Leading Worship For Small Groups (7 Simple Rules)
by Rick Muchow

This article is written specifically for leading worship for Small Groups, however these principles apply to every worship setting. From my experience, if a worship leader can lead worship in a small group setting they will have no trouble in larger ones. Applying these Simple Rules to your worship leading will greatly increase the response and participation of the people you are leading.

Over the years I have led worship for many small groups. I love it! Almost every small group I have led worship for has been grateful for the music as if they had a deep hunger to worship together in their intimate setting. One thing I have found in common with vibrant Small Groups is that they worship together. These groups find a way to sit together during most weekend worship services, attend Nights Of Worship, talk about worship, include worship in their group time and more. However many groups, sadly, have yet to discover or incorporate this missing jewel.

The two most significant barriers to having meaningful worship in the small group are musical leadership and the misconception that worship is synonymous with music. Biblical Worship is, of coarse, more than music and is not synonymous with it (see Romans 12). The essence of worship is faith not the soundtrack! Biblical Worship is Faith Expressed! There are many ways to worship God without music. However, one of the most common, most beautiful, most effective ways to express faith corporately involves music.

"Music is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us." Martin Luther

Here are some practical tips for leading worship with music in the small group gathering.

1. CALM FEARS.
If public speaking is the number one fear of most adults then public singing was overlooked in the survey! Most people like to sing but prefer to vocalize privately or in a setting where their individual voice will not be noticed. Getting people to sing in a small group can be a challenge. An affable worship leader encourages participation by intentionally gaining the group's trust.
Being friendly, relaxed and likable will help calm fears about the "singing" part of the worship time.
Worship leaders should avoid making direct eye contact with the group members while singing words directed to God. Staring in general makes people nervous but during singing it can be particularly weird. Picture singing the words "I love you, Lord" while staring directly at someone just five feet away from you. Direct eye contact is important when you are speaking to the group but will feel awkward to others while singing in a small setting.

Simple Rule: be caring without staring

2. CHOOSE FRIENDLY
Use songs that are group friendly: familiar, well liked and in sing-able keys. Singing gets better with confidence. Confidence grows with familiarity. Avoid using songs that are unfamiliar, hard to learn and difficult to sing. Another way to be friendly is to put the song in the right key. Most groups stop singing when the key is too high. This is because many people have to sing louder when they sing higher. Some can't reach the high notes and most people become self-conscious if they hear their voices above the rest and will stop singing. Simple Rule: Use familiar songs and friendly keys.

3. CONTROL VOLUME
People follow voices! Be careful not to drown out the voices with your guitar or other accompaniment. There's a difference between louder and energy.
Simple rule: Sing brighter and strum lighter. Your guitar can be louder than you realize.

4. CONTEXTUALIZE SONGS
Participation will increase when the group relates to the song. The worship leader can share interesting facts about the song: what the song means to them personally, it's scriptural reference or how it relates to the group study.
Simple Rule: Plan your speaking and be brief.

5. CONNECT GROUP
The goal of group singing is connection: connection with God and each other. Music is a language that speaks directly to the soul. The worship leader's job is to make the introduction and then stay out of the way.
Simple Rule: Focus on connecting not performing.

6. COME PREPARED
Know your music and sing from the overflow. The bible says, "If we are leaders we should do our best." (Rom 12:8) The Worship Leader should know their music and words well enough that their leading is easy for the group to follow. Effective worship leaders are more than just skilled troubadours. The Worship Leader must have an authentic relationship with the Father, faithfully living a life of worship.
Simple Rule: Leading worship with music requires Spiritual and Musical preparation.

7. CONTINUE PRAYING
Think of singing to God as a form of prayer. Don't just play your songs. Pray them. People respond to sincere prayers especially in an intimate group setting. Be aware of those you are leading while staying focused on the conversation with God while singing. Approach worship leading as more of a prayer time than "Special Music" or a mini concert.

Simple Rule: Pray and Play.

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Please visit www.rickmuchow.com for more worship resources from Rick.