all love Jesus, and are moving in the same direction across the worldwide Church. But, just as a lime slice changes the taste of water, each expression or movement of the Church has a unique twist – defined by its history, preferences, demographic and leadership.

In a day when the common person's musical palate is very refined by being inundated with music at every turn, there are a few core values that can guide us along as worship leaders as we seek to lead 21st century people into a place of worship encounter through contemporary music.

a. We Value Intimacy In Worship.

Intimacy, in any relationship, does not just happen when the lights are low and the music is soft. Intimacy can be loud and celebrative, or soft and sweet. Intimacy is a posture, a positioning, of one heart toward another.

Intimacy happens when one heart chooses to make itself vulnerable to another, choosing self-offering above self-preservation; self-disclosure above self-protection.

God has chosen to make Himself intimately, honestly and vulnerably known to us.

He has self-revealed His love and the depths of His Person to us. When we turn to Him, and respond to His love with honesty, vulnerability and self-disclosure, then we are engaging in the intimate relationship into which He Himself is inviting us.

b. We Value Accessibility In Worship.

When a wheelchair ramp appears at the entrance of a corporate building, we immediately know what that business is trying to do.

It is making itself accessible to those who may otherwise have trouble entering. Others may already be inside who have found entry easy; accessibility tries to make entry easy for everyone.

We want to make a way for everyone gathered in a room to find their way to God through the songs we sing. This is hospitality.

Our musical goal is not to impress people with the capabilities of the band, or worse yet, with the capabilities of an individual, but rather to beautifully create a musical space for people to meet with God.

We have one set of goals ever before us as a team. We are playing so that the congregation might remember God's saving acts, celebrate God's unchanging character, encounter God's loving presence, and find a clear way to lay down the burdens they walked in with at the feet of Jesus.

We are poised as a worship team to serve, to use all our musical gifting to get out of the way, and to make a way, for people to get to that place of encounter.

c. We Value Integrity In Worship.

People may not be able to put their finger on it, but they somehow intuitively know if a worship leader, or any leader for that matter, is leading out of the integrity of their secret life with God.

In other words, when people sense that the "worship show" is all about the leader and the musicians, and is less about the congregation meeting with God, they perceive something is hollow in the corporate worship experience over time.

We can't sing songs about pursuing God with any integrity if we are not actively pursuing Him in our own lives. We cannot sing songs that move us to care for the poor, if we in our own lives are not actively questing to care for the poor.

For worship leaders and teams to effectively build a congregation as a discipled community over time, that team must value their personal lives with God over and above the opportunity to express their personal musical gift on a stage.

When we lead with integrity, we are *giving* to the community, and taking our place as a servant. When we lead without integrity, we are *taking* from the community, and taking our place as a parasite -– for the elevation of our gifts and ourselves.

In other words, we don't want to just look good or sound good – we want to actually be good.

d. We Value Cultural Connection In Worship.

We live in a time, and in a place in history. We embrace, to one degree or another, the sounds and musical textures of today's music, choosing to be true to who God has made us to be, and true to the communities we are seeking to reach.

For that reason our music is not dated in its sound (though in some settings this may be appropriate) but is current with the kinds of sounds today's listeners, and worshipers, love to hear.

We use video and other forms of cultural communication to connect with our attendees and our neighborhoods.

In considering the value of cultural connection as it relates to worship leading, we must hold some truths in tension. As a worship community we don't want to contrive our sound, making music we're not comfortable with, always trying to "keep up" with popular culture.

At the same time, we hold this in tension with the reality that we want to avoid "churchy" or "Christian sub-culture" musical styles that seem disconnected from the daily musical experience of the average person on the street.

What is the answer? We seek in our worship expressions to reflect the demographic of our local community (both inside the church and outside), and this means that we choose the music of today's culture with which to worship, integrated with the familiar music of the Church historic (i.e. hymns, etc.).

The sound that results from this quest is usually very culturally current music, that sounds like the tunes one might hear on the radio on any given day – but with lyrics that focus us Godward.

As we do this, we are laid back, and low-hyped, in our approach to worship. We seek to break down the barriers that people perceive between church life and everyday life.

We seek to make our church language as accessible as our street language, much in the way that the writer's of the New Testament did.[9]

For that reason, our church services and worship would be led in

gentle, pastoral ways, and not in showy, glitzy or personality-centered ways. We're not trying to stir anyone up; we're simply creating an accessible place of worship for people by leading it with the sound of music and style of lyrics that connect with our generation.

e. We Value Kingdom Expectation In Worship.

Rooted in the Jewish hope for a redemption to come, Jesus came to the world declaring to human beings that God's Kingdom is "within our reach."

In other words, God's Kingdom is now (among us), and not yet (still to come). He gives us tastes, like appetizers, of our future inheritance by the Holy Spirit – healing us, renewing our minds, encountering us in powerful ways – even as we worship Him. This idea we call "the presence of the future."

As we sing songs to God, and not just about Him, we make room for His Spirit to move among us. God's Kingdom begins to break in among us in powerful and even miraculous ways.

When we gather to worship, we expect every time that each individual, as well as our corporate community, will have an intimate exchange with God. We expect His Kingdom to break in at any and every moment, as He heals, delivers and transforms us as broken people.

We never want to lose the dynamic of creating worship settings that have plenty of "space," both musically and spiritually, for God to interact with His people. For us, worship is not about a shining worship leader and a killer band – its about serving God and people by making a way for us all to meet with Him.

How do these values apply to your denomination or community? How do each of these values get fleshed out in how your community is led into worship week after week?

Asking these questions is vital if we are to lead worship well in our churches and groups.

Session 2
Reflection Questions

If you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

    Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.

    How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. How do values shape the way we lead worship?

    First, talk about your church's local history, and your denomination's history. How might the story of your particular church shape the way you lead worship in your community?

    Second, go through each of the five values mentioned one by one. First, ask what values your current church is good at, or emphasizes. Then, ask how each of these values would affect, in the moment, your worship leading? Imagine you are leading worship right now, and apply a value to that moment.

    How does it shape your thinking as you lead that song, or speak to the group?

SESSION 3
THE CHARACTER OF THE WORSHIP LEADER

"The one thing I would say to anybody who would be getting into worship leading, or to anybody who is a worship leader right now, is that the job of leading worship – your job of leading worship and my job of leading worship – one day will probably end.

It is possible, but it is unlikely, that at 90 years of age I am going to be in an old-age home strumming on my guitar leading people in worship. Who I am before God however, does not end. That truth has an eternal quality to it, and one day I am going to be standing before Him, and I won't be standing behind a microphone with a guitar on my back.

It is just going to be me and Him."[10]

Brenton Brown (*Everlasting God*)

In a worship leader, pastoral leaders are looking primarily for disciples of Jesus who are strong in character, and not simply full of gifting (or full of

themselves). In other words, who a person is in the secret place of their hearts is infinitely more important to us than how they play their instrument, sing or function in front of a crowd.

Having said that, it is also true that we value the power of beautiful and well-played worship music – but only if it flows from the heart of people who are content to give Jesus, and others, the place of prominence.

Many times I have had both the privilege, and the challenge, of sharing with worship leaders on the topics of integrity and godly character as primary hallmarks of an effective worship leader. I often prompt the discussion by asking a leading question, such as "What is the strongest, and most powerful instrument you lead with as a worship leader?" The responses are as varied as the musical preferences in the room. "My voice." "My guitar." "My keyboard."

Your Life Is Your Loudest Instrument

Someone inevitably speaks up, in a commonly shy manner, and gives the answer behind the answers: "My life." All heads in the room nod in agreement as we strike a profound spiritual chord together.[11]

Biblically and experientially, we understand that a powerful life is the most permeating, inspiring, transforming and impacting leadership instrument the Lord wields in His hand. Put another way, your life and mine are God's "worship leading instruments" of choice – especially when they make a sound that is pleasing to Him.

A worship leader is a spiritual leader, and pastors the congregation every time they step up to lead worship. For that reason, all the qualities that we look for in any spiritual leader in the Church – be they a pastor, elder, small group leader or worship leader – are similar.

As Horace Mann said,

"Reputation is what men and women think of you.
Character is what God and the angels know of you."

Qualities To Look For In A Worship Leader

- Are they humble?
- Do they have a vibrant secret life with God?
- Are they able to take direction or correction?
- Are the accolades and affirmations of people too important to them?
- Are they doing what they do to serve, or to gain respect?
- Are they good husbands or wives, parents and family members?
- Are they willing to train others to take over for them?
- Are they skilled at what they do?
- Are they teachable and eager to learn?
- Are they willing to quietly care for the poor as much as they are willing to stand on a stage?
- Are they loving, gentle and generous with all those around them?
- Do they have a substantial interior life with God, that reflects itself in their outward lifestyle?
- Does their musical expression of worship, in style and spirit, either fit the current congregation or the target group of the church/group?
- Do they seem to be called, at a core level, to lead others in worship?

Questions Worship Leaders Must Ask Of Ourselves

Let's look at the same values we mentioned earlier, in light of our character, and ask some important personal questions:

1. Do I value intimacy?

In other words, am I the kind of person who loves to worship God in secret as much as I love to play in front of a crowd? Is my life with God growing, vibrant, full of expectation and marked by a sense of His nearness? Am I willing to go deeper with God, before I ever lead anyone else to a deeper place? Do I hunger for more of God?

Do I deeply desire to follow the way of Jesus? Am I willing to lead "transparently," so the congregation is more drawn to Jesus than they are to me?

2. Do I value integrity?

When I am in front of people, is it more about what I get from them, or what they get from me? Is my life lived in such a way that cares for the poor, prays for the broken one, and is content to be passionate for God when no one is watching? Do I believe the songs that I sing? Are the words of the worship songs I lead meaningful for me personally? Do they say what I want to say to God? Am I the same person when no one is watching, as I am when others are watching?

Is there anything in me that "needs" to lead worship, for my own sense of self-fulfillment and value? Will this get in the way if I need to step away from it?

3. Do I value accessibility?

Am I content to play simple songs of love, and choose worship sets based on those who are a part of the community I lead? Am I

willing to die to myself to serve my worship team, my pastor and others, all toward us all encountering Christ in worship?

Am I committed to learn new songs that will access the prayers of people's hearts in our community, at the same time that I am willing to play an old song (for the 947th time) in order to serve my church? Am I as willing to lead 3 people in worship in a living room, or 15 children in a Sunday School class, as I am to lead a congregation?

Can I get *out* of the way, to *make* a way for others?

4. Do I value cultural connection?

Do I come out of a church tradition that creates unnecessary barriers between church culture and the culture around me? Does my style of playing, leading or singing represent the musical tastes and demographic of the community I am being asked to lead in?

Do I live a life that is seeking to live out the ways of Jesus in the streets, in the marketplace and in inter-church relationships? Is my motive in wanting to lead less concerned with what the congregation needs, and more concerned with my desire to play my instrument? Do I lead with a particular "Christian sub-cultural" style?

Am I willing to get involved in my community outside of church, to get to know the felt needs of the community of which our church is a part? Do I own my pastor's vision for touching our community?

5. Do I value Kingdom expectation?

Am I more of a song leader, or a worship leader? Could the term "lead worshiper" be applied to me?

Am I able to defer to the leader of the meeting when they sense we need to either stop worship, or keep going?

Am I willing to create a musical space that leads people into an interaction with God, even if it means playing a G chord for 30 minutes?

Am I able to lead worship with "one ear to earth, one ear to heaven," and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit without always derailing a well-planned worship set?

Do I want God to break in and transform people as we gather to worship, and are my prayers to that end? Do I care about that?

As John Wimber put it, (a mentor to thousands of worship leaders around the world today), we must value character above gifting. We want our worship leaders, in his words:

- to be passionate pursuers of God,
- to love the Scriptures and to know them well,
- to seek unity in the whole Church,
- to live with compassion and mercy toward all people,
- to mentor and equip others beyond themselves,
- to relationally care for the people around them,
- to live generous lives that are outward in focus,

- to value simple and authentic ways of living, praying and worshiping, and
- to be risk-takers who are willing to go where God seems to be going.[12]

Session 3
Reflection Questions

If you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

    Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.

    How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. What have you discovered about your own qualities in this section?

    Go through the list of "qualities to look for in a worship leader" again, applied to your life as a Christian and as a worship leader. Do you care about all of these values? If so, why? Which ones are more difficult for you to connect with your worship leadership?

3. What values mentioned here are areas of strength for you, and which are weaknesses to be worked on?

    Go through the list at the end of this session. What areas are already strengths for you? Which are weaknesses?

SESSION 4
EFFECTIVELY LEADING WORSHIP

"So don't be afraid to learn by doing, even though the earliest steps are sometimes slow and awkward. You'll never get anywhere unless you start at square one." [13]

Andy Park

Let's assume a few things. You probably either (predominantly) play the guitar, or the keyboard. Most worship leaders lead from one of these two instruments. Why? Because they are common to contemporary music, they are harmonic (accompaniment) instruments, and they can be used to musically and rhythmically lead a band. (Personally I lead mostly from the hammered dulcimer, and new leading instruments are finding their way to church platforms across the world).

If you play another instrument, good on you! If you play no instrument, you probably lead alongside a keyboardist or a guitar player. If you play the tuba, there will be more for you in our next study, *Leading Worship From Instruments That Are Downright Painful To Play*.

This first section of this chapter, "Leading Worship," will be addressed to all worship leaders, whether you are leading worship in a living room, or in front of thousands. The second section, "Leading A Worship Band," will be addressed to those leading along with other musicians.

Our last section of this chapter will address relating to your pastoral leaders, mentoring other worship leaders, and making progress as a growing worship leader.

Leading Worship

"I started off leading a bit of worship in college but I was really, really dreadful at it, and was encouraged never to do it again! At the same time, some of my other friends said, 'You've got something in there.'

I felt so insecure that I just thought I'd never do it again.

But when I moved to Glasgow after college to get married, a guy there asked if I would become the worship leader in his church. I felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit that this was something He had in mind for me to do.

So, in fear and trepidation, I decided I would give it a go, and the Lord showed up. It was great."[14]

Kathryn Scott (*Hungry*)

Worship leadership is both an art and a science. Worship leadership is the

profound combination of effective musical skill, organization and preparation, experience, practice, calling, character, intuition, gifting and God's grace.

Given the nature of the mandate of the worship leader, to effectively facilitate the worship interaction of God's people with Himself, both the heart and skill of worship leadership need some attention.

Back To The Basics

An experienced and capable worship leader steps up to the microphone, guitar in hand, as the congregation prepares themselves to respond to the love of God. Anticipation to engage with God through the music is high, and the worship leader begins to gently strum the guitar.

Then, just as the first words of the song are about to be pounced upon by every soul in the room, everyone starts to feel their throats tightening up. The opening melody is about to be far higher than they can sing! The worship leader abruptly stops the music.

"Oops. I've got the capo on the wrong fret. Sorry about that!" He stops, changes the capo position, and counts the band in again. Laughter ensues among the band members and the congregation. "Let's try that again," he quips, and this time the song is in the right key.

How Do We Get Back To Effectively Leading?

Believe it or not, at a recent gathering of experienced worship leaders and teams in the southern states, two highly experienced worship leaders made this same mistake at the beginning of a song – and I was one of them!

We know how to prepare, rehearse and lead a consistent and effective worship set – we may have been doing it for decades.

Yet sometimes we still struggle to pull it off skillfully and from a good heart – every time. Sometimes we all need to go back to the basics. Even musicians keep up their rudiments, their licks, and their chops.

Here's some straight shooting from a fellow worship leader.

1. Cultivate Your Own Heart As A Worshiper – Alone.

Let's get practical. It's time to move the glitz away from worship leading and contemporary recordings – your authority to lead worship depends directly on your secret life with God in worship. The reality is, tomorrow you may strap on your instrument and begin to artfully play some worship songs that you love.

However, if your own self-expression is the hidden heart behind what you do, or corporate worship is the only place you express yourself before God with those songs musically, then your authority to lead worship will show itself increasingly empty and lifeless over time.

Great music can hide a hollow heart to some degree – but only to a degree. Is your secret life with God a vibrant life, where God is the center of your personal worship experience? Are you cultivating your musical leading skills in the secret place of worship as well as the secret place of rehearsal?

If you focus on your secret life, concentrating on your musicianship will become second nature as you worship personally, and as you lead others. If your personal life is empty, and your interior life is smaller than your exterior life, your worship leadership will amplify a striving soul behind the songs.

Trust the voice of experience on this one. Find your life with God, up and down as it is, before you lead others in their life with God. Find it.

Fight for it. Foster it. Besides being important on it's own, finding your growing life with God will empower your worship leading.

2. Build Simple Sets Around The Character Of God, And The Faith.

Songs about who God is, strung simply together, consistently move souls toward the greater Story that underlies our lives. Songs about how we feel about God, or even how He feels about us, may season a set well and be biblically represented, but make for sappy sets when strung together all in row, all the time.

When leading remember this rocket-science equation for good worship leading, when good songs are selected and the heart is engaged: Sing a song, finish it, sing another song, finish it, sing another song, finish it. People have come to worship – lead them without meandering around musically. Sing the song, and get out of the way. Let the songs lead.

Make it a priority to create sets that celebrate God's character and intimately express worship through songs that remind us that God is the center of the universe, and we are invited into His grand Story.

Values such as intimacy, accessibility, integrity, cultural connection, and Kingdom expectation can guide us into less whimsical, and more well-planned and value-laden worship experiences. These corporate worship sets last for the long haul, and further the Kingdom story in our generation and in our communities.

3. Care More About Your Congregation Engaging Than Your Platform.

It's simple to say, but hard to do. If that platform means more to you than your congregation finding a regular, rich, consistent and beautiful meeting place with God, then it's time to step out from behind the guitar, microphone or keyboard.

To become the kinds of leaders who equip others, and give away opportunity in order to see living worship advanced in our community, we must love the Church more than we love playing, leading or singing.

Take the time to wrestle with this before God. It's worth the process, and your worship leadership will be forever changed – as will the worship life of your community.

A Simple Pattern For Building A Worship Set

One of the most helpful tools that I've had in my worship leader's tool-belt over the years has been this basic "3 Step Set" approach to building a worship set.

Over 20+ years of worship leading, I've watched the following approach to building a worship set work consistently as a flexible template.

Note that this "hidden format" can bend and morph easily, and I've built 2-3 hour sets based on the following structure, repeating the pattern.

1. GATHERING
Invite the community to worship with an opening prayer, reading or scripture, and then a song (or songs) that "gathers us and reminds us what we are here for." *Come, Now Is The Time To Worship* is a contemporary example of an invocation song that works well.

2. CELEBRATION
In this section, we focus on "God Songs" as we celebrate the nature of God, His unchanging character, His attributes and Story alive among us. Our attention is not on our feelings and responses particularly, but rather on Jesus and God's nature.

This is the core of our time of musical worship – appreciation and thankfulness. *How Great Is Our God* is a contemporary example of this kind of song.

3. RESPONSE
This final section is the point where we respond to God's self-revealing with songs of surrender, prayer, intimacy and choice. We've sung about God's nature, now we offer ourselves with love and allegiance to Him and His purposes. *Here I Am To Worship* is a contemporary example of this kind of song.

If you're stumbling along in planning small group, large group or conference sets, this helpful template has enabled many to overcome the "Stumbling Set Blues." I'd encourage you to experiment it as you plan your next few sets, to see how it works for you.

(Note: This flow actually maps, on some level, with the traditional 4 fold structure of worship gatherings – i.e. The 1. Gathering, 2. Word, 3. Table, and 4. Sending pattern. In this structure, music is just a part of this progression. In many lengthier contemporary sets, it actually can guide how a series of songs are linked together.)

There is no indication of fast/slow, etc. intended in the above progression either – basic principles of flow and transition apply here.

How This Pattern Could Be Applied To Different Set Lengths

- If I am doing a 3 song set, I will pick one song for each category, GATHERING, CELEBRATION, and RESPONSE.
- If I am doing a 6 song set, I will tend to pick 1 song for GATHERING, 3 songs for CELEBRATION, and 2 songs for RESPONSE.

- If I am doing a larger set (8 songs or more) I will simply keep the principles in mind, and flow between them.
- If I have time to only do 1 song, I will tend to choose either a GATHERING song, or a CELEBRATION song, according to the event.

Again, these are just general rules of thumb that may prove helpful in the planning of your next set.

Song Selection And The 3/3 Approach

In my own worship leading work, my song selection is based generally on a 3/3 (1/3, 1/3, 1/3) approach when it comes to genres of songs.

You can modify this to suit your own resources and focus in your church, but here is the general 3/3 principle I go by:

> *1/3 of the songs I use are contemporary worship songs* that are well-respected, known and fitting to our community. This is the *contemporary part* of the set.
>
> *1/3 of the songs I use are historic, traditional and ethnically diverse*, connecting us with the Church throughout the ages. This is the *ancient-future* part of the set.
>
> *1/3 of the songs I use are written in our community*, by those with a primary calling as seasoned (and growing) songwriters. For us, the bar is high in this area, and these writers are writing songs based on pastor's messages and themes it seems that God is speaking about to our local church community. This is the *indigenous* part of the set.

Foundations For Leading An Effective Worship Set

So, I have my GATHERING, CELEBRATION, RESPONSE set pattern generally in mind. I choose songs for each section that are based on my 3/3 approach, caring for tempos, keys, etc. Now, I have built my set and am ready to lead.

Here are just a few foundations, learned from the school of hard knocks, that enable us to lead effective sets. After looking at these, we'll get very practical on how to actually execute the set in detail.

> *Play The Songs With The Tightness Of One Who Is Recording.*
>
> This is a tough one for today's worship leaders to grasp. Let's not mince words – *forget sloppy playing* – it just doesn't work and distracts people from engaging with the song. A poorly connected set, musically, can't be blamed on the Holy Spirit and us just "flowing."
>
> Granted, raw music, unrefined and spontaneous, can still breed beautiful worship experiences. However, that is the exception and not the rule. When we try to make it the rule, it may just reveal that we are too lazy to get good at what we do. How's that for honesty?
>
> Without intentional development, many worship leaders play like they did when they were younger, and were slamming out tunes in a garage band. Without taking care that every strum is full and exact, and every picking pattern solid and clean, worship leaders begin to just strum and pick away without thought to the tightness of their shared performance. We may think its cool, but it's not. It's just distracting.
>
> Performance is not a bad word if the heart is engaged with God and the people. The recording studio makes demands on

musicians – timing problems, buzzing strings, erratic picking, clunky and busy playing, tuning and vocal issues all rear their heads in the naked sound of the studio. In the studio there is no crowd energy to hide the fact that we're unrehearsed and not sure what we're doing! Studio musicians *must* play well, or the track is bad and unusable. Period. It's distracting.

So, rehearse, get great at your instrument, work toward excellence in your sound, tone and playing. With a great heart leading, and good music being played, our worship gathering is lifted. Log in hundreds of hours (over years, of course) leading worship, playing in studios, or practicing to click tracks.

Play with recordings until the tempos of the songs are in your head, and you've learned to play with good timing. Learn to arrange a band well (that's coming up) and then lead it with confidence and musicality.

Good music usually facilitates worship expression; bad music usually hinders it. Simple. Minimize distraction; maximize beauty.

Have A Theme, And Plan Your Set Accordingly.

Whether it's a church year season, or your pastor's sermon notes, or your own heart leading as you pray about the worship time you are about to lead, do your best to find a theme, and lead people on a journey through a few songs.

In a recent gathering, I led one song with New Testament roots, one song with early Church roots, one song with Reformation roots, one spiritual and a contemporary worship song. The theme of the set was to engage us with the riches of worship history. Every song didn't say the same thing – but they all elevated the

character of God and the essential Story of the Kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus.

Respond to the themes given at each event, and look for key words and phrases in songs to build your set.

Plan First, Go With The Plan Second, Be Spontaneous Third.

If we start out always trying to do something spontaneous and "spirit-led," our worship leading will become loose and ineffective. Conversely, if you always over-plan, your expression may become rigid and formal.

Plan a set well, then plan the structure of each song (ex. intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, chorus, end). Rehearse and lead it that way. Know that when a chorus is begging to be repeated, you can do that. Plan well first, then follow the plan, then be free to lightly season the set with some spontaneity.

Your band will learn to trust you if you generally stick to what you rehearsed – which helps the band succeed musically (this is important to musicians).

Three Phases Of Worship Leading

Both experienced worship leaders and budding worship leaders are in need of some pause and reflection today in our "worship as industry" climate. If we're desperate for God, it will come out in the music over time, and others will evidence that same desperation for God as they join in with us.

So, we build our sets well, and practice our instrument, leading from the center of a vibrant walk with God. We have a privileged job to do, and that

job flows out of the hidden life we share with God as musicians and worshipers. Find your life with God, learn the craft of effectively executing a set of songs and liturgies, and you will have a lifetime of leading worship effectively.

For the purposes of this quick glance at the skill of worship leading, we'll now break up the worship leading experience into three phases:

The Pre-leading phase,

The Present-leading phase, and

The Post-leading phase.

We'll look at each one in point form, and offer many tips from seasoned worship leaders who learned to lead in the school of hard knocks.

THE PRE-LEADING PHASE

In the pre-leading phase of worship leading, there is a fair amount of homework to be done. As the old maxim states, "Prepare to be spontaneous." Many of my own frustrations as a worship leader, and for many other worship leaders I know, lie in this area of leading. A few tips from the school of hard-knocks may help avoid some of the pitfalls you may be experiencing in worship leading.

> ***Recognize that you are there for the congregation*** you are about to lead; they are not there primarily to be your audience. In other words, you are a servant to this group of people you are leading, and your role is to do whatever it takes, to sacrifice whatever it takes, to lead this group to a place where they can joyfully meet with God.
>
> The congregation is not there to be our captive audience, to watch us express our gifts or to show them our stuff. Regard

the stage as God's, a place to express His fame, and all will be well. Congregations intuitively know if the worship leader is giving to them, or taking from them. Be a giver.

Use the instrument you lead with often in your personal times of worship. The more time you log in on an instrument, the more you are playing it instead of it playing you! Get more and more comfortable worshiping alone with your guitar or keyboard, or other instrument. If you can, worship and practice the songs in the environment you will regularly lead in (the church sanctuary or hall). Let the sound of the system become familiar. Practice, and worship, with CDs. It all helps.

Choose songs that the group you are leading knows and loves. When planning a worship set, the lion's share of the songs should be tunes the congregation loves and knows. Intersperse those songs with one or two new ones, but even those should be lingered over for a few weeks until the group owns them. You may have to rehearse and play a song 30 times before the congregation is even beginning to know it by heart. Don't move on too quickly for the congregation, even though the song has become tired for you.

Practice a structure of the song that seems to work, i.e. verse/chorus/verse/chorus/chorus. Let the team have something to expect, and then change plans only if necessary in the midst of worship. Don't leave too much to the spontaneity of the moment. Unless your players are all professional musicians, not knowing what to expect can be disheartening and frustrating instead of "spiritual and spontaneous."

Rehearse personally before you rehearse with anyone else. This helps for quicker learning of the songs together, security

for other musicians, expedited rehearsal time, and impartation of your love for the song.

Be well prepared for rehearsal in other details. Make sure the team has accurate chord charts (and/or music) for each song they don't have. Remember, paper is cheap. Save time by having extras on hand so you don't have to run back and forth to the photocopier. If your team doesn't have worship song binders, get them binders yourself.

Pray and select songs that you love to play. If you are confident and enjoying yourself, chances are that others will follow your lead.

Select songs according to the season of the life of your church. Have an updated master list with keys, style of the song, and the title in front of you so that you can see the whole banquet before picking the portions for the week.

Memorize the songs. Memorize the songs. Memorize the songs. Now, don't run away. Just read on for a moment. The distraction of looking at charts, music, and/or lyrics can be deadening to your worship leading. If you have memorized the song, you are free in worship to look at the congregation, the team, and to hear the gentle whispering of the Spirit.

Leading from chord charts can be too mechanical otherwise, and can be distracting to you and the worshipers. (When is the last time you saw your favorite band play with chord charts or lyrics in front of them?)

Try this method. Play the song over and over again with the chart, then try it over and over again without the chart, peeking at it section-by-section as needed. After you have memorized it, play it over and over again without the chart,

and try to do that each day until you are going to use it. I have played any one song (especially harder ones) at least 20 times before I've tried to do it live without charts.

Having worked that hard on the song, you probably won't forget it with people in front of you, and you probably won't forget it for a long time to come! If you don't have a song memorized, don't beat yourself up over it, or worse yet, don't try to play it half-memorized!

Distraction hinders congregational worship, and good, smooth flowing music facilitates it. Use chord charts if you must.

Listen to the quality of your instrument. It makes beautiful sounds; play it gently and with care, lest it rebel. Let the music breathe, and learn from better players how not to "fill all the space" with your playing.

Make small musical steps in your playing week to week. In other words, trying something just a bit new (I.e. make your pinkie do something it didn't have to do before) each week will eventually add much more seasoning to the meat and potatoes of your worship leading.

Make a list long enough to pick and choose from. Have plenty of gathering, focus, and response songs for a variety to draw on. I often have one or two songs that I feel like the time will hinge on. Head for those songs with the others, and draw on them if you hit a moment of "sweat and standstill."

Be highly prepared before "Sunday morning" so that you can focus on the Lord, the team, and the heartbeat of the morning (or gathering) without being harried to tie loose ends. Most worship leaders have found that Sunday mornings

and events have enough troubles of their own without adding to those troubles by last-minute panic-preparation. Do as much as you can early on in the week.

Be familiar with "vamps." Vamps are chord progressions that you can improvise over in worship, and that you will probably use to introduce the song and to linger on if the moment is appropriate.

Often, the vamp is the chord progression between the chorus you just sang, and the next verse you are about to sing. Rehearse vamps with your team. Give the band a feel for where you will probably use them. Again, prepare to be spontaneous.

Remember that the capo is your friend. This is for guitarists. In preparation for worship, sometimes variations of the song in high-end guitar can accentuate the sound beautifully. It also allows a second guitar to play the lower-end chords without musical or rhythmic clash. If one guitar is playing high, with a capo, a second guitar can be playing low without a capo for a great sound.

Make it a habit to initiate communication with the pastor or the leader of the gathering early in the week. They have the ultimate responsibility before God for the equipping of the saints, and to facilitate the ministry that God is wanting to do.

Find a consistent way to ask the pastor what the Lord is putting on their heart for the gathering, or for their teaching, and actively look for scriptures, songs, etc., to facilitate what God is giving them. Don't wait for them to track you down for input. Usually they have a million things on their mind that week and are blessed by such a request.

THE PRESENT-LEADING PHASE

In the present-leading phase of worship leading, we are in the moment, executing the set, and leading the musicians. Being in the moment, new dynamics present themselves that were not part of the rehearsal, or our practice time in our bedroom.

People are staring at us, we are being spiritual and practical leaders of a section of our service, and expectations are all around us. Here are a few tips on leading as you actually do it.

Assume that the people have come to meet with God. "When can I go and meet with God?" the psalmist asked (Psalm 42:2). When you prepare to strike the first chord on your guitar or keyboard, assume that the reason everyone has gathered is because they *want* to meet with God. If you start there, you will be less inclined to cheerlead the congregation or say lots of things as you simply lead people to a place where they can have their heart's desire. You are at your best when you are facilitating people's worship – not making something happen with psycho-spiritual religious gymnastics.

Consider beginning the time of worship with a brief prayer, a passage of Scripture, or a word of encouragement. I find that this is a quality way to bring a moment of much needed focus on God for those who are gathering, for the team, and for me. The Bible has some very encouraging things to say about God and us; you really ought to read it publicly sometime!

Keep your eyes open most of the time. We often label the closing of our eyes as an intimate show of communion with God. When done for that purpose, it is quite appropriate. However, I think we do it many times because we don't want to see the train wreck! Or if the train is wrecking as we go

along, we shut them to avoid the pain in others' eyes!

The faces of the people are not always an accurate measure of the effectiveness of the worship time, but making contact with people through your eyes is very important. Many times I smile as I am singing at dear saints a few rows back, and for that moment we are celebrating together.

We model that we are corporately worshiping by our connectedness and demeanor at the front. Closing our eyes all of the time can distance us off from the very people we are seeking to lead.

Sing clearly, confidently, and sing the melody. When you lead, lead. Mumbling creates insecurity in your leadership, and singing confidently gives a strong sense of direction. It is not controlling to lead confidently, but rather it is very freeing for the congregation (by "confidently" I do not necessarily mean "loudly" – a boisterous worship leader can be as distracting as a timid one). As well, avoid trailing off on too many flourishes or harmonies when you are the worship leader. Unless the whole congregation knows the song so well they could each sing it to you backwards (the song, not them), it will distract and confuse the masses if you venture too far from the melody in the context of leading of the song.

Shoot toward making the playing of your instrument second-nature. This refers to what I mentioned before. The more fluid you are in playing your instrument, the more freed up you are to listen to the Lord's instructions as you go. I can be thinking of 25 different things in the middle of a worship song. "Boy, it's good to see them here this week," "She looks like she is really hating all this racket," "Lord, touch Tom while we play this song," "Oh, I forgot to call him this week!" or "I wonder what we should have for lunch?" You know what

I mean! We sometimes miss the next chord when we are distracted. The better prepared we are, the less chance of goof-ups that distract.

Avoid "indulgent worship." What I mean by "indulgent worship" is worship experiences that are meaningful to you, and maybe even to the band, but lose the people. You are there to serve their expression of worship and intimacy with God. Long instrumental times, or long prophetic rabbit-trails are not always God's highest, especially for a Sunday morning.

Conferences and special celebrations I find much different than small groups or Sunday mornings. Be careful not to justify indulgent and loose leading with a spiritual label. Humbly ask your pastor if you are unsure of the appropriateness of some of your choices as you lead. They are called by God to be in touch with the people, and will have some ready insight.

Talk about your body language, and how you use it in a set, with your team. My team is well-trained to watch, watch, watch me. They've come to know, generally, my body language, what the intensity in my voice means, what the strumming of my guitar is leading to, etc. Verbalize it if necessary. My drummers watch the head of my guitar and my left leg closely! They know that if I want to speed up or slow down, they will see it there first.

Consider starting each song on your guitar or lead instruments, at least for a few bars. This enables me to re-orient my tempo (which is often necessary) before the band comes in and sets it in stone.

I remember times in my early days leading worship when I

would start off playing in the wrong time signature, and was thankful that the band was waiting for me to find it!

A solid tip – after you finish one song in your set, begin to sing the *chorus* of the next song in your head before you start strumming or playing that next tune. This trick will help you to lock into a sense of the tempo and timing of the song before you start to lead into it.

Have signals with your sound person. He or she should be watching you anyway, but it is good to have agreed-upon signals about sound that don't require your hands to be involved.

Keep consistent eye contact with the lead pastor. It is crucial to remember that none of us lead in a vacuum. We are called to lead together in distinct roles.

The pastor is called to have a sense of the overall pulse of the gathering of the saints in your local congregation, and it is crucial to maintain communication with them (verbal and non-verbal) and walk in submission throughout your part in leading a gathering. This goes for smaller groups as well.

Sometimes I have even stepped down from the stage to have a brief exchange with my pastor (in unique circumstances), determining where he is sensing we should go in worship. We are not mavericks, just doing our own thing. We walk in submission to those God has given primary oversight, and our gifts and leadership follow suit.

Remember that your sound person is part of the worship team, and is not just there to serve you. Be sensitive to their needs as they work to be sensitive to yours, even in the midst of the worship set.

Don't just barrel through ministry times; they can be the most sensitive and exciting times to learn to hear the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor people as you lead in ministry times. Pray for people through the songs. Let God use you in those precious moments of Him speaking into hearts.

THE POST-LEADING PHASE

In the post-leading phase of worship leading, we have concluded our set, or service, or small group. We're finished, right? Wrong. It is what happens after leading a set that lays the foundation for the next time we will lead. In this phase, we examine our hearts, ask for input, and learn so we can create more effective spaces for corporate musical worship.

Always remember to first ask the Lord, before anyone else, what He felt about the worship time you just led. Success and failure are events, not people. Before you go seeking others' affirmation, or throwing your guitar through the nearest window, quiet your heart before the Lord (you can even do this immediately after your part in the service, in the comfort of your seat) and receive His love and input. I am often surprised by what I sense the Lord's perspective was on a time of leading.

Receive input graciously. Sometimes you will receive encouragement, and sometimes you will receive criticism from people around you. Respond with grace to each remark, and remember to lay each one before the Lord for His Glory and your discernment.

No matter what spirit a comment is brought in, ask the Lord

if He wants to speak to you through it. If it is a remark of thanks, honor the person and respond in kind with "You're welcome." Remember, if "it was all God" and none of you, it would have been much richer of an experience for everyone! He used you, and He receives glory if you give it to Him in your heart. Honor the gift of thanks the person gave you.

Learn from your mistakes. Have someone video-tape you leading worship sometime. You will be amazed at things you see that you never imagined so consistently occur! Remember little boo-boos and big bomb-aroos, and make sure that they don't happen again if you can help it. If not, laugh a lot. It eases the stress.

Take the initiative to ask your pastor/leader how they felt the worship time went, and if they have any input. After they pick themselves up off the floor, they will respond to your teachability with some invaluable thoughts and perspectives. Receive what is said with humility, and take it before the Lord. Even if you think they don't have a clue because they "weren't worshiping like everyone else" was, submit the question anyway. You'll be surprised how far a little check-in like that will go.

Always, always, always, give the glory to God after you have led. Sit down at home, or in the car, and hand it all back to Him. A friend of mine speaks of "glory" as being like radioactivity. It's powerful stuff, but if you hold on to it too long, it will kill you.

Keep it all centered on Jesus, especially in a generation that glorifies and idolizes musicians.

We have a stage and platform, whether we are in a living room, sanctuary, or stadium.

As a worship leader, we are called by God to be good at our practical worship leading skills for one purpose alone – to create a space where people can connect with God.[15]

Session 4
Reflection Questions

If you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

> Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.
>
> How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. Talk about the GATHERING – FOCUS - RESPONSE model of building a worship set. How does this help?

> Think about how you went about about choosing songs and building a worship set the last time you did it. What motivated your choices of songs? How much focus did you give the lyrics, and how did they fit in with this general model? How could this framework help you build your next set?
>
> If you have time, build a set based on this model together as a group (if doing this study with a group). Pick a theme coming up at the church, and go from there.

3. What new skills did this session help you begin to think about acquiring?

> Many different worship leading skills and tips were discussed in this session. What arenas of growth can you see being the most important to you right now?

SESSION 5

LEADING A WORSHIP BAND

"The more I lead, the more confident I feel. The more experience I have, the more I become aware of what God is saying. In the past, when things have been going badly, my head would go down and I would think, 'Let's just get through this.' I would feel so terrible.

But now, I get more and more desperate for God to do something and I say, 'Lord, what is it you might be wanting to do?'

I am trying to be more eager to hear His voice."[16]

Tim Hughes (*Here I Am To Worship*)

It is always amazing to me how the dynamics related to building an effective worship team are very similar to those related to building a healthy family, a healthy Church, a healthy business or a healthy sports

team. Human beings, as you may have guessed, are the common denominator in all of these equations, and it is in the realm of human relationships that we find the keys to managing healthy relationships in a worship team.

However, I would challenge the language of "team" being the most effective term applied to what is happening among the group of musicians that we call a worship team. While the words are harmless enough, and I don't think we have to change the terms "worship team" or "worship band," let's differentiate between a team and a tribe (or community).

If a team is primarily a functional unit, made up of various participants fulfilling divisions of labor to accomplish a task, then I would contrast this with a tribe or community – a gathering of inter-related members who fulfill responsibilities related to the fulfilling of their shared needs, and the blessing of their shared relationships. A tribe shares a common story, and a common set of values.

To understand your worship team in the sense of "community" or "tribe" may refine your approach to handling the tender matters of relationship and musicianship that come with the territory. First, we'll look at pastoring your tribe, and then we'll look at how we can gel musically.

Building Your Band Relationally & Spiritually

In Galatians 5:22 (NIV), we find a listing of what have been commonly called "the fruits of the Spirit."

> *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

These "fruits" are most accurately the character traits of the Holy Spirit, modeled in the life of Jesus, that are meant to be the common traits of those who are filled with the Spirit of God. In other words, the attributes

listed are the surest evidence that God is indeed in our midst, actually present and ruling and reigning in our lives. Personally and corporately, we are to bear the natural fruit that bursts forth from a healthy tree – in this case, the tree of our friendship with God.

In the NIV version of the scriptures, these fruits were listed as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, these words are expanded, and read like this:

> *"But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard – things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely."*[17]

Given that a worship community is a microcosm of the community that is the Church, with defined tasks and functions in the community, we'll apply each of the fruits of the Spirit to the maintenance of healthy relational dynamics among the creative tribe that is your worship community.

How Can We Live These Out In A Band?

We are invited to live out our faith in a time, and in a place. Here are some ideas for how we can live out the fruits of the Spirit among our peers in a band or worship ministry setting.

> ***Love: "affection for others"***
> Model for your team a style of leadership that always has their highest and best interests in mind. When you express love and

affection for your team members, over time, they will begin to show it to one another. When you set up someone's instrument for him or her, or honor that person in front of the band, it will be contagious.

Joy: "exuberance about life"

Make sure that you make time to just play, without your instruments, together. Plato once said that you learn more about someone in an hour of play than in a lifetime of work. Make sure you find space to eat together, have parties together, and to enjoy one another's unique personalities.

Peace: "serenity"

Keep short accounts with one another. Pray for your team, and make sure that any relational conflict is not left to fester, but rather dealt with as lovingly, gently and as quickly as possible.

Patience: "We develop a willingness to stick with things"

In rehearsal, when someone needs to work out their own part, give them time to do so. The other team members may have to show them patience, but that's a good exercise for musicians. Show the team members that you are willing to stick with them as they grow as disciples, and as people.

Kindness: "a sense of compassion in the heart"

Guard your words, and make sure that for every criticism you must give that you have offered at least 10 words of encouragement before that time. Many worship leaders wonder why their band members are so easily offended, when often the worship leader has never learned how to encourage people to the point where individuals can receive input more easily.

Oh, and in case you didn't know it, musicians and creatives tend to be, well… sensitive human beings. Use the fruit of kindness

frequently, and empathize with the needs of each of your bandmates.

Goodness: "a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people"
If you treat each person as someone made in the image of God, and as valuable, they will stick with you and serve as best they can for a long time to come. Affirm people by calling them up to the goodness of Christ within them, and don't let them fall down to their lowest expectations of themselves.

Faithfulness: "We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments"
Many musicians struggle with being faithful, dependable and consistent. Help your musicians learn to "stick with it," and remind them that loyalty to Jesus and to one another is a high calling. Call people up on coming late or disrespecting others' time schedules when it harms or dishonors others.

Gentleness: "not needing to force our way in life"
Teach your team to see the stage or platform as a vehicle to bring fame to God – not to themselves. If they see you calmly walking through life, trusting God without pushing for your own agenda, they may awake to the reality that they don't need to push you or others to give them visibility or platform.

Self Control: "able to marshal and direct our energies wisely"
Ask God to enable you to call out the full potential of each band member. Help them to focus their energies and avoid "scattered living." When certain areas of sin are acknowledged by a person, you can help them to walk the journey away from those areas as a mentor, intercessor and friend.

It is our ability to value one another, in the midst of laughter and labor, which makes a worship team into a true worship

community, a true Kingdom tribe in the family of God.

Building Your Band Musically

Bringing your band together musically can be an entirely different matter than bringing them together spiritually. Hear these words from worship leader Bruce Ellis:

> *"From a musical perspective, a worship team presents an interesting dilemma. Firstly, this is probably the only context where such a diverse group of musicians are gathered together and expected to produce a sound suitable for mass consumption.*
>
> *A worship team can, and often does, represent a wide mix of musical abilities and strengths – from the seasoned professional to those who have just learned a few chords. Since musicians naturally tend to gravitate toward those who share similar levels of ability, this integration can, if not kept in perspective, have some devastating effects on the worship team experience.*
>
> *Factor in that many pastors, too often, closely correlate church growth with the worship team's sound and you've got a breeding ground for division and contempt. That's the bad news.*
>
> *The good news is that we can have confidence in the wonderful way God has both called us to, and provided the means by which, we can interact on both a spiritual and a musical level. If this sounds a lot like the Kingdom of God to you, you can rest in knowing... it is!"*[18]

Here are just a few tips to keep your band growing and working well together musically:

> *Allow time for band members to work out their parts for a particular song.*

In rehearsal, it's important for a musician to feel like they are contributing their best. Aid this by giving them the songs you'll be leading earlier in the week (so they can work out their parts), and by allowing them to fine tune their part during a rehearsal.

Make sure you are all in tune (maybe to the same tuner).

Don't be proud about your ability to tune your instrument without a tuner. Most of the time, especially when playing with other musicians, it creates just enough sonic tension to make the music sound bad.

Every band should have a tuner they share around, and every musician should be humble enough to tune to it for the good of the band and the congregation – without having to be asked.

Give your team CDs to practice to well before they will do the songs in rehearsal.

While you never want your band simply mimicking CDs without ever catching the heart behind a song, CDs are a great learning tool for musicians (even professionals). I use an online planner to get the songs to all my musicians in a fast and easy way.

Drummers are pushed to play to the beat of a pro drummer, and to stay in time with the band who recorded in the studio. When the recorded songs are used for learning, electric guitarists are forced to play less, along with the guitarist on the recording, and to try new sounds.

Vocalists learn new harmonies, keyboard players learn new sounds and textures, and worship leaders learn how to play their

instrument to the actual tempo of the song!

Encourage, and even supply, lessons when possible.

This is all part of making your musicians feel like a valuable part of the team. When you can supply workshops for individual instruments, or send a musician for a few lessons with someone they admire, do it. Pick your investments wisely, and do all you can to encourage the musician in a craft they've been working on for years.

Expose them to greatness on their instrument.

If possible, have your band go to events together where great musicians are playing. Encourage them to watch what the players are doing, how little they are playing or how well they are blending in. The more you inspire your musicians, the more they will seek learning opportunities themselves.

Be brutally honest, and keep short accounts.

Being shy with musicians, while desirable in the short run, often leads to problems later. Be honest with where a musician is at, musically, spiritually or relationally. While not being overly-critical, extend love and grace in honest conversation about where a person is headed as a Christian (or as a musician).

When love has ruled the day before, most musicians I know are eager for honest input.

Put like-abilities together.

If you have a few great musicians, give them plenty of opportunity to play together and be inspired by each other. If you only put learning musicians with your best musicians, the latter will get frustrated along the way.

If a few musicians are growing together, have them play together and inspire one another to greater heights. Then, on occasion, mix the teams to create mentoring relationships. In some case, have younger musicians "shadow," or play in the background with, your better musicians.

Rehearse well before you play.

Never apologize for rehearsing your band thoroughly, and for doing your best to create music that is beautiful together. Beautiful music facilitates worship; bad music distracts and disturbs people's interaction with God. The more rehearsed a band is together, the less they need to go over every little detail before an event.

"Top and Tail" songs for quick rehearsals.

When there is little time to rehearse even familiar songs, "top and tail" the songs. In other words, practice how you will get into each song, how you will finish each song, and then how you will start the next song after it, and so on. This is a quick way to rehearse when time is short.

Obey the "Fraction Principle."

Brian Doerksen, well-known worship leader and songwriter, emphasizes the reality that the sound of every band should equal "1." In other words, if there are 7 people playing in the band, each band member only plays 1/7 of what they could play if they were on their own.

If each band member overplays, the sound ends up equaling 7 – a wall of busy sound will overwhelm the listener, and is closer to noise than it is music! If we each add our small part, making way for the other instruments in the band, we'll play less, and more simply, than we would on our own.

This is part of maturing as a musician, and as a band. The most professional of players and bands understand, and intuitively obey, this principle.[19]

Use the phrase "Downbeat Time."

When calling your band to show up early for a rehearsal, use the language of "Downbeat Time" for that rehearsal. In other words, "Downbeat Time is 6:00 pm," means that everyone's gear should be set up, and ready to hit the "downbeat" on rehearsal at 6 pm. So, if the electric guitar player knows they have gear to set up, they come at 5:30 pm so they are ready for the first "downbeat" on the rehearsal at 6.

This simple language change has helped hundreds of teams communicate more clearly, and get in full, effective rehearsals with their band.

See Your Team As A Group Of Spiritual Leaders

Finally, let me emphasize the extreme importance of seeing your team as a group of spiritual leaders who play music, not just musicians who have a role in the spiritual life of your church.

Consider investing in their long-term training – as musicians, disciples and spiritual leaders. WorshipTraining.com (an online training site I founded and designed with others for this very purpose) is just one powerful mechanism for creating a full development track of courses for all your worship ministry members. Other resources are available as well – take advantage of them.

Your team is so worth it.

Session 5
Reflection Questions

First, if you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

    Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.

    How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. What did you learn that you could apply to leading your team?

    What principles of leading your team would you immediately apply after having read this section?

3. Talk about the *Fraction Principle*. How does it apply to your setting?

    The Fraction Principle, all of us sounding as "1" in a band setting, changes the way individual musicians play. How could this principle apply in the current setting where you lead worship?

SESSION 6

PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS & MENTORING SKILLS OF THE WORSHIP LEADER

"I think the worship leader/pastor relationship is almost the most critical relationship in the Church, because the worship leader leads and holds out to the people this heart-theme of 'When can I go and meet with God,' and facilitates that heart connection corporately.

The pastor provides an umbrella of authority in teaching the Word of God. If there's any sort of strain or severing in that relationship, I believe it begins to affect the life of the entire church.

It really grieves me sometimes to have worship leaders pour out their heart to me, groaning 'I can't believe it, my pastor wants to have input into what songs we sing at church!'

I look at them and ask, 'Why wouldn't they?' If they're the shepherd, and they have a concern that you're singing a song that is out there in left field

theologically, why wouldn't they want to come to you?

It's not like they're coming and saying, 'I'm going to tell you everything to do, and how to be creative,' because that is not their gift. They'd be foolish to do that. But I think the pastor's job is to impart their values and their heart, and then it's up to the worship person to interpret that, and to serve that.

When those two things come together, I think you have not only a healthy church, but a growing, vibrant church leadership."[20]

Brian Doerksen

Relating To Your Pastor & Leaders

Biblically, we are challenged to "…Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you" (1Thess. 5:12 NIV). That means that when it's easy to respect and honor those who lead in our community, we do it. It also means that when it's hard to respect and honor those who lead in our community, we still do it.

Being a worship leader means you are part of a team that is discipling a community – we're not mavericks, on our own, getting our musical jollies while we court the crowd. Pastors have a tough job. We must embrace them, support them, encourage them, and serve them as worship leaders.

Always honor your pastor, in public and private.

In both public and private, speak well of your leaders. In private prayer, pray for them in areas that you believe are blind spots. God may change them. He may also change you. He may change an entire congregation. Pray more than you say, and take your role as a servant to your pastor. Your humility will inspire them to greater heights.

Put yourself in their shoes.

Every day, a pastor or leader carries a responsibility and calling to nurture the whole of the church they lead. They are aware of all the issues going on in the community, from the illnesses, to the fears, to the marriages, to the struggles, to the dreams of individuals. As worship leaders, we only see a part of the church, and usually we affirm the people that are most like us. Put yourself in your pastor's shoes, and help care for the whole community you share.

Serve the vision that your pastor has for the community.

Spend time building a co-ministry relationship with your pastor. Listen and ask questions about the vision for the community, and how you can lay down your life to serve that vision. The more the vision that God has spoken to your pastor for the community becomes your own, the greater the strength you will have ministering together to the church you serve.

Keep short accounts, and share honestly and humbly with one another.

Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Build your friendship with your pastor. Your ability to lead is based on your ability to keep relationships that are loving, honest and mutually submitted. Keep humility without apology, and confidence without arrogance, ever before you.

Love the church you lead.

If you don't love the community you lead, then either get out of the

worship leading role or get on your face before God until you do love your church. When we are caught up in "us/them" language, we don't represent the heart of the Groom toward His Bride – the heart that sees all the wrinkles and blemishes, but lavishly loves anyway.

Again, over time people will intuitively know if your worship leading is "taking" from them as an audience, or "giving" to them as a community. Most pastors have had to come to grips with this concept, and the sooner you do, the better for the whole church.

How To Mentor Other Worship Leaders

Raising up worship leaders is both a relational and functional task. The following are just a few quick tips on how to facilitate the growth of a new worship leader:[21]

Co-Lead with Them

This gives them credibility before the congregation, and enables you to prepare, lead and de-brief together. Give them familiar songs to lead for six months to a year, so the congregation learns to trust them.

Spend Time with Them

If the leader is of the same sex, spend time with them doing spiritually important activities like watching a movie, eating food, laughing hard and listening well. If they are of the opposite sex, involve others in these same kinds of activities.

Take Your Time with Them

There is no rush. Give them a little bit of leading room over a long period of time. The issues of pride and identity are dealt with as you take the slow and steady route with a new worship leader.

Share Input with Them

When you lead together, help them choose songs, and show them how you organize the set. Assume that you actually know something about worship leading, and give confident guidance to their unique style. Everyone has something to teach.

Share Friends with Them

Expose them to your mentors via meals, meetings, seminars, DVDs, CDs, or other media. Set up times for others, like the pastor, to comment on their heart, style and skill growth.

Give Gifts to Them

Take a year, and put generosity into your budget. When you have it in your power, buy them gear or music items that remind them of their personal importance to you, and the investment you're willing to make.

A simple pack of strings can go a long way in building your worship leader, and your friendship.

Give Hope to Them

Celebrate the hard process of growth and maturation with the new worship leader. Honestly, but lovingly, point them toward faithfulness above today's vision of "success." Have regular meetings to encourage and to guide them.

Mentoring can be one of the most satisfying and fulfilling parts of your leadership journey. Focusing solely on our own development will not only limit us, but won't serve the Body of Christ of which we are a part for the long haul.

The Mentoring Cycle

Here is something called "The Mentoring Cycle" that can help you think through how to come alongside another worship leader in his/her development. Each of these steps can take many months; even years.

I do it.

You watch me do it.

I teach you to do it.

You do it with me.

I do it with you.

You do it.

You teach others.

Session 6
Reflection Questions

First, if you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

> Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.
>
> How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. How do you believe you could become more effective at mentoring other leaders?

> What areas from the mentoring list do you think you could invest yourself in as you develop other worship leaders?

3. Why is it so important that there be a good and trusting connection between the worship leader and the pastor/small group leader?

> Relationships between leaders are a vital element in making sure a community will engage in rich, life-giving gathered worship experiences in a church. What can you do to strengthen that relationship?

SESSION 7

BECOMING A GREAT WORSHIP LEADER

"I've heard some teaching... about the investment and the enticement. God is trusting us with something in this generation. There's a new wave coming in worship, and it's exciting. You can catch a glimpse of it everywhere you go. But it's a holy thing that we're running with, so keep bowing down.

We keep seeing examples of people who've lost it. They've lost it with the Lord, and have disillusioned other people. So if God trusts you with something, just keep bowing down."[22]

Matt Redman (*Heart Of Worship*)

We never "arrive" as worship leaders. Every time we lead, we learn a little more, we sense a little more and hopefully, we grow a little more. Be a lifelong learner.

Read books. Join WorshipTraining.com. Watch those you respect as worship leaders, and take notes.

Pursue higher education that will deepen you in skills, spiritual leadership, formation, theology, biblical understanding, history and creativity. Take every opportunity to become a more effective worship leader, musician and arranger, as well as becoming a well-read and thoughtful pastoral leader.

From Functional To Effective

We want to move from being simply functional worship leaders, to becoming good worship leaders, and then on to becoming great worship leaders. There are certain qualities that run like a thread through the lives of consistently effective and authoritative worship leaders. Here are a few thoughts from my years partnering with these worship leaders in interdenominational, intergenerational and international settings.

Note: I must note here that not everyone is primarily called by God to be a worship leader. Some worship leaders are primarily servants filling a need that energizes them as well as serves a need. That's a beautiful heart in action.

Some are artists, serving as worship leaders. Nothing is better for an artist's soul than to enjoy the full extent of one's creativity and to lead people to God with accessible music. We all take our place, and serve.

You Can't Learn Calling, But You Can Learn Skill

Others, though, are called to this type of ministry in the Church, and it is clear that the hand of God is on them to effectively and authoritatively lead worship. We can't learn "calling;" we either are called to do it or we are not. Our gifting to lead worship will fall somewhere along a spectrum – embrace and pursue understanding as to where you are, and just be faithful.

Listen closely to God, and the counsel of others, regarding your call to lead.

Then, serve in whatever way you can, without insecurity or fighting for something that God isn't giving. A servant with a role is a servant. A servant without a role… is still a servant.

Growing Toward Greatness

"Whatever your creative expression is, whether you're a wordsmith, or a painter, a dancer or a songwriter, make it a significant and central part of how you communicate with God on your own.

Real life will come to you from that place, though we sometimes separate our devotional experience from that creative aspect of who we are, because we haven't been taught how to marry them together.

Make your personal expression your devotional experience."[23]

David Ruis (*You Are Worthy Of My Praise*)

How do you grow as a worship leader? The reality is that the more experience you gain leading worship, the more effective you may become. Sometimes we only reinforce bad habits over time, though, so a roadmap of some sort can be helpful.

There is no silver bullet for growth – growing as a disciple, growing as a spiritual leader, growing as a musician, growing as a pastor, growing as a lead worshiper, growing as a songwriter and growing as a human being all are factors in the development of a great worship leader. Every wedding you play at, funeral you sing for, and small group you lead into worship adds to your experience and wisdom base.

The old maxim states, "If you don't have a target, you're sure to hit it." It does help our progress when we have a solid goal in mind. The following thoughts on what makes a good worship leader into a great worship leader will aid you in setting goals for your development.

Great Worship Leaders... are consistent.

Anyone can lead a great worship moment every once in awhile. The strongest worship leaders have a knack for consistently leading worship, in small groups, large groups, conferences, etc., in an effective and meaningful way.

> *Great worship leaders* have learned how to build a worship set in a consistent and systematic way, without feeling like they're quenching the Spirit of God if they prepare for spontaneity.
>
> *Great worship leaders* are not afraid to do 6 or 7 songs over a half an hour, instead of stretching out 4 or 5. In other words, they know how to start and finish songs with confidence, and how to linger if the moment calls for it.
>
> *Great worship leaders* know how to make the lion's share of a set out of songs that are fresh yet familiar, God-centered and easily sung by all age groups.
>
> *Great worship leaders* know how to finish a song without feeling a need to meander, and know how to start another song with confidence.
>
> *Great worship leaders* know how to gracefully transition between songs in a set, without jarring the congregation musically. Flow is important to them, and each song prepares you, in some way, to engage with the next.

Great worship leaders know how to let the songs lead worship and give the worshiper language for worship. They feel no pressure to say-a-lot or pray-a-lot to keep energy flowing.

Great worship leaders know how to execute a set, without being too sensitive to, or influenced by, the faces or dispositions they see in the congregation.

Great worship leaders know how to choose the right song when asked to play for an offering, a funeral, or to end a conference with a time of celebration. They have a large, diverse catalog of worship songs in their memory bank; not just in their song binder.

Great Worship Leaders… are equippers.

The most appreciated worship leaders have a streak of a trainer and mentor running through them. They are not content to have the platform all to themselves over a few years. They are always looking for those they can train, mentor and release, either inside or outside of that local congregation. They are secure in the gift they offer, and in the face of the gifts that others offer.

Great worship leaders know how to enjoy the process of building lifelong friendships with developing worship leaders – particularly those who value their input, are relationally loyal, and share like-mindedness on many levels.

Great worship leaders know how to co-lead with someone, and how to pre-brief and de-brief while all the while sustaining a confident atmosphere for the developing worship leader.

Great worship leaders know how to mentor over time, without feeling any pressure to release people to lead worship before they are developed musically, emotionally or skillfully.

Great worship leaders are not afraid to address the pride that comes with youth, talent, and musical platform.

Great worship leaders are capable of listening to, and learning from, a younger leader.

Great worship leaders know how to invite a young worship leader to fall in love with the community who they lead, and to call them to either love the church they lead – or to step away from the microphone.

Great worship leaders know how to vulnerably share their story as a worship leader, and how to encourage younger leaders to learn from their mistakes.

Great worship leaders know how to become older brothers and sisters in worship leading, and not to simply protect themselves in the "always-leading" worship leadership role.

Great Worship Leaders… are pastoral.

These worship leaders have a wider skill-set than just playing an instrument, leading worship and leading a band. Most churches cannot afford such a limited capability in a new staff member. Most pastors and leaders I know are looking for worship leaders stirred by Kingdom passion, and motivated by pastoral love for the church.

Great worship leaders are flexible. They can lead worship in a home group, or lead the devotional time, or speak before the church on Sunday morning if asked.

Great worship leaders know their scriptures, know how to sensitively pray for a cancer patient in a hospital, and know how to pray for a congregation in the midst of a building program.

Great worship leaders actually care for, and shepherd, their worship teams.

Great worship leaders "pastor" the congregation as they lead worship. It is clear to the church that the worship leader is not primarily in front to express his or her musical preferences in worship. There is a keen sense that the worship leader is there for them to have a meaningful connection with God.

Great worship leaders know when to ask someone to join a team, because their hearts are right, and how to ask someone to take a break because their hearts are askew from the central mandate of the team – to serve.

Great worship leaders read the scriptures, history, theology and classic Church writers in order to understand what makes and breaks the people of God. That learning finds its way into everything from the prayers uttered between songs, to the songs selected each set.

Great Worship Leaders… are proficient.

Worship leaders who play their instrument well have a much longer sustainability factor within a changing congregation than do those who are weak technically and cannot handle a diversity of demographic needs in a local community.

Great worship leaders are able on their instrument. They are not always the most proficient musician on the team; in fact, they are sometimes the least! However, they can lead the band confidently with what they do know, and are confident in their skill level.

Great worship leaders have just enough arranging ability to take a rag tag team, intuitively know what songs they can pull off

smoothly (and what songs they simply cannot), and make them sound sweet together with simple arrangements.

Great worship leaders practice privately, and keep their own chops up personally or with lessons. They listen to fresh songs impacting the church, integrate them as possible, and gain fresh musical ideas from them.

Great worship leaders love the old and the new, and seek to integrate the riches of the historic hymns (and ethnic expressions) with the jewels of contemporary worship music. They see the whole of church worship music, throughout the ages, as one body of work to be drawn on in appropriate occasions.

Great worship leaders have hundreds of songs in their mental arsenal, having led them over the course of many years. In a multi-church event, a spontaneous moment, or a ministry time, they can draw on a song that will fit the bill for the whole community.

Great worship leaders… understand authority.

These worship leaders understand what mutual submission is all about. They recognize the mantle that the lead pastor carries for the congregation, and they do all they can to defer to, and support, that leader.

Great worship leaders know how to honor time limits, ask teachable questions, and share the pastor's vision for the church in song selection and event preparation.

Great worship leaders do not push their way into worship leading or other roles – they offer their gifts, and then allow God to make a place for them to lead. They are not pushy or forceful – they are

centered, and full of trust in God to make a place for their leadership.

Great worship leaders graciously receive input, and even pursue it – especially from the lead pastor and worshipers in the congregation.

Great worship leaders… are passionate.

The passionate will always lead, no matter the sphere or situation. Inspiring worship leaders carry a blend of passion and restraint in their toolbox. The leader's hunger for God, evidenced in an honest and vulnerable worship leading style, is irreplaceable, and evident to all.

At the same time that passionate worship is the hallmark of their leadership, great worship leaders are very keen in knowing when to push the envelope in worship, and when to hold back – even when their own emotions are running high.

Great worship leaders are exuberant, without becoming cheerleaders. In other words, they approach the moment of worship with enthusiasm, yet that enthusiasm is tempered with gentleness and a lack of need to generate outward emotion from the congregation to feel that they've done their job.

Great worship leaders can separate their personal emotional state from what the moment calls for in the group they are leading (I don't know that this art is learned by any other mode than longevity of worship leading experience).

Great worship leaders love the secret place. These worship leaders will never let go of their personal, private times of worship before God. They understand that their public authority as a worship leader is built on this ongoing, private integrity as a worshiper.

Great Worship Leaders… are committed to the community.

Great worship leaders are intent on creating an effective space for people to meet with God through the medium of music, sacred actions (communion, etc.), and other means. Great worship leaders do not expect the congregation to be a captive audience for their own musical exploits.

> *Great worship leaders* know that they are there for the community – the community is not just there for them.
>
> *Great worship leaders* know how to discern the difference between a song that is a corporate worship song, and one that is an artist's expression. They are after the widest community encounter with God possible, yet are deeply aware of the power of artistic complexity in specific contexts.
>
> *Great worship leaders* can pull out a children's song, a celebrative song, an intimate ballad – whatever is required in the moment.

Make it your vision to be the most effective worship leader you know, making it easy for the heart cry of the community of God to find its way out of their hearts, and before the One they love. Then, train others around you to be great in the same high calling.[24]

Session 7
Reflection Questions

First, if you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

> Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.
>
> How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. Name a worship leader for whom you have a high respect. How does he or she embody some of the qualities of a great worship leader spoken about in this session?

> What qualities do you see that worship leader modeling? Which qualities draw you to their leadership?

3. What is one next step you could take toward "greatness" in one of the areas mentioned in this session?

> Growth begins with the next decision. What is just one area in what you studied in this session that connected with you, and motivated you to want to grow?

SESSION 8

AN HONORABLE TASK

"Every day I wake up, and I thank God for the great, grand Story in which I find myself.

To lead others, through music and art, into a place of gratefulness, response and intimacy with Christ is a lifelong privilege.

I will never take it for granted, whether I am leading in a church, a living room, a recording studio or a hospital room.

It is a privilege to lead worship, and it's not mine to hold on to too tightly."

Dan Wilt

You've chosen an exciting and dangerous task. This little booklet is your survival manual. *Do you accept your mission?*

At the beginning of this booklet, we asked a few questions. What's so exciting about worship leading? Using the medium of the music we love, we have the privilege of leading people into the greatest adventure a

human being can undertake – the journey into the heart of God.

What's so dangerous about worship leading? In a culture that idolizes musicians and elevates emotions, we stand in front of people, behind a microphone, up on a stage, influencing people. Our own hearts sing louder than our musical instruments, and our true character touches people in ways we never before thought possible. I can lead worship, and you can lead worship, without being a rock star.

As You Move Forward As A Worship Leader

As you move forward as a worship leader, know that God and all of heaven will be behind you as you join the ranks of those who have chosen to honor God, and serve His people, by leading worship. From the passion within your heart, lead with skill, integrity, honesty and humility.

Learn from your mistakes along the way, be teachable and humble, and expect God to deepen you as a person as He strengthens you as a lead worshiper.

Watch effective worship leaders and analyze what they do, how they do it, and most importantly – *why* they are doing it. What is motivating them? What is their story as a worship leader?

Lead worship knowing that every person you lead, whether in a living room or in a stadium, was designed for this high privilege – to worship the living God with their lives. We can nurture that expression of life worship by leading well in our gathered worship settings.

Bless you as you rise to the privilege of leading worship in the beautiful part of the historic Body of Christ that is your community.

Session 8
Reflection Questions

1. Review Sessions 1-7. What key themes jump out at you the most when it comes to your own development?

> What is next for you? What have you learned from this study that you are ready to begin applying?

2. In what ways do you believe you are already a "great" worship leader? In what areas do you need help growing into?

> Greatness in worship leadership is acquired over time, and with much experience. Where are you at, in your mind, when you read over all the sessions?

3. What choices could you make, even this year, to become a better worship leader?

> Think about the suggestions made for becoming more effective at what you do as a worship leader. Where are your growth areas? What decisions can you make, right now, to move ahead one little step in each of those areas?

ENDNOTES

1 Brian Doerksen, *Personal Interview*, Winter 2000.

2 Andy Park, *Personal Interview*, Winter 2000.

3 This information is drawn from a variety of sources, including VineyardMusic.com, VineyardChurches.org.uk, Vineyard.ca and VineyardUSA.org websites.

4 Ibid.

5 Dan Wilt, *Contemporary Worship*, unpublished manuscript (Nashville: Broadman Holman Publishers, 2006), 20.

6 Eugene Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 2054.

7 Brian Doerksen, *Personal Interview*, Winter 2000.

8 Ibid.

9 Eugene Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 1741-1742.

10 Brenton Brown, *Personal Interview*, Fall 2002.

11 Dan Wilt, "The Sound Of Your Life," in *Inside Worship Magazine: Walking In Holiness*, Vol. 46 (Feb. 2002), 6.

12 John Wimber, "The Values Of A Worship Leader," in *Inside Worship Magazine: Walking In Holiness*, Vol. 46 (Feb. 2002), 12.

13 Andy Park, "Developing A Worship Team," in *Worship Update*, 1st

Quarter (1997), 1.

14 Kathryn Scott, *Personal Interview*, Fall 2002.

15 Dan Wilt, adapted from "The Phases Of Worship Leading," unpublished article, 1994.

16 Tim Hughes, *Personal Interview*, Fall 2000.

17 Eugene Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 2123.

18 Bruce Ellis, "Rehearsal Hall Etiquette," in *Inside Worship Magazine: Building The Local Worship Experience*, Vol. 45 (Oct. 2001), 6.

19 Brian Doerksen, *Personal Interview*, Winter 2000.

20 Ibid.

21 Dan Wilt, "Mentoring A Worship Leader," in *Inside Worship Magazine: Building The Local Worship Experience*, Vol. 45 (Oct. 2001), 14.

22 Matt Redman, *Personal Interview*, Spring 1999.

23 David Ruis, *Personal Interview*, Spring 2003.

24 Dan Wilt, adapted from "Great Worship Leaders," in *Inside Worship Magazine: The Life To Life Exchange*, Vol. 56 (June 2005), 6.


wildpear

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DAN WILT, M.MIN. is one of today's most respected leaders in the area of worship leader and artist development. With over 20 years of experience as a worship leader, songwriter, pastor, recording artist, mentor, author, communicator, radio host, and media resource developer, Dan digs deep to form 21st century worship leaders.

He is the founder of WorshipTraining.com (a training network of thousands worldwide), the Worship & Arts Institute, and has trained worship leaders globally. Dan served as the Worship Resource Development Specialist of Vineyard Music, and as the editor of Inside Worship Magazine.

He is an adjunct professor with various colleges, universities and seminaries in worship and creative leader formation, and leads ancient-future and instrumental worship via the hammered dulcimer.

Dan lives with his wife Anita and three children, Anna, Abigail, and Benjamin in Franklin, TN USA.

More of Dan's video, audio and written training resources can be found online at:

www.EssentialsCourse.com

www.WorshipTraining.com

For speaking or concert events, Dan can be contacted at:

danwiltevents@gmail.com