

Role of praise leaders essay



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This week we have the first of two perspectives on the Role of the Worship Team. I thought we should start by explaining... who is... or should be considered part of the 'worship team'. This may seem rather obvious, but the people on the praise and worship team are those directly involved with the praise and worship. This would include, but is certainly not limited to the singers, musicians, worship leader and the sound, lighting and vision technicians that immediately support the 'on stage' team.

Obviously all of these people must work together to ensure that the service flows to the best it can and the congregation are able to enter worship freely. Any of these team members can either enhance the service, or take away from it. The role of the praise & worship team then is to lead the congregation in worship. Everything that comes from the worship team must have the goal to lead the congregation in worship to God, not to entertain - we need to keep in mind the purpose of leading worship is not to show off my vocal prowess, dexterity on the frets or produce the 'killer' audio mix.

It's about helping people on a journey from walking in the door to a place where they encounter God in a meaningful way. The only way to lead anyone is to first connect with them in some way. Imagine having a conversation with someone who is constantly avoiding your eye contact, continually distracted by the action happening behind you or staring into the 'distant blue yonder'. It could appear as though they weren't paying attention to you, and more than likely you would move on to a conversation with someone else who is interested when they talk with you. By the same token, a worship team who are so engrossed in their own experience of worship, playing their instrument, reading charts or lyrics, paying little or no attention to where the

congregation is at, have forgotten their purpose and are not going to be as effective as they should be... In the majority of churches today the song list is set out in advance and the level of difficulty of songs means that with a few practices of a song during the week prior to a service should give you enough confidence to run without charts & lyrics when the service time arrives. This means that you can actually focus on leading the congregation.

The 'technical team' also has the responsibility to connect with the congregation, as well as connecting with the 'on stage' team, in order to be responsive to changes in monitor levels, mixing to enhance what is musically happening and following any directions from our leadership as to the mix direction. Diversions from the run sheet are possible in any situation and the difference between a good operator and a great operator is someone who is paying attention and is ready before the moment happens - connected to the leadership on the stage. Being connected to the congregation means being aware of how they are engaging with the worship service and then assessing whether there is anything we can do to ensure they are moving forward in their worship, led by the on stage team. Let's all make this week for us a milestone in proving our connection to our leaders, the others in our worship team and our congregation, because the greater level of connection to the people around us, the more we are able to impact and influence them for good.

1. Who is... or should be considered part of the 'worship team'? The people on the praise and worship team are those directly involved with the praise and worship. > This would include, but is certainly not limited to the singers, musicians, worship leader and the sound, lighting and vision

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technicians that immediately support the 'on stage' team. 2. What are the Role of the Praise and Worship Team Members? > The role of the praise & worship team then is to lead the congregation in worship > Everything that comes from the worship team must have the goal to lead the congregation in worship to God. > It's about helping people on a journey from walking in the door to a place where they encounter God in a meaningful way.

3. How to lead the congregation to worship? > The only way to lead anyone is to first connect with them in some way. > The 'technical team' must be connected to the leadership on the stage. Being connected to the congregation means being aware of how they are engaging with the worship service and then assessing whether there is anything we can do to ensure they are moving forward in their worship, led by the on stage team. There is no greater sound than when the people of God come together in unison and worship Jesus. Praise and worship is a supernatural experience.

Miracles happen, issues of the heart are dealt with, and sinners come to repentance in an atmosphere of godly worship. The Bible says God inhabits the praises of His people (see Psalm 22: 3) — and there's nothing quite like having God "invade" your praise and worship! This is the goal of praise and worship in every service. How to reach that goal requires commitment — including multiple rehearsals each week — and maturity in your own spiritual walk. The following are some "do's and don'ts" of praise and worship that can help ministers and their worship leaders lead others into heartfelt, undistracted, and meaningful worship of God.

#1: DO Spend Time in God's Presence for Yourself The saying is true that you cannot give what you do not have. If I haven't spent time in God's presence throughout the week, my praise and worship as a worship leader won't be anointed during the Sunday morning service. Spending time in God's presence helps me know what He wants to say to the people through the praise and worship. But I can't impart His heart if I don't know His heart! Our relationship with God is critical as worship leaders and as any Christian leader.

The saying is true that " as the head goes, so goes the whole body. " What the leaders of an organization do or don't do in their spiritual walk affects the entire organization on some level. God promised us as believers that out of our " bellies," or spirits, would flow rivers of Living Water from God (see John 4: 14; 7: 38). No matter how skilled or talented we are as worship leaders, ultimately, God's presence is the only thing that will truly satisfy our hearts and the hearts of those we lead in worship.

As praise and worship leaders, we must picture ourselves as a sponge that becomes saturated throughout the week by the Living Water of God. Then as we lead worship on Sunday, we release those waters to the people. Every day we must drench ourselves with His presence so that we can impart that same presence to others. This kind of commitment is required of everyone who is part of a praise-and-worship team, but it is especially necessary for the leader. If a leader possesses this kind of dedication and commitment, it will have a positive effect on the congregation as well as the musicians who work with him or her.

The commitment to develop and maintain a consistent life of personal worship requires determination and persistence. Our attitude toward our worship of God should be that of Jacob's when He wrestled with the Lord. Scripture tells us that Jacob wouldn't let God go until he received from Him. (See Genesis 32: 24-26.) Through that experience, Jacob's name was changed from Jacob to Israel — and changing his name eventually changed his life.

Similarly, we should have the attitude, I'm not leaving until You bless me. I won't leave this place of worship until you change my heart and take me to another place in my walk with You. 2: DON'T Confuse Praise and Worship With Entertainment I'm all for lighting, special effects, and excellence in performance, as these are things that can enhance praise and worship. But it's important to understand that praise and worship is not a show. In other words, the goal of praise and worship is not to entertain but to usher in God's presence.

Therefore, as worship leaders, we must be more focused on bringing glory to God than on the entertainment value of what we're doing for Him. We've heard arguments over which has the best music — the Church or the world. God created music, and no music can surpass His genius and creativity. So certainly, the best music should be coming from the Church.

But my honest opinion is that the world has the best entertainment, and I'll tell you why I believe that. Entertainment appeals to the flesh, or the natural part of man. And simply put, the best entertainment — from movies, music recordings, concerts, nightclubs, etc. — comes from the world. As worship

leaders, we can't get people to come back again and again to a church or meeting on the sole basis of our entertainment quality. The world is simply superior in this respect.

We must focus on something the world does not and cannot have: the anointing, God's power and presence that changes people's lives. And one way the anointing is released into people's lives is through praise and worship. Worship leaders should remember that the service is not theirs but God's. And the church is not ours but God's. We live under His rules, and His rules are to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and to esteem His power and presence as absolutely vital and necessary when we meet together as a local body of believers. Submission to the authority of the Holy Spirit in worship is something we must constantly strive for as worship leaders.

For example, if the Holy Spirit wants me to sing a certain chorus longer than I'd planned for, rather than be concerned about my agenda or schedule, I must be concerned about following Him. I don't want to grieve the Spirit of God or give Him only limited access to the service and the people in attendance. Instead, I want Him to fill the place with His glory, because when that happens, God touches people, and they're set free from sin, sickness, addictions, etc. The Holy Spirit doesn't just deal with people during the message. During praise and worship, He can deal with people and prepare their hearts for the message.

Praise and worship is a crucial part of God's work during a service, so it's important to stay focused on Him, allowing Him to lead you and your team into God's presence in worship and to take the congregation into His

presence with you. #3: DO Realize the Importance of Your Role So You Can Do Your Part Well Imagine yourself going to church for the first time. You're not saved, and you go to church only because you made a promise to your friend that you would. You leave your home, careful not to be late, but when you arrive at the church early and find a seat, you have to sit and wait because the service doesn't start on time. And thoughts begin to flash across your mind, These people don't respect me or my time.

Finally, the worship starts. The music is loud, and the people look sloppy and unprofessional. The worship leader says nothing to encourage the people to enter into praise and worship, and there's no explanation as to the purpose of worship or why others are raising their hands as they praise God. You're thinking, These people are weird or maybe even crazy! Then the songs are hard to sing because the key is too high. The melody is also difficult, and there are too many words — so many that even the worship leader mixes them up.

Afterward, the minister begins the message, but you as a guest are so bewildered that you're more attuned to your "strange" environment than to the words of the message. At that point, the chances that you'll ever return to that church are slim. Unfortunately, what I just described is a reality in many churches and to many who are unsaved and unchurched. Yes, there are a lot of great praise-and-worship leaders in the Body of Christ. But there are also things churches could perhaps improve on regarding their praise and worship.

For example, imagine a similar scenario at a different church. You arrive at that church, and the service starts exactly on time. Whether consciously or subconsciously, you think, This organization is professional, and I feel respected. The worship leader greets the people and leads them into a song that is easy to sing. Then he or she uses Scripture in between songs to briefly explain the importance of worshipping God.

Your mind feels at ease instead of distracted by questions and confusion. Perhaps the leader exhorts the people in a specific way as he or she is led by God, such as to pray for their city, a friend or relative, or even the person in the seat beside them. The worship leader might also have a word of knowledge that he or she speaks out. It “ hits home” to you, and the Holy Spirit begins ministering to your heart.

As the music continues, you notice that the team is sharp and plays well together. The sound is pleasant to your ears, and you’re eager to hear the pastor’s message. You end up yielding to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit — and when the man or woman of God gives the altar call, you give your heart to Jesus. You feel at home in that church and look forward to returning and learning about your new life in Christ.

The praise and worship played a role in your getting saved because it opened the door for God to move in your live without distraction. Music and worship play a valuable role in any service. In Second Chronicles 20: 20-22, we can read that King Jehosaphat sent his worshipers out ahead of even his soldiers. In other words, the worshipers were in the frontlines of battle! And worship still has its place on the “ frontlines” today.

Biblically, praise and worship is a spiritual weapon God has given to His Church. But the praise-and-worship portion of a service also provides one of the first impressions for a guest in your church or meeting — and it can prepare the way for a move of God’s Spirit to radically change people’s hearts and lives. Serving as a worship leader or on a worship team is an honor, but it’s also a calling that carries a great deal of responsibility and commitment. It’s important that we as worship leaders give careful attention to this area of ministry so that we don’t fall short in fulfilling our role to make each service — as well as the church overall — what God desires it to be.

Ten Commandments for Worship Leaders and Worship Team Members

Introduction: Why do we even need a Ten Commandments for Worship

Leaders? Here’s why... • There are thousands of tithe-paying worshippers in evangelical congregations across the country whose taste and preferences in Christian music style are not being represented or even given serious consideration.

These under-represented worshippers are the ones who ask merely for a music mix that includes an occasional song in the Gospel style instead of a steady diet of praise and worship and contemporary music.

1. You shall remember the primary purpose for your being up in front of the congregation during praise and worship. As the worship leader, you are responsible to set the pace for the rest of the team in assuring that everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. 1 Cor.

- 14: 40. Every team member should be a role model of how to participate enthusiastically yet reverently in the worship experience.
2. You shall covenant with your self and the others in your group to do everything from

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behind the cross of Christ. Everything you do, say, and wear should be designed to render yourselves invisible with Christ and His cross plainly visible.

3. You shall consult with the senior pastor regarding how he/she would like the worship block to fit into the flow of the rest of the service. Worship services will change from Sunday to Sunday as a result of various activities and events such as: Communion, baby dedications, special presentations, and special speakers. Make sure you know the senior pastor's thinking regarding how the worship block is to fit into the total service.

All thinking senior pastors will have preferences; make sure you know what they are. Of course, I am assuming that no thinking senior pastor would expect the worship to go for a fixed period of time, regardless of what else is happening in the service. Learn to back time: You may like to begin the worship block with a six-minute slow and rather heavy worship chorus with several repeats and key changes culminating in the congregation standing with hands raised. Let's say you have two morning services.

After the first service, the senior pastor may say the worship block ran about six minutes long and crowded the special speaker's close with prayer around the altar. He/she may ask you point blank to cut the worship block short by six minutes. If you don't get a direct order to shorten your block, volunteer to do so and do it by cutting off the opening six minutes. The easiest way to shorten the worship block may be to cut down on the multitudinous repetitions of the same worship song.

4. You shall use a mix of music styles that approximates the preferences of the congregation. If you are called a worship leader and you have a group assisting you called a worship team, the chances are very strong that the style of music is very heavy on the praise and worship side. Just a few minutes ago, I did an Advanced Google search on the phrase “praise and worship” and here is the data from that search: About 10, 200, 000 results (0. 2 seconds I did a second Advanced Google search on the phrase “southern Gospel music” and here is the data from that search: About 6, 560, 000 results (0.

17 seconds. I did a third and final Advanced Google search on the phrase “contemporary Christian music” and here is the data from that search: About 14, 100, 000 results (0. 26 seconds These three Google searches only prove one thing: the Christian music audience is comprised of persons with a range of musical preferences ranging from Gospel songs to Christian rock. There is no right and wrong regarding styles of Christian music; just differences. However, these differences can be very important to members of your congregation.

Several years ago, I had a conversation with a Minister of Music about 75 miles north of the Mason-Dixon Line that went something like this [Paraphrased]: “Why don’t you use more Gospel music with the choir selections and special music?” “I don’t think Southern Gospel would go over too well in this area.” I said, “Gospel music has nothing to do with geography. Bill and Gloria Gaither [the king and queen of Gospel music] are from Indiana.” When the Gaithers held one of their Homecoming concerts in a major nearby arena, the response was so strong they had to add a second

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night to the program. Nancy and I were a little lax in buying our tickets and our seats were up in the nosebleed section, close to the rafters.

The concert was done in the round with plenty of large-screen monitors so we enjoyed it immensely in spite of the height. [This was one of the last times Vestal Goodman sang in public before her death. In a separate conversation, I asked this same Minister of Music a similar question. He said, “ Any music that gives glory to God is Gospel music.

” This man chose to ignore the fact that the Gaither Homecoming videos are selling like hotcakes across the country, and that people drive for hours to attend one of the regional Gaither Homecoming Concerts. In radio jargon, a music mix means a play list that consists of a variety of music styles so your sound will appeal to the widest possible audience. A member of a radio audience has a powerful tool at his/her fingertips. It’s called a tuning knob or a preset button.

However, a worshipper sitting in the pews of your church has no such luxury and is limited to one of the following options:

- Sing when told to sing, clap when told to clap, stand when told to stand, smile when told to smile; be good sheep.
- Time their arrival at the house of worship to coincide with the end of the praise and worship block.
- Find another church with a music mix that includes some Gospel music. Here’s a novel idea. Why not conduct a church-wide survey of music tastes and preferences. Let the people speak through a form.

You may be amazed at the results. If the people don’t get a chance to vote with their pencil, they may vote with their wallet or their feet! 5. You shall

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not rehearse the worship block to the extent that spontaneity and flexibility are lost because you are following a rehearsed worship routine. This is a touchy one. Above, I say everything should be done decently and in order. Now, I'm saying don't rehearse.

You are thinking, how can the worship block can be done decently and in order if we don't rehearse. In *You Can Be a Teacher, Too* I talk about Lesson Plans. Teachers should always do lesson plans but that is not to say they should rehearse. I'll copy this section here for your convenience: Prepare a lesson plan.

The plan should be in outline format so it can be used for quick reference during the lesson. During your preparation time, learn the lesson so well that while you are teaching, a quick glance at your lesson plan can trigger the next sequence of thoughts or events. Your lesson plan shouldn't be a script that is read word for word. In fact, you already know you should seldom read anything to students unless it has lasting literary value.

Lesson plans seldom do. All good teachers rehearse their lessons. Beginners may need to do this with an audience (from within the family or friends). Or, teach to a tape recorder and then play it back as you listen critically.

As you get more experienced, you may do your rehearsing mentally. When I know I am going to speak before a group, I always do a mental rehearsal. Some of this activity involves actual mental word-for-word dialogue between the group and me. Let me extrapolate from the Lesson Plan segment above and apply it to the worship plan: • Select the songs, their keys, and any

key modulations [changing to another key, usually higher.] • Do a dry run by yourself to get an idea of the time to be consumed.

Replicate the tempo and repeats that will be used in live worship.

- Make sure the instrumentalists know the worship plan and are well prepared to musically support the singing, smoothly and effortlessly. 6. You shall not use strange arrangements of well-know hymns with unusual chord progressions and rhythm patterns.

Many churches with worship teams and leaders project the words to the songs onto a screen. When such churches do mix in a number found in the hymnal, they sometimes use a strange arrangement with unfamiliar chords and tempos. If your worshippers are looking at the words only [no notes] and the chords are unfamiliar, you are forcing them to sing in unison. One of the most beautiful segments of evangelical worship is thereby lost: singing in harmony.

My wife, Nancy, is a lifelong alto. She has both read and harmonized alto as long as she has been able to carry a tune. When a worship team presents her with a familiar hymn, nothing but words, and unfamiliar chords, she is forced to give up and drop out of active participation in the praise and worship block. The melody [soprano] of most humans are out of her vocal range, there are no notes to read, and she can't harmonize because the chords are unfamiliar. This is an especially bitter pill because the occasional hymn is usually one of the few songs in the praise and worship block that she recognizes.

. You shall not ask the congregation to remain standing for more than two successive music selections. Prayerfully seek the mind of the Holy Spirit regarding why you are asking the people to stand in the first place, and for how long. • Out of reverence for God? • To make it easier for them to sing? • To make it easier for them to move into the aisles and dance in the spirit or come forward for prayer? • To measure the limits of their physical endurance? • To demonstrate your authority over them? 8. You shall not permit the amplified voices of the worship team nor the drums and brass of the worship band to drown out the vocal participation of the congregation.

If you want the congregation to sing with you, don't overpower them with amplification and drums. 9. You shall covenant to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in terms of the songs that are sung and especially the number of times each song is repeated. While I was in college, I learned that teachers should always stop a physical activity while the students were still enjoying it. 0.

If you are leading worship for an outdoor camp-meeting type service, you shall not lead the congregation in your standard fare of "praise and worship" songs and choruses. This is especially true if a large segment of the congregation has been getting the senior discount for several years. This summer, Nancy and I make our annual visit to the camp meeting where we met back in 1952. After a year of praise and worship music, we were looking forward with great anticipation to some of the old-time camp meeting music on which we were raised.