

As a small group worship leader, your role is **no less important** than the main stage worship leader. You are creating space for God and you are helping to form people as they worship. After 25 years of leading worship, many of my favorite memories are leading songs to groups of 3-10 people in a living room.

There is so much to say about this critical role in the Church, but here are **some unique points I stress to every new small group worship leader I train**.

Five practical ideas for every small group worship leader:

1. Set a Mood

Worship leadership has **more than just songs** and singing to consider. Think about the physical space. Working with your host and group leader, get the couches, chairs, and lighting best for the group (this might be different than the normal layout). Try to face as much seating as possible pointed away from the entry point(s) and face chairs towards one another. Dim, or turn off the overhead lights, turn on some lamps and light some candles.

BIG IDEA: *A small group worship leader helps create a physically inviting and worshipful environment.*

2. Stand Opposite the Main Entry Point of the Room

In order to minimize distraction for the group, consider standing facing the main entry point to the room. People facing you will not be as distracted when people arrive or step out. Since it's a small group just one person making a move will cause focus to turn to them. Do the best you can to help folks avoid distraction.

BIG IDEA: *A small group worship leader strategically places themselves in the room to help remove distractions.*

3. Sing with Clarity and Boldness

Leading songs without amplification has unique challenges. There can be crying babies, coffee grinding, and kitchen chatting competing with the focus. Try to articulate and be clear with every word and phrase.

Be clear and direct at the beginning of each phrase; sometimes I put a little rush on the first syllable. This is a subtle but important factor to small group singing that can help people engage the lyric more fully because everybody will better anticipate the first word of the next line. Use your body and facial countenance to lead into each section. Consider cueing the ensuing lines, especially in the beginning of the songs.

BIG IDEA: *Sing lyrics with conviction and confidence, often times in front of the beat*.

4. Plan Songs with Simplicity and Repetition in Mind

Some worship songs are more lyrically dense than others. Assuming you are not projecting or handing out lyrics,* consider choosing songs that have less overall words. Here are some approaches:

- Use songs that have melodic and lyrical anchors “Great are You Lord, Great are you Lord”
- Start with the chorus and repeat it.
- Repeat verse sections. Repeat chorus sections.
- Consider dropping whole sections of the song if they are too wordy or complicated.
- Leave intentional space in the songs. Breathe.

* I would discourage the temptation to set up screens, PowerPoint on TVs or handing out song sheets for small groups. What did the church do for centuries before printed sheets and electricity? Can you connect with those historic roots and turn off visual media?

BIG IDEA: *Choose and arrange songs for your small group that are simple and memorable.*

5. Sing Really Soft and Really Loud

One of my favorite parts about small group worship is the invitation explore volume dynamics in worship. You can simply strum a chord once and start to sing without constantly strumming. You can and should lead “fast” songs, don’t be afraid to be loud together! Within songs, you can make verses whisper while choruses explode. As long as you are INTENTIONAL and CLEAR, people will follow.

BIG IDEA: *In a small group, allow your musical worship to be both loud and soft; use your instrument and voices explore every dynamic possibility.*



My name is Mike O'Brien and I am passionate about teaching and mentoring through music. My calling is to use my experience as a producer, worship leader, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist to come alongside musicians, helping them more fully worship God with their instrument and lives. Find out more how I can help your worship leaders and teams HERE.