Way to go!

You've already demonstrated a commitment to your personal leadership, to the development of your church and to the discipleship of people on your worship teams by beginning with this book. You're showing that you're concerned about improving what you do and how you do it and you should get a big ol' fist bump for that one! Way to go.

The process laid out in this book is put together from my experience as a worship leader and pastor in full time ministry since 2003. I've auditioned hundreds of musicians and singers along the full spectrum of talent from delusional to professional. (Those delusional ones.. you know what I'm talking about!)

My hope is that my process will inspire you to think about *your process* and your church will thrive because of it. Remember that part of your job is development - developing yourself, developing people and developing your teams - and so you can think of the audition process as a way to develop from within.

I'm convinced that you'll take what I've written here and make it even better for your own context! I can't wait to see the impact your refined audition process will have in your church. I'm cheering you on!

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Introduction

One of the beautiful, difficult realities of having a leadership role is evaluation. We are asked to evaluate new ideas alongside existing realities. Leaders are constantly evaluating where things are and where things could be. Leaders are asked to evaluate people, events and systems at every stage along the way.

When it comes to a leadership role in worship ministry, evaluation can take on some added complexity. We are sometimes asked to evaluate someone based on their ability, their talent and what they have to offer our church. While this seems like an easy task in principle it won't take you long to figure out that all kinds of circumstances can contribute to the complexity of evaluation.

Auditions are one of the ways worship leaders are asked to evaluate. We are evaluating the ability and compatibility of someone who has a desire to lead our church in worship.

This responsibility for evaluation is part of the role of the leader and you mustn't run from it, you can't apologize for it and you should never be afraid of it. God has called you, equipped you and empowered you to lead in the context where you are leading and part of that leadership is evaluation. Leaders must live out their leadership in many ways and evaluation is one of those ways.

The catch is often *how* do we evaluate, *what* do we evaluate and *where* are we trying to lead people. If we don't have answers for those questions it will make our responsibility for evaluation difficult and the people who we are leading will be confused, disappointed and eventually disillusioned with your leadership. Ain't nobody got time for that!

In our evaluation if we focus exclusively on ability, we will have a team of great sounding musicians who may or may not get along, who may or may not care about the greater mission of our church and who may or may not have their hearts in the right place. "They're a killer player!" is never reason enough to let someone play on your worship team.

If we focus exclusively on compatibility, we will have a team of nice people who love to serve but you probably won't have many people in your church telling their friends about how great the music sounds. "They have a great heart!" is never reason enough to let someone play on your worship team.

There has to be a balance.
Ability with compatibility.
Skill and soul.
Competency and chemistry.
Hands and heart.

When I talk about this with people on our worship teams I will often bring them to Psalm 78. Through the psalm we read the cyclical story of

God's faithfulness, Israel's disobedience, their repentance, God's forgiveness and God's continued faithfulness.

Psalm 78 ends with this verse: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them."

See it? Heart and hands. Soul and skill. Capability and character. Both are important.

If we're honest, ability is fairly easy for most of us to evaluate. Can they sing? Do they have good tone? Do they care about having quality gear? Are they able to match harmonies?

Compatibility can be a harder thing to evaluate but it is just as important when it comes to the formation of our worship teams. In fact, compatibility may have more impact on the long-term success of our worship team and the worship culture of our church than ability on its own.

What you've read so far is a pretty good description of the *why* behind our audition process so let's talk about the *how*. Your *how* will probably not be exactly like mine and that's okay. We don't need clones but take what we're going to talk about in the next few pages and make it work for your own context. Make sure you get to the *why* of what you're trying to do and the *how* will come from that.