THE WORSHIP MUSICIAN



5 Important Roles of The Worship Vocalist

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Contents

1. The Role of The Worship Vocalist

2. Attitude In All Things

3. The Melody and The Harmony

4. The Vocalist Leads

5. The "Solid" Vocalist

1: The Role Of The Worship Vocalist

Singers have such a centralized and important role in any musical setting. A singer communicates the song's meaning and focus that the songwriter wants to convey to the listener. So how is the role of the singer different in the worship setting? That's what we'll discuss briefly in this chapter and the in next corresponding chapters.

The worship vocalist is a very important role in the worship setting. And a worship vocalist can have more than one role to convey the lyrical content and emotion of a song in different ways. There are melodic vocals and harmonic vocals. Tenor, Alto, Baritone, and Bass vocal parts. Or, in some settings, a singer that merely sings textures and vocalizations.





So what about the role of the worship vocalist?

The worship vocalist definitely has to require the most basic roles of the singer. So what is the different role of the worship vocalist? The answer flows into the worship vocalist's focus not only on being technically sound. But being spiritually sound as well. Even though we will concentrate on some technical aspects of singing in the worship context. We will also focus on the spiritual aspects, that I believe, are important as well.

As a worship vocalist, your worship leader is not only looking for a singer that can sing the music well. But also a vocalist that co-leads in the worship service. So in this aspect, your role as a worship vocalist, is in fact, different than any role you might have in a mainstream band that plays on Friday nights around town. A worship vocalist is a different vocalist's role, and a very important one in the worship band.

With this brief but important tutorial. We will focus on five important things that I believe are some of the most essential aspects of a worship vocalist.

1. Knowing and defining your role as a worship vocalist (Explained in this chapter)
2. Attitude of the worship vocalist.
3. Focus on the melody and where to sing harmony parts (Why this is important to divide)
4. Leading worship (Along with the worship leader) as a vocal team member.
5. Focusing on solid singing instead of flashy singing.

These are five very important focus points that I wanted to accentuate in this brief eBook. I have always benefited from many teacher's brief lecture points in the past. Memorization and reference are key. Also for the fact that so many points can be consolidated into the same topics while getting the essential teachings across.





The worship vocalist adds an essential part of the worship team when they are of sound technical ability and spiritual focus. Knowing your role as a worship vocalist will enhance a worship service not only for you and your team. But for the congregation itself.

Take these next brief chapters to heart and meditate on the spiritual examples. The worship vocalist is a great piece of the band when focusing on the teachings Jesus gave us on humility and worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth. That combined with excellent technical ability can do incredible things in the worship service as the spirit moves and is ultimately glorified in these disciplines.

I wish you the very best on your journey to becoming sharper in your ability as a vocalist and as a follower of Christ. And I hope these words give you a broader understanding of what it means to be a worship vocalist.

2: Attitude In All Things

Many have read the verse about the humility of Christ. But do we really understand it? I've quoted this verse quite a bit in other books and in other tutorials. It's a verse that deserves our study and application. It is a verse written so eloquently by the apostle Paul on the attitude that every worship musician and human should have. So for our study. Here it is.

Philippians 2:3-8 New International Version (NIV)

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.
5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:





6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

This passage gives us the quintessential guidance on attitude. Jesus exemplified the mindset we should strive for.

Worship services and rehearsals can be stressful to many. We will be stretched and pulled to show our strengths and weaknesses in times of trial. The attitude of Christ is an example of great strength in trial. He was and is the ultimate example of grace under pressure.

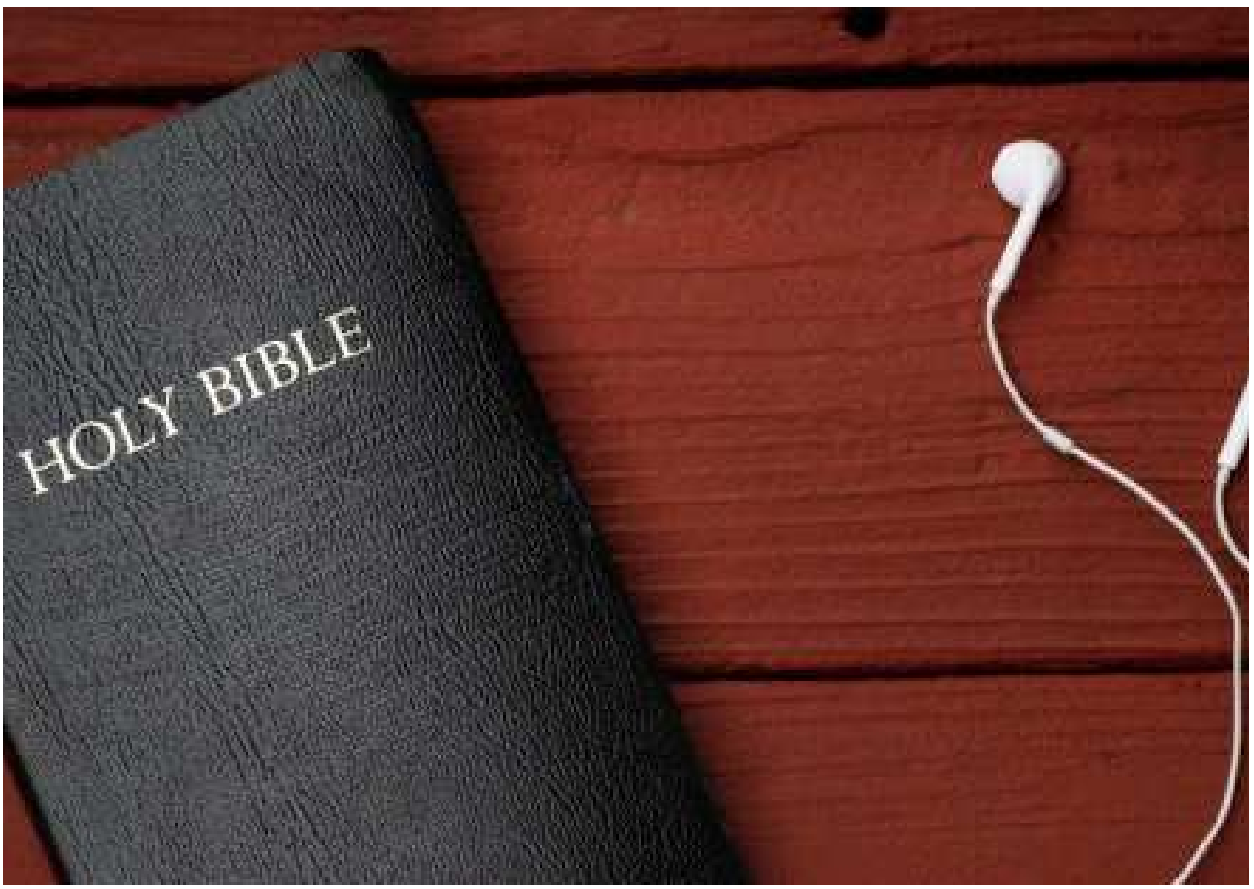
You will be tested in times of trial. And many times will you hear the voice of self beckoning you to demand your role be increased in a worship service. It is our nature. And a nature that we must be constantly be at war with. It can be tiring, especially for musicians. We struggle with the attitude of Christ because we are on a stage. A stage not designed for our glory. But for God's alone. A stage not designed to display the full range of our gifts. But to display the glory of God through us.

Jesus was on one of the grandest stages in human society of its time. The Roman empire was one of the grandest kingdoms at the time of Jesus and Jerusalem was its jewel. Jesus's popularity and audience grew exponentially after he began his ministry. While obviously, it turned to negative listeners as well as those who followed his teachings. Jesus understood this stage. He took it with great responsibility and became a servant to both his critics and followers alike. He did this all while being the creator of everything. The universe in all its 13 billion light years in measurement and billions of people populating the earth. He created it all. Everything. And yet, he humbled himself on the grandest stage in the universe. All while being fully the creator of all things and being fully human. Subject to every temptation and doubt. But Jesus prevailed and was without sin. He was victorious over his humanity and proved his deity.



7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

While on our stage, we can be victorious over ourselves. Humble our hearts like our Lord and Savior and have this mind of Christ. The death to our selfish ambitions, while being worship leaders, demand this attitude of Jesus. It is actually imperative and a prerequisite of leading on a stage that can easily become a desire for us to become greater. But our greatness lies in the attitude of Jesus and to the death of self. This is our worship of the one true God.



3: The Melody and The Harmony

There is such a demand for a vocalist to understand the difference between the melody and the harmony. The reason is because they're used for completely different purposes.

The melody part should be the first thing that any vocalist tackles. Why? Because the melody is the main vocal part that has been written and recorded by the songwriter. It is the vocal part that the listener and congregation will sing in unison in the worship service. It is the vocal part that will be the focus of both the singer and the listener. So therefore, we should master the melody parts.

Harmony parts are also very important parts of the worship vocalist toolbox. And it can take some time to properly master. Harmony parts should be approached with an understanding of where the melody is going first and using the singer's hearing to pick a harmony part that coincides with the melody. Harmonies usually consist of being sung either a 3rd of a step above or below the melody line.

This is why it is important to master the melodies first. After understanding the song's melody, and properly deliberating with the worship leader and team on who will sing what parts and where. Then the worship vocalist can master the harmony parts. But it's significant to master the melody and understand it before moving further.





How to do this? Read below on some questions to ask yourself to improve on this discipline.

How often do you or your vocalists sing with tracks or a metronome?
How often do you or your vocalists sing with a band?
How often do you or your vocalists listen to vocalists that sing solid melody and harmony parts?
Do you or your singers read sheet music with SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) parts?
And have you or your worship leader properly determined what part you'll most likely be singing?

A worship song, is at most, a song that needs a vocalist's discipline. There are so many worship leaders that count on the vocalist to be the co-leader of how energetic and meaningful the songs will be.

The discipline, as described earlier in this chapter, is to see the melody part first and see the harmonies as second. The vocal part should be approached as seeing the melody line as the foundation of the vocal team and vocal arrangement of the song. Also, and according to your part, either Soprano, Alto, Tenor, or Bass. You should choose harmonies according to your vocal range. Sopranos and Tenors usually sing harmonies in tasteful 3rds above the melody. Altos and Basses will usually sing harmonies below the melody line.

Harmonies need to be as such that there are no dissonant or consonant notes conflicting with the instrument chord structure and vocal melody line. This is not so much the pitch of the vocalist but the notes that you are choosing to sing. It is important to learn or choose harmony notes that coincide with the chord structure and vocal melody so that the vocals sound tight and harmonious!

Vocal pitch is also very significant after learning and choosing your vocal part. Vocal pitch is attained with warming up properly and being confident in your vocal part. If you can visualize your vocal part before you sing it. You will be more confident in singing it on pitch. It is also very important that you can hear yourself and your vocal team properly. Then make sure you are singing properly to fortify your vocal chords to stay on pitch.





Since this is more of a tutorial on understanding your role as worship vocalist. We won't go into much depth on the fundamentals of singing properly. But it is very important to learn the basics and fundamentals to strengthen your vocals and create more vocal endurance. There are many great vocal tutorials that go in depth on exercises to help you build your sense of melody and harmony. Plus, they will help with vocal strength and sense of pitch.

Mastering the melody and harmony of the vocal part is very important to take a vocal team to another level of the congregation's worship experience. When you and your worship team take a pragmatic approach in building off the melody part first. Then the harmony parts will naturally build off the knowledge of where the melody is going and where to place the harmonies thereafter.

The worship leader is traditionally the leader of the song's melody. And will sing the melody with the congregation to properly lead in unison and lead the congregation in worship. The vocal team is an added power to the worship leader's vocal presence in lifting praise to God. In doing this, we are in strong agreement with the angels who sing a continuous and harmonious praise to God our creator and redeemer. What a joyous sound our vocal praise of God is and will be forever.

4: The Vocalist Leads

We all see the worship leader, most often, as the lead vocalist of the worship band. But in this chapter, we will be focusing on all of the vocalists in the worship setting together as one. If you're a vocalist in your worship band. You obviously know that the worship leader leads. But we will be talking about the praise team vocals and the vocalist, in the accompaniment sense, in this chapter. Where the vocalist is the secondary role, providing background vocals, harmonies, and secondary vocal parts. Even though I'm saying this is a secondary role to your worship leader's vocals or a main vocal part. It, in essence, isn't really any different.

Why is this? A secondary vocalist or worship team vocalist that's providing the background vocals, melodies, and harmonies in the background is still very much a worship leader. The responsibility of this part is enormous on how the band and congregation interpret the sound and meaning of the song(s). A secondary vocalist is leading with these things.





In a worship band, everyone leads in their own role. But there’s a big difference in why the secondary vocalist leads. The secondary vocalist creates the sound of the vocal presence. Or, how the vocal sound is being presented to the listener and the congregation.

This is why it's important for a vocalist to have an incredible sense of melody. It's also very important for a vocalist to know the song arrangement, dynamics, and particular vocal part. You are not only doing your part to guide the band and congregation in the sound of the song. But also helping lay the road map of where the song is going.

The secondary vocalist leads with his or her understanding of these things. You're the rock of the song(s) presentation and vocal presence. You create the song's vocal layers and vocal background and you lead the way your role as a secondary vocalist directs you to. As the song's vocal sound and presence.

The worship vocalist also leads with an understanding of being a "solid" vocalist. This goes hand in hand of what Chapter 5 will talk about. Being the “solid” vocalist. These all coincide with each other and there’s a big reason why. You’re striving for excellence when you understand the direction of the song both in arrangement and lyrical meaning.

When you understand the song’s direction in its arrangement. You’re saying, “I know where the verse is and what I’m singing to communicate that verse section”. This relates to picking a vocal part and sticking to it. This will help you understand where you're at in the song.

When you understand the song's direction in lyrical meaning. You're saying, "I have read the song lyrics and comprehend what the songwriter wants to convey to God and/or the listener and understand the subject matter within the content of the lyrics." This is an important focus for a vocalist. To not only sing the song or vocal part well. To not only know where you're at in the song. But to know exactly what you're singing and who or what the song is intended for.





As you see and read more in these chapters. I hope you see that the worship vocalist is not only an important part of making the vocals sound good. Or making your vocal part stand out. But I hope you see that the song meaning is just as important to accentuate and you are big part of communicating this to your congregation. These concepts need to be harnessed in a worship vocalist's understanding of how how the secondary vocalist leads worship.

You lead with good presence and with confidence in your arrangements. You also lead by understanding the song's meaning and communicating that to the congregation.

This is how the worship vocalist leads.

5: The "Solid" Vocalist

Solid singing requires musical maturity and practice. And musical maturity and practice come with adjustments. The band and congregation is not only counting on you for this but it will make you a better singer. More trustworthy.

Being a solid vocalist is simply singing with taste that everyone in your worship team and congregation can understand. You might sing more or less but your singing is solid. Your melody lines are simple, yet meaningful, and your harmony part correctly follows the melody. A solo isn't a focus on your best vocal runs. But used sparingly and saved for when they will make the most impact to accentuate a section, part, or particular phrase of lyrics.

The solid vocalist sings solos, when necessary or designated, and has a focus on serving the song, worship leader, worship band, and congregation. The solid vocalist asks the question. What does this song need? Instead of, what can I do to make this song more "vocal like?" Of course, a song should not ever be uninteresting. But it shouldn’t be a vocal solo either.





The vocalist should sing within the song's context. That should be fairly easy to comprehend since a slow song is a slow song. A fast song is a fast song and etc. You will know where melody and harmony lines should be sung and how many of them to sing.

It's important to focus on the simplicity of your singing and where you're at in the song. Being a solid singer is a lot about understanding the road map of the music and not getting lost. I mean, we've all been at this point in the song and had no idea if we're going back to the chorus or to the outtro. But being a solid singer is always knowing where you're at, where you're going, and how the song will end.

So you could say being a solid vocalist is more than just the technical aspects of singing. Absolutely. This all goes back to being reliable. If you wish to give your worship team a boost and flow. Then be a solid vocalist. You're doing your team such a great service by doing so.

The worship vocalist is a solid vocalist. He or she worships with their singing and is not a spectacle on stage to be a distraction to worship of God. There can be only be humility in it. Therefore, solid singing is required.

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