wildpear

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HOW TO LEAD WORSHIP

AN 8 WEEK STUDY

WITHOUT BEING A ROCK STAR



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?