8 Tips On Taking Your Sunday Morning Worship To The Next Level

by Mark Cole

I love leading God's people in worship. I have been blessed to have led church worship teams at home and around the world for over twenty-five years. Here are a few things that I have learned along that way.



1. Pick Great Songs

Picking great songs of worship is so important. They should be singable, memorable, Biblical and inspirational. Great songs of worship have a God dynamic all their own.

Check out my blog on "*What I Have Learned About Picking New Songs For Worship*". Here are the main points from that blog:

- Learn to pick great songs not just doable songs.
- One of the tests of a great song is that you catch yourself singing it by yourself
- Great songs have the Spirit of God resting on them
- Pick great songs from around the world… not just your favorite band.
- CCLI Top 200 SongSelect List is an invaluable list to choose from
- Great Writers: Find out who the top writers are and listen and learn from them
- Keep a balanced repertoire: You need fast, medium and slow tunes.
- Repeat the new songs: I always do new songs three times in the first month.
- Put songs in singable keys: Are you singing them too high or too low?
- Should you do your original song? Is your song a good to great song?
- Does the song work with just a simple acoustic guitar or piano?
- Generally speaking, it's not a good idea to start or end with a new song.

2. Put Great Songs in a Great Order

I have found that congregation's often rush to church, just trying to get there on time and are often unfocused on God. One of my jobs is to pick great songs that help get them focused on God as soon as possible. That usually works best by finding an up-tempo worship tune that is easy to sing and gets them engaged as soon as possible.

I usually have a half hour to do worship in a Sunday morning service, so for my team, that means five songs. My general rule of thumb is to do two up-tempo songs…often more praise orientated…and often the second song is slightly faster than the first one. Then I do a strong medium tempo transition song and then end with two powerful worship songs that are sung directly to God.

This general guideline helps the congregation go from focusing and singing about God to worshipping God directly. It is not meant to be a formula but an overriding time proven way, to help achieve the goal of getting the congregation to focus their hearts and worship on God.

3. Have Great Rehearsals

I normally have two and half hours of band rehearsal for every thirty minutes of worship time. The goal is to get so proficient at doing the music that you do not have to think about the music during the live worship time. You need to get past just performing music to focusing on and worshipping God!

My normal practice is to have a strong, two hour midweek rehearsal (Thursday night is my favourite) and then a forty-five minute rehearsal on Sunday morning. These rehearsal times gives everyone time to learn the music properly and work out any problem areas. (Check out my blog: What I've Learned About Running A Worship Band Rehearsal)

4. Work on Great Sound & Media

A good soundman can make or break you! There is no use having great songs and rehearsals if the sound mix is not working for the congregation. I have learned that putting the drums in a full cage generally helps gets the best overall mix. Also, putting baffles around guitar amps and putting the band on in-ear-monitors really helps the soundman. I also try to take a Sunday off the stage once a month to listen to the front-of-house mix.

In the same way, having a media person who is on top of the projected lyrics is huge. Besides having the lyric screen up front for the congregation, I also have a large screen at the back of the auditorium for the singers to see the lyrics.

If you can have the soundman giving you a great mix and the media operator giving the lyrics at the right time. You have a strong sound and visual foundation on which to work off!

5. Put God First

Worshipping God is a daily lifestyle. If you are just worshipping God on Sunday morning, you are living a subpar Christian lifestyle. Sunday mornings should just be the tip of the iceberg! If you honor God daily by reading His word, praying, worshipping and spending time with Him; He will honor you by showing up Sunday morning in your corporate worship times!

I am fairly capable of putting together a good band and list of songs. But only God can touch people's hearts and heal their bodies and minds! Put God first in your daily life and He will show up in powerful ways in your Sunday morning corporate worship! (Check out: Three Ways To Put God First In Your Life)

Also, put God first in your actual worship time. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the music, transitions and the mechanics of leading and playing that we don't focus on the main thing: God! God is why we come together. God is why we sing great songs and worship. God is the reason. Don't allow the distractions of live

music get in the way of worshipping God with all your heart and leading your congregation to do the same! (check out: 'Where Is Your Brain On Sunday Morning?')

6. Memorize Your Music
There are few things worse than seeing a worship leader and team whose eyes are glued to the music. When you memorize the music, you can communicate better with the congregation and with God! To get past the music, you need to memorize it and know it so well that you do not have to think about it! Great teams and leaders memorize the music so that they can worship freely!

(Check out my blog: "What I've Learned About Memorizing Music For Worship")

7. Worship God With All Your Heart
The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. This includes worshipping God with your actions. The actions of Biblical worship include singing, clapping, raising our hands, dancing, bowing and shouting. We serve an awesome God who created every good thing that we enjoy. He is worthy of passionate worship.

Never let yourself just go through the motions of just singing a song. Be a passionate worshipper who loves and worships God with all you have. Learn to incorporate all the actions of worship into your personal and corporate worship!

8. Be A Great Example To Your Congregation
I have found that congregations tend to mirror the passion of the worship team. If the people up front are full of passion and energy for worshipping God, the congregation tends to lift their worship to a higher level.

We have the opportunity to be passionate examples of worshippers to our congregation. If they see you and the team worshipping God with your whole heart soul, mind and strength on a weekly basis, they will grow in their passion for worship.

If you lead, they will follow. It sometimes does not happen immediately, but that is what worship leadership is about. A big part of leadership is helping people grow in their passion and worship of God. Learn to be a passionate worshipper of God, on and off the stage. Be authentic and do not lose your passion for loving and worshiping God with all your heart! (for more on this, check out my blogs: "Actions Speak So Loud" & "Attitude Is Everything")

Question: What things have you done that have helped your congregation grow in your corporate worship times?

::

Mark Cole: Jesus follower, Husband, Father, Worship Leader, Writer, Pastor, Church Consultant, Founding Arranger for Praisecharts.com, squash & tennis player, blogger & outdoor enthusiast (biking, hiking, skiing).



The article above and many additional insights may be found on Mark's blog at http://markcole.ca/

Check out Mark's new book - "Leading Worship ~ Notes from a Grand Adventure" available in Kindle or Soft Cover Editions. This is a great gift for the musician or worshipper in your life.