4 Essential Keys To Leading Worship Online
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A huge component of any worship gathering is, well, the gathering. It's the people. In light of the quarantine taking place with most churches it's important that we take a deep breath and consider the challenge ahead for us as the church. It is a shock to the system and learning curve for musicians, techs, and congregations: this will be new for just about everyone!

It's OK to grieve the loss of the physical connection. Don't rush, and don't try to make a virtual meeting more victorious than it is. Nothing will compare to the physical connection of people. That being said, God is not limited. For example, check out this less-than-ideal worship service with Paul and Silas in prison:

> *After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. Acts 16:23-26*

Even in shackles, their worship of Jesus and recognition of his kingdom was established in that less than ideal situation. The same can be true for us. Jesus is established forever, and he will be glorified in the Church. Here are a few things worship leaders can think about when leading worship in this new era:

NAME THE STRANGENESS

This is not business as usual. You can publically acknowledge the uniqueness of the time and format for worship. Look forward to a day when we will be together again. Reflect on times past that were wonderful. Let people know this is new for them—*and* you! Smile. Laugh when things go wrong. Don't feel a greater pressure to perform or be perfect.

> *"Welcome to worship on Facebook Live and YouTube! We are so glad you logged in to participate in worship together. This is a unique time and we recognize this will be hard for some of you. This is new for us, too!"*

GIVE PERMISSION

As a virtual worship leader it's important that you recognize that everyone is watching and participating at their own comfort level. They see you, but you do not see them. Encourage everyone to take postures of worship that might include singing, shouting, lifting hands, bowing down, or kneeling down. For many, this will be the first

time they might feel comfortable worshipping this way. Encourage families (especially families with children) to worship together through dance and physical action.

> *"We encourage you, in the comfort of your own home to worship freely before the Lord. Turn up the music and express your worship to God through song and prayer. Feel free to bow before the Lord or dance with your family. Be free to worship!"*

DO LESS

When you are in a room with people looking at you it's a lot easier to "feel" the room. Since you will not have the sympathetic sounds and vibrations of the room you should assume that you *will* lose people more quickly. Consider a shorter worship set or amend the songs, so they don't carry on too long. If you are fortunate enough to have more production elements (additional cameras or top-notch broadcast audio) you might be able to extend things. But if you are just getting started consider using a smaller worship team rather than immediately trying to get your whole band to broadcast-quality sound.

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

As you move to a regular culture of live streaming there are elements at play that might be new to you. The clothing you wear is much more important (solids are better than stripes). Stage lighting is a bigger deal. Effects like reverb and delay are much more pronounced. All of these little things are simply more important because the two-dimensional expression on the screen is more limiting, and we need to help remove unique obstacles. Also, make sure you watch and review what things actually look and sound like during rehearsal or sound check. You might change your strumming style or your posture based on what you see. Also, ask congregants for their feedback on what could be done better as the weeks progress.

"Difficult times" doesn't mean "impossible times." You can serve your church in this hour, *and* grow as a worship leader!