

# Love Led Worship

© Copyright 2022 - All rights reserved.

The contents of this book may not be reproduced, duplicated or transmitted without direct written permission from the author.

Under no circumstances will any legal responsibility or blame be held against the publisher for any reparation, damages, or monetary loss due to the information herein, either directly or indirectly.

### **Legal Notice**

This book is copyright protected. This is only for personal use. You cannot amend, distribute, sell, use, quote or paraphrase any part or the content within this book without the consent of the author.

### **Disclaimer Notice**

Please note the information contained within this document is for educational and entertainment purposes only. Every attempt has been made to provide accurate, up to date and reliable complete information. No warranties of any kind are expressed or implied. Readers acknowledge that the author is not engaging in the rendering of legal, financial, medical or professional advice. The content of this book has been derived from various sources. Please consult a licensed professional before attempting any techniques outlined in this book.

By reading this document, the reader agrees that under no circumstances is the author responsible for any losses, direct or indirect, which are incurred as a result of the use of information contained within this document, including, but not limited to, — errors, omissions, or inaccuracies.

# Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Endorsements .....                                     | 5   |
| Preface .....  | 11  |
| Introduction .....                                     | 13  |
| Love Led Worship.....                                  | 17  |
| Please Take Us With You! .....                         | 23  |
| Choose The Right Songs! .....                          | 29  |
| Start ... At The Start!.....                           | 41  |
| Praise Vs Worship... Is There A Difference? .....      | 51  |
| If You Don't Love Them... You Can't Lead Them... ..... | 57  |
| Love Filled Preparation.....                           | 63  |
| Spirit Led Engagement .....                            | 69  |
| Dealing With Me.....                                   | 79  |
| Personal Integrity - Authenticity Lived .....          | 83  |
| Let The People Sing! .....                             | 89  |
| No Praying... No Playing! .....                        | 93  |
| Teaching The Church To Worship.....                    | 99  |
| Authentic & Intentional Modelling.....                 | 105 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| The Search For Fame.....                               | 111 |
| It's About Him... Isn't It? .....                      | 121 |
| Excellence Looks Different In Different Contexts ..... | 127 |
| Unity And Dealing With Offences.....                   | 133 |
| Clean Up Your Mess.....                                | 139 |
| Servant Kings.....                                     | 143 |
| Working With Your Team .....                           | 151 |
| Kingdom Realities.....                                 | 163 |
| Song Writing.....                                      | 171 |
| Passion vs... Hype and Manipulation.....               | 179 |
| Multicultural Worship .....                            | 185 |
| Multicultural worship & Reconciliation .....           | 195 |
| Creative Forms Of Worship.....                         | 199 |
| Take Ground & Grow.....                                | 205 |
| Vineyard Distinctives In Worship .....                 | 209 |
| Note from Author.....                                  | 215 |

# Endorsements

What an extraordinary gift!

Ricky is a rare man!!!

Love Led Worship is an exceptionally crafted expression of guidelines and arrows pointing to the very heart of non-prejudicial Worship.

Ricky has taken great care to mix wisdom with spontaneity in a blend that saves us from rote or religion as well as self-indulgent consumerism.

This very title Love Led Worship declares that the worship which the Father seeks is not Law Led nor Lust Led !!! It's not about formulae nor about self satiation. As in marital intimacy the best lovemaking experiences are by-products of giving not getting, of realizing it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Ricky calls for this !

Here we have an authentic lover of Jesus who practices what he preaches with an excellence of inspiration. His own journey shines through this book.

I believe this book will number among the classics of the Vineyard as it so very accurately expresses so much of what the Lord has brought to the Body of Christ in the area of worship.

I also want to salute the rare mix of Inspirational worship leading along with Governmental leadership that is Ricky Venter! This is a work of the Spirit of God. Ricky has developed the maturity and the wonder to work with blends!

Thanks Ricky for who you are and for what you are bringing!!

Dave Pedersen

Senior Pastor, Fountain Vineyard Christian Fellowship,  
Port Elizabeth, SA.

National Director, Vineyard SA.

The first time I actually saw Rick Venter in church I grinned. Here was this South African in the Vineyard Brussels up front, dancing and shouting loud praises to Jesus, clapping and moving his hips like I had never ever done. He and his lovely wife Natalia had been freshly commissioned to lead the Vineyard in Brussels. A multi-ethnic church at the heart of the EU capital. I wondered, will this work. All these sober Europeans and very smart internationals in this church, will they buy into such worship? I did know one thing though as I watched Ricky. This is not just African culture worship style, this is a love affair. He is not holding back but putting it all out there because he actually loves Jesus more than our opinions.

But how will this love affair not just affect the pastor but involve everyone in the church? That's is what Ricky is after and this book is a great help for every pastor, worship leader, musician, homegroup leader, children ministry leader that to become involved in getting the whole body of Christ involved into worshipping the One we love. It touches on many practical stuff but most of all addresses the heart of worship.

Ricky could not have chosen a better title and a better starting point to help us consider our worship than this:

‘Love’. May love lead your worship evermore and may this book help you recalibrate again and again.

I warmly recommend Ricky’s book to you. Read it, study it together, to practice it and to share it, but most of all DO IT. Worship Jesus and express your love for the Lord who gave His live for you.

*Menno Helmus*

*National Director AVC Benelux*

What a delight it is to read this book! Ricky Venter writes as his heart beats, and as his feet walk. The ministry about which Ricky’s book will inspire you is the art of leading people in the activity of the worship of God, which is of course the Church’s first and most important *raison d’etre*. Ricky writes about it simply, passionately and oh-so-practically. Every word you will read has been, and is being, lived by this author. He worships God because God is, because God is Worthy, because God has loved Ricky, because Ricky loves God. Hence the title points in two directions: worship that is led by the God who is love; and a ministry of leading churches in worship by that love’s



motivation. Let it grip you. And then live it. I think every Vineyard church would do well to have this book as its training manual for all prospective worship leaders!

- *Costa Mitchell*

*National Director Emeritus, South Africa.*



# Preface

**T**his past 10 years I have been serving in a Vineyard church in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. In that time the Lord allowed me to serve as the associate pastor, head up the worship ministry for a season and He also opened the door for me to be the National Co-ordinator for worship in the Association of Vineyard Churches in South Africa. It was a privilege and an honour to be entrusted to perform these roles. Thank you Dave Pedersen and Costa Mitchel respectively for the faith and trust you put in me to lead the local congregation and the nation in worship respectively. I honour your courage to allow a boytjie from the wrong side of the tracks loose to operate in his grace. To Grace Vineyard in Cape Town, thank you for believing in me and allowing me to do my first fully fledged worship workshops with you. I honor you Jeff and Ricky for your vision. Thank you to my brother in law George Oosthuizen who made me lead worship for the first time at the age of 13. (There was no one else and he gave me a day to learn a new instrument and lead 5 songs!) Your input has been

invaluable. To my biological family, all of you world class worship leaders in your own right, I can only say thank you for years of bringing the glory into our family gatherings in worship. It was in those spaces I got to know the presence and glory of God. Thank you mom for teaching us to worship. To my wife thank you for loving me and believing in me, you make me want to be a better man. Kids, I love you and I pray you'll learn to love worshiping the Father as much as mom and I and our family do.

I am stepping into a new season, a new dimension of my worship life. I may not be playing the guitar and leading as often as I once did but I remain a worshiper in everything that I do. In fact John Mumford told me recently that the lead pastor is also the lead worshiper. My heart resonated with that so we'll have to see how it will play itself out in time to come. But for now, I would love to share the lessons I learnt in this past season and I hope that you will find something in there that will help you grow on your journey to the heart of the Father and in your pursuit of leading others into that intimate place with you.

# Introduction

I love worshipping God. I have worshipped and do worship Him alone, all by myself in my room, next to the ocean, on a mountain top. I have led worship with small crowds and I have led worship in front of crowds of hundreds and crowds of thousands but what I have done and how many I have served with my gift is inconsequential when the heart that I am worshiping Him from is not right. If my heart is not motivated by my love for Him and for His people, why am I worshiping Him?

In this age of technological advancement, instant millionaires, social media superstars, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and the rest, we have to pay careful attention to our hearts more than ever before lest we fall into the trap that cost Lucifer his spot in the throne room of heaven.

Even though there are loads of practical tips in this book; my hope was not to write a definitive guide to worship leading, the Internet is full of good material, it's to share

what has worked for me in practice leading a few people, and many people in worship. I am not a big-name worship leader. I am just a worshiper of God who loves touching the heart of the Father and leading people into a place of encounter with the One who can change their lives forever.

To clarify everything, I believe that worship is not just singing or playing an instrument. Our entire lives lived to the glory of God is an expression of worship. Lives surrendered to the heart, the will and the pleasure of the Father is at the core of how we worship God with our lives.

However, in this book, I will primarily be dealing with the aspects of worship that pertain to what we do on stage on a Sunday or as part of an established worship ministry in a local church as well as who we are as worshipers. I believe it will encourage those who are functioning in these ministries greatly, strengthen those who are leading and give pastors of worshippers much-needed help to support and undergird the people they have entrusted this critical ministry to.

Romans 12:1 NIV - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.

We offer our lives to Him. Our everything on the altar to serve the King and His Kingdom. This is our reasonable act of worship.





# Love Led Worship



Jesus - God's greatest expression of love led the way in sacrificial worship. He was willing to lay down His life for the sheep. He is Love and Love led worship.

Jesus went to the cross joyfully. His loving, joyful obedience to the will of the Father is our greatest example. He didn't do things to satisfy his own ego-driven needs, no, He would only do what He saw the Father doing. Jesus was constantly moved by compassion for the people He was sent to serve. When compassion moved Him it resulted in acts of supernatural service that would bring Kingdom breakthrough, set captives free, heal the broken-hearted, bring hope to the poor and the destitute. His compassion-filled ministry almost always ended with miraculous service that moved people from one state of being to another.

In the same way that Jesus served in loving sacrifice, we are meant to use our gifting to serve God's kingdom purpose. As worshipers, we are called to lay down our own desires for the dreams of the Father.

Are we willing to serve the sheep, the community God has called us to lead in worship, in the same manner our Saviour did?

I know, after 30 years of leading worship, meeting worship leaders from across the spectrum of society that there is one thing that burns in the hearts of almost every worship leader I have met. We desire to see God move in our congregations in worship. It looks different in a different context but at the heart of it, we want people to experience God for themselves in our times of worship.

Our greatest example of ministry in any form is Christ Himself and when I look at His ministry it was characterized by His love and compassion for the people He was called to redeem.

As worshippers, I present to you... shouldn't compassion and love be the driving force that moves us to serve God's people as well? Isn't compassion and love the key we have been trusting God for to see miraculous outpourings of His presence and power as Jesus did every-time compassion moved Him? How does that look in practice? How do we live this life of love as worship leaders? Please don't get me wrong. I am not advocating another formula here. The

greatest key I could ever offer you as a worshipper is to have a relationship with God and learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. However, I believe that this is one of the keys that the Lord has given us that we can employ to unlock kingdom breakthroughs in our midst.

How we long to see people healed during our times of worship, how we long to see deliverance and salvation come to those in need. How do we employ God-given compassion to serve God's people?

I feel that we are being robbed by the self-centred nature of our media-driven world. However, the life we have been called to as Christians is a life of not loving our own lives even unto death. (Revelation 12) This is how we overcome the enemy. Our hope is no longer for a comfortable life on earth where we get to become superstars in the Christian Contemporary Music scene but in living and dying in Him and for Him if dying for Him serves His eternal kingdom purpose. My life is not my own, I have been bought with a price, the Bible says, but many of us have bought into the lies of the evil one and even our worship unto the Lord has become more about what God can do for us and through us than it is about giving glory to the one to whom all our

worship is due and serving the people He has entrusted to our care.

Jesus our greatest example loved not His own life, his own fame, his own reputation. He was not driven by a love of self but by His love of the Father and His people. No greater love hath any man... that He would lay down His life for a friend. In this era of big-name worshippers and big name bands are we willing to let our selfish ambitions go to serve His people in love? Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and in due time He will lift you up.



**Please Take Us With You!**



Let me start off by stating what most of us believe to be obvious. Worship is about God. It's about leading people to a place where they can glorify the Father and offer the worship that is due Him. However, God in His great love has also made worship about us. God Himself saw us as His pearl of great price and He was willing to give up His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. What we do, and how we do it, matters to God because we matter to God! Loving God and the people you serve will definitely find expression in how you prepare for worship, create an environment of worship and lead people from what we consider the outer court into the holiest place, the place of intimate love.

As we serve those the Lord has given us with a heart filled with love, He responds to us in our time of worship and invades our meetings with His love-filled presence. In these moments we respond to His love as He lavishes His grace upon us in worship. What a great gift we have as God's loved children to be able to serve God's people as we create



melodies, revel in rhythms, use our art to reveal His heart, and revel in His beauty. IF Jesus Christ is at the centre of what we do as worshippers, our hearts will always lean into serving our people in sacrificial love, just as Christ served the church and laid His life down for His bride.

**In the many years I have been leading worship I have realized that there is a definite progression of heart from the outer court to where we commune with God in the holy of holies for most people.**

Please don't get me wrong. God is accessible to us at any time. We do not have to follow a linear process every time! The veil has been torn and we have access to His presence at any time. We do not have to jump through any hoops to enjoy His presence. Our job is to turn the eyes of our hearts toward Him in worship. To focus or fix our attention upon Him. To approach His throne with Boldness and expectation. Those moments of intentionally shifting our focus is usually what is most troublesome for many people.

Part of our job as worship leaders is to be guides to others along this journey to the heart of God. To guide people to that place of intimacy where our hearts are laid bare before God and we experience an intimate knowledge of the

Trinity. We have been called into perichoresis, the perpetual self-giving dance of love shared between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This communion is what we have been made for, what every heart longs for, but getting to that place very often requires a progression in our own hearts.

I've been married for 16 years and as a husband, I know that the journey to intimacy with my wife is a progression. As worshipers, we have experienced this place of intimacy with the Father and we love it there. Our heart is to lead people to that place as quickly as we can but it doesn't always happen as quickly as we would like it to. There are some Sundays when we look out over the congregation and we wonder will they ever get there?

So, for those of you who are not married let me break down the journey to intimacy for you. Take it slowly, don't start where you want to end up!

We cannot start in the inner place. I have heard it said that there is a growing trend where worshipers skip all the handholding of friendship and jump straight into the "I love you" of intimacy. Once again a loving understanding of where our people are at will help us to lead them to this place of intimacy by choosing songs that will help facilitate this journey to the holy place.

Over many years I have borne witness to what I call the worshiper's frustration. You know, before the service starts, we've been rehearsing, we've been pushing into the presence of God, in fact before the people arrived we had already experienced the depths of His presence and their slow uptake in worship can be seen as indifference when in truth they haven't had the time we had as worshipers to prepare our hearts. In fact, many of them came into the meeting carrying burdens, struggling with issues in their lives and families hungry for a touch from the Father yearning for intimacy and if we are sensitive to their hearts and attentive to the voice of the Spirit in our preparation and delivery we have the privilege of leading them to that place every time.

There are times when the level of expectation is high and by the leading of the Spirit we can step a skip or two, but those moments are usually reserved for times like camp meetings or revival meetings where we've been experiencing God's presence consistently. The level of expectation and the spiritual awareness of people in times or places like that are usually heightened and getting to the place of intimacy is greatly sped up.

An average Sunday in an average church with a normal community who has worked the whole week, and faced

trouble and concerns of their own is not necessarily like that. In this environment, we have work to do and if you miss the progression of intimacy you will miss it every time.

Our job is to facilitate those moments where the glory comes but often we are like children who forego the process for the pleasure and we start our sets where we were meant to end. Most people are not ready for those moments and already we have plunged them into deep waters where they cannot yet swim.

Into this understanding, I want to speak about how we select songs for worship.

# Choose The Right Songs!



In the section on praise and worship I speak specifically about my personal worship philosophy and how to choose the first few songs in your set. Do take a look at that. Depending on what church you serve, the typical worship set is usually 20 minutes to 30 minutes long. At approximately five minutes a song and some time for spontaneous moments that roughly translates to about 4 to 6 songs you could potentially squeeze into a set.

If you are serving in a congregation where you have much greater freedom in terms of time that's awesome. These principles will still work for you, you have the freedom to add a few more songs and take more time to allow the Spirit to move in prophetic and spontaneous moments and you don't want to take that for granted. The onus is still on you to lovingly prepare for the people God has called you to serve.

I've often been asked; Which songs do I choose that will help facilitate the progression to intimacy that we are

looking for and is there a skeleton or grid I could use to give shape to my song selection for a Sunday morning? The answer is yes and no.

We'll look at that in a few moments but as a side-note allow me to share a few thoughts before we get there. It is easy for worshippers to fall back on old personal favourites in their worship sets. Songs that they are comfortable leading, which hold specific meaning to them personally in their walk with Jesus.

It is important to note that songs that hold personal meaning for you in your intimate time with God won't necessarily translate well into a congregational setting. Be willing to test it with others and if it doesn't work in a congregational setting be willing to lay it aside for songs that lead others to the place of intimacy.

What God is doing in the life of the church is a fluid thing. The Spirit is constantly moving, touching new areas of our lives, awakening the church to new realities, and positioning our hearts as a community for His purposes. It changes consistently. Our song selection should be as fluid. Keeping pace with the Spirit and His working. Break the pattern of habit. What do I mean by that? Stop choosing

the same songs all the time because you are familiar with them or because the Lord rested on them once when you led.

Be prepared to stretch yourself to learn new songs, try new chord progressions and genres. It's so easy for us as worshippers to put ourselves into a category or worship box. We define ourselves as worshippers who worship in a certain style and we close ourselves off to God's ability to use us in any way He chooses. What if you're a soft rock worship lover and you've defined yourself as such and the Lord challenges you to incorporate some reggae worship into your set, would you be willing to strip yourself of the label and give it a bash?

Know your people, know what they are singing in their cars and at home. Find what God is on, what would Please Him first, what is speaking to the hearts of God's people, and tap into that. There are times when the anointing rests on a particular song for a season and we have to be aware of it and harness that anointing for the purposes it has been released into the world. Some older songs are known to carry the presence. You know those songs that always carry something special in the Spirit and when they are sung at



the right moment just releases the fragrance of God into the atmosphere? Know what those songs are for your congregation and use them as the Lord leads.

Please choose songs that accurately reflect theology. Songs are powerful and very often a lyric to a song will stick in people's minds long after they have forgotten the Sunday morning preach. Ask me, I am a preacher. If you are uncertain about a lyric ask someone that has the theological understanding to check the lyrics for you. Our heart is to accurately represent the nature of who our God is at all times. Many modern worship songs are written by ordinary people who have no theological background, just a profound love for God and we have to be mindful of that when choosing songs. I have found that there were times when I did change a lyric or two to accurately reflect scripture. If you need to sing it change it up.

You may have noticed how there are certain seasons in the life of the church globally where we are all singing certain songs. Songs like Sinach's Waymaker or Matt Redman's Heart of worship just transcends all boundaries and it touches our heart in inexplicable ways because it reveals the truth to the church that we need to hear in that

season. God is at work and in the book of Revelation, He says let him who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This is the present truth. God is talking to His people. He is wanting to reveal something of His nature to the church and He often does so through song.

Personally, coming from a staunch Holiness of God evangelical church I had no idea that my relationship with God could be one of intimacy and love until I heard True Love by David Ruis. God through the Holy Spirit was using the Vineyard movement at that time to release into the world a greater understanding of His loving, passionate nature and His desire to live in and through us in tangible ways. Toward the end of the song, David Ruis shares a prophetic picture about how there are people in the congregation that needs to cry and it ministered directly and profoundly to my heart. I was balling my eyes out as a teenager in my living room as I was exposed to the prophetic and healing nature of God.

That song is still powerful today but at that moment, in that season God used it to reveal something more of His nature to us as a church. Tap into what He is saying to the

church globally and sing those “now” songs as the Lord leads.

**Now for song selection, our roadmap to an intimate encounter with the Father.**

As always I will lead by saying that everything we do is subject to the leading of the Spirit.

Before you start randomly selecting songs which is a sure fire recipe for going nowhere in worship ask the Holy Spirit what He is on. What is it that He wants to highlight that morning? Some preliminary talks with your pastor is always a good idea if you want the worship to intentionally line up with his theme for the morning but I have seen it over and over again that even without that consultation the Holy Spirit will still line up His theme for the morning regardless of whether you had collaborated or not. The need for collaboration is also church-specific.

Some pastors may require the worship leader to know what the theme is so that he or she can prepare with a theme in mind. On a practical note arranging your songs according to the theme in an easily accessible spreadsheet is worth the time and effort for ease of accessibility when

preparing your set. If you haven't done it with the countless songs you have in your current repertoire how about starting with cataloguing the new stuff for future use and adding songs to your catalogue as you use them.

Keep energy and pace, tempo, and rhythm in mind when choosing your set and cater across generations. In other words, include a hymn or an old anointed favourite in your set list from time to time. I personally love some of the older Vineyard songs, Keith Green's "Oh Lord Your beautiful" and Kevin Prosche and I throw in one of those into a set ever so often but especially when the words and the sentiment expressed reveals the heart of God for the "Now" moment we find ourselves in.

The standard worship progression that most worshippers employ in terms of pace is fast – mid tempo to slow. (fast-mid-slow). A variation I have experimented with is the mid-fast-mid-slow. I find a mid-tempo song at the beginning of a set is really helpful to get people engaged before you get to the high energy up-tempo stuff that will get the feet moving. However, I have also seen how worship leaders stick to a "formula" and after a while, it frankly becomes so predictable. If I am attending the same

congregation week after week I will definitely become bored with that real quick. For those of us who have grown up in church, we can quickly spot the rhythms of the service. You can almost predict exactly what's going to happen next and who's going to say or do what!

Be creative with your progression, change it up a bit if you need to. Start with a solo or no drums, or just a beat with lyrics and handclaps, a duet, add spoken word, whatever you do try to add some variety. On the flipside worship is not a variety show, so please keep it within limits. Don't start releasing doves during the song about the Holy Spirit for dramatic effect. The key... follow the leading of the Spirit. He will inspire you to do more than you thought possible.

**Introducing new songs...** What is a new song? Songs that you are introducing for the first time, whether you have personally written it or it is new to the congregation from a well-known artist. Do not introduce more than one new song in a worship set and don't start your set with a new song unless you prepare the congregation. Even then I would advise only teaching them the refrain if you're doing it at the beginning of the worship set, go back to your

prepared set, and when you do sing the song later in the set people are already familiar with the refrain at least.

**Not all songs work verse, chorus, and bridge** - but there could be parts that are really anointed, hack it and use selected pieces in your set. As tough as it is to say... some songs just aren't meant to be sung in their entirety- some of the more modern verses are really, for lack of a better word, convoluted - congregational songs are best enjoyed simply - not everyone is on the same level musically and accessibility is a value we should hold dear - if you are a recording artist you can be as creative as you want to be with regards to sentence structure, tempo and rhythm, word spacing and timing - but when your hope is to engage a congregation we need to be sensitive to who is in the meeting.

So, if it doesn't work for the congregation **hack it and use what the people can sing.**

**Choose a comfortable key for people to sing.** Ask a few people who are not in the worship team and some who are if the key you're singing in is sing-able.

I remember being in a masterclass for worshippers at a well know worship conference and one of the worship

leaders asked the trainer a question about accessibility. I was shocked to hear the speaker reply, and I quote: “Sing in a key that’s comfortable for you. We already sacrifice so much of our art for the congregation, they just have to fall in line.” It was liberating for a moment! Yay, I finally don’t have to concern myself with those non-musical stragglers anymore, I can just enjoy myself in a key that is comfortable for me. However, a second later the Holy Spirit reminded me of one of the keys to congregational worship I have learnt in my time with the Vineyard called accessibility.

If you love your congregation you will do your best to serve them. Worship is not about our “art”, it’s about God and His people. If your key is causing people to struggle to worship God, change it. If there is anything about your delivery that causes the majority of people to struggle change it. You won’t be able to please the entire congregation but aim for including as many as you possibly can in the worship experience and if possible offer those who struggle a creative alternative. Let your aim be to lead as many into His presence as possible.





**Start ...  
At The Start!**



**W**e start off with what is known as the **Call to Worship**. This is an invitation to engage our hearts in song or spoken form. It challenges the congregation to take their eyes off themselves and to place it on God, the author of worship. God has set the stage for us to worship. He prepares the table for us and He invites us into His presence first. Our call to worship is a response to this invitation. David says in Psalm 132: “I was glad when they said unto me let’s go up to the house of the Lord”. He was glad because there were others inviting him into what he had already set His heart on doing. There were others that were as excited as he was to go “up to the house of the Lord.” It also sets the scene for what is possible in our time together as a congregation and this early song can raise the level of expectation exponentially. Some worshippers use scripture to set the scene for this but there have been some really great worship songs that have been written that incorporate scripture and call people into this place of spiritual readiness.

This is followed by **Songs of Praise!** Who is God and what has He done. Songs that declare the greatness and the glory of God. This is all about Him! Our focus is entirely upon the majesty of God. This helps us to take our eyes off our own worries and concerns and to focus it on who God is. When we exalt Him above our circumstances we are giving Him the freedom to be Lord over the issues of our lives because He is. In worship, we get to recognize the greatness and ability of our Father which makes it easier for us to hand over our mess to Him who is so much greater.

I believe that we need more simple praise songs to be written this season! This is my personal desire. Songs that are easy to sing, yet not cheesy, that declare His greatness and mighty deeds. There is such power in boldly declaring the mighty attributes of our Father. It gets our heads out of the realm of the possible and puts it into the realm of God's possibilities. That's where the power to break chains and open prison doors is! Just ask Paul and Silas. Their praise broke them out of jail! Praise God.

**Songs of response.** How will we respond to this great God? When faced with the realization of who our God is how can we not respond? What will our response be? How

will we sing that response to the Lord? Are there opportunities for us to engage our bodies in worship through kneeling, prostrating ourselves before, lifting our hands to Him in surrender? How do we lead people in these moments without demanding a response? When seeking to lead people into expressions of worship that are new to them we should never employ hype and manipulation as tools. Instead, aim at inspiration and motivation fuelled by passion.

**Songs of Encounter.** These are usually the songs around which our entire set revolves. This is ultimately the place we want to lead people to. The place of encounter. Intimacy experienced in worship. The effectiveness or depth of these moments is very dependent on the progression that led them to that moment.

**The Kingdom can break into our meetings at any time** but these moments of encounter are especially pregnant with the possibility of Kingdom breakthrough and God wrought change. Don't rush to get to this place. Instead, build toward it with great care and intentionality.

**Keep the mission in your mind.** Giving Him Glory and leading people to an encounter with the Lord. Be especially

mindful in these spaces of what the Lord is saying and what the Holy Spirit is up to and lead into it with the kind of boldness that only the Spirit can supply. Make space for people to interact with Daddy God and declare His love for Him.

**Big side-note:** God can encounter His people at any time during or even before our worship. I have experienced moments where the Lord had rocked up to church much earlier than I did! Where God's people walk into a room pregnant with the impossibilities of God and have encountered Him without a long run-up! I remember being in a small church in the traditionally coloured neighbourhood in Port Elizabeth. We met in a school hall where we had to set up for worship every Sunday and it was glorious. Before the meeting officially started we were worshipping and the presence of the Lord tangibly filled the room. As the church arrived they walked into this God atmosphere and they were for lack of a better word, zapped by His power and presence. People were crying, laying on the floor in worship, men who I had never thought I'd see moving were dancing and lifting their voices to God, people were healed. It was a God moment.

I've had the privilege of experiencing many moments like that and I thank the Lord for them. For every other time I prepare with love for God and the people He has called me to serve, I worship with the expectation that He can break into our midst with Kingdom power at any time and I will be ready. Side-note concluded, let's continue...

**Be aware of the musical dynamics** as those too will be dictated by the Spirit. Following one another musically comes easier the longer you have really worshipped together. There is a God synergy that exists between worshipers who have touched the Father's heart together. For me personally, this is the ideal. However, it's not always possible or practical, so in the absence of this, it is so good to have pre-determined signals worked out so that the team can know where you are leading them.

**Worship through some old songs and hymns and include them.** Sometimes we get so preoccupied with the latest and greatest hits that we forget to look back over our rich heritage of music to find songs that capture a present-day reality. Expose your heart to songs from yesterday then go ahead and include them in your set. You'll be surprised at the grace that is released through those oldies. The hymns are steeped in scripture. There are very few things

that can compare to the faith that is released when we are singing scripture back to the Lord.

### **Ministry time Worship**

This time at the end of the service is often neglected or just not given enough attention. Leaders, I urge you, have a plan of action for ministry time worship. To eliminate all hesitation about whether or not the person leading ministry time would like music or not be sure to ask before the time. I have seen how not knowing whether the pastor or ministry time leader wants music or not has confused worship leaders into inaction. Ask before the time and in the event that you didn't ask assume that someone needs to be playing.

A piano or a guitar is your instrument of choice. Please play simple three-chord melodies. Add a fourth if you must but the rule of thumb is "keep it simple". If you have been asked to play a specific song keep playing the melody until you can sense the atmosphere changing or you are asked to lead a different song.

Ministry time is often themed to fit in with the message of the day, so a great practice to develop is to have a database of songs in your head and heart or on your iPad that you can call on quickly. If you know a few songs that carry the

same theme as the ministry time flow from one to the other with as little interruption as possible or just stay in one song.

Your job is to provide a bed for what is happening in the Spirit. It is an important job that requires loads of sensitivity to the Spirit. Do it confidently but never overwhelm what is happening during the prayer time with convoluted melodies and unnecessarily loud playing. Be sensitive to the Spirit at all times.

If needed and indeed if possible, ask the sound guy to lower the volume on the monitors closest to the prayer line so that the music doesn't compete with people trying to pray or minister to others in the prayer line as well as turning down the house volume.

Many times after incredible times of ministry the Lord may inspire a desire for further worship from the congregation. Be ready for those moments. Think through a song of celebration in line with the work the Lord has done that morning and be ready to play it whether the service goes in that direction or not. There's nothing more distracting than when the congregation is ready in the Spirit to sing and the worship leader has no clue as to what needs to be sung because it wasn't on the setlist. Be prepared in



your Spirit to make the most of every opportunity the Holy Spirit affords.

There will be times that God uses the time of worship instead of preaching to be the main means of ministry to His people. I have experienced many a service where the Holy Spirit rests on the worship for that morning and if you have leaders that are sensitive to the flow of the Spirit you may find yourself in a place where the music must continue beyond your prepared setlist. This is where what we do in our secret places of worship is revealed. If you have cultivated an intimate relationship with the Lord where you worship Him for the sake of loving on Him and not just for the sake of leading worship these moments are an extension of that time. Your job is to remain sensitive. Listen carefully to what the Holy Spirit is doing inside the congregation. There will be times when there are church members that get the download of where the worship should be going and you have to put your agenda to the side and flow with it. In these moments your role is to be attentive to the Spirit and to lead the flow. It is also to protect the flow from people with their own agendas born from their own personal brokenness in a loving spirit-led way.



# **Praise Vs Worship... Is There A Difference?**



**W**hat is praise and what is worship? Are they not just two sides of the same coin? Isn't praise worship and worship praise? I think many worshipers are a bit confused on this score. How do we distinguish between praise and worship? Why would we want to distinguish between the two in any case? Let me start answering these questions by throwing in a caveat.

We know that worship is not just an event, it is a lifestyle. The intention of our discussion here is not to relegate praise and worship to a Sunday event but to give worship leaders a greater understanding regarding how they need to position their hearts and the hearts of the people in regards to leading people in song on a Sunday morning. The mechanics of praise and worship if you will. Why do I find it helpful to distinguish between praise and worship... because I love the people I have been called to lead. I understand that all who come to worship on a Sunday are not at the same place with God.

Part of my job as a worship leader is to help people make a heart decision to take their eyes off themselves, their situations, and their pain or joy and to focus it on giving God the glory that is due to His name. Starting my worship set with songs of praise helps in this regard. **Praise helps us to focus our attention on Him who is bigger than all our earthly concerns.** We declare His greatness and we marvel at the wonderful works He has done in us and in the world around us. We praise Him for His mighty works and we give thanks to Him for Who He is. The bar to entry here is set very low. All people can praise the Lord, in fact, even inanimate objects like trees and rocks and stars can praise Him. Praise is open to all people. Psalm 67:3 says: "Let all the people praise Him."

If we were looking at this topic from the point of temple worship, praise would be outer court expression of worship. Psalm 100:4. We enter His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and His courts with praise. Praise is powerful in its ability to break strongholds in our thought patterns. When we start declaring the truth of who God is it breaks the fog off our self-centred hearts and focuses our attention on He who is greater than all our fears.

**Does tempo have a role to play?** I have had this discussion with many a worship leader and there are a few things to consider.

Yes, the words we sing will determine whether what we are singing is a song of worship or a song of praise. So, the argument most worship leaders would make at this point is that if praise is in the words we sing then the tempo of the song shouldn't matter at all. I tend to agree in certain settings, but for an average congregational worship set tempo does have a role to play in the distinction between a praise and worship song.

Remember, our heart is engagement. Yes, for those of you who have a church filled with real spiritual Christians, you are right, engagement is a choice made based on the worthiness of God and not on our personal feelings. However, every person who walks into the church is not at the same level of growth and we have to keep love in mind when choosing how we'll engage these people in what is essentially a Christian experience. So energy and pace are important. Remember, **worship can be missional in its expression.**

My mom who was also my first choir director always told me to pay careful attention to the beginning and the end of

a song. She used to say: *"People forget what happens in the middle of a song but what happens in the beginning and the end is what sticks with them."* Choose your first song well and practice how you will lead into it as well. Personally, I would steer away from super up-tempo songs as an opening and choose something more mid-tempo too fast, to begin with, where after I would lead into something faster. If you are intent on starting with a super-fast song prepare the congregation for it. Let them know that you are going pedal to the metal and encourage them to join in. Don't just jump into it! You'll blow their hair back and rock their socks off but you will probably lose them for the rest of the worship set as well. Be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and the hearts of the people.

**An experience of true Worship is ultimately where we want to lead people.**

That place where the glory of the Lord comes and His presence engages our hearts where we are at. This can be a powerful time of healing and restoration, Kingdom breakthrough, and deliverance. In this place of worship, we get to honour God for who He is and not just for His mighty works. Psalm 20 verse 2 speaks of us bowing before

the Lord in the beauty of His holiness. We kiss toward God. The Greek word Proskuneo meaning to bow or kneel and prostrate before the Lord becomes the attitude of our heart. The place of divine exchange.

Where we get to bring who we are into the presence of an Almighty Loving Father and access His grace and love to touch us and change us in immeasurable ways and we are invited into the divine dance of the Trinity. This is an intimate space where we know God in the beauty of His holiness. What we are is laid bare, our hearts condition is revealed, our lack is exposed and in the presence of the Father, we are transformed. In this place, we whisper our words of love and devotion. The eyes of our hearts are opened to see Him as He is and as we behold Him we are changed from glory to glory. This is where we want to lead people in our times of worship.

P.S: none of what I am writing is meant as religious laws or set modes of operandi. As worshipers, our primary job is to follow the Spirit's leading so do take these writings as guidelines and not laws.



**If You Don't Love Them...  
You Can't Lead Them...**



**Y**ou can't lead them if you don't love them. This truth should be at the foundation for every worshiper that seeks to ever lead God's people in worship.

1 John 4:7-8 says:

"Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God. He who does not love does not know God for God is love."

To operate from a place of love is to operate from a place of putting others before yourself and your needs on a consistent basis. **Love is not self-seeking.**<sup>1</sup> I have seen to many modern day worship leaders intentionally or unintentionally create a barrier between themselves and the people they have been called to serve. There are no superstars in the Kingdom of God. We have no right to elevate ourselves above those we serve... ever. I know that's an incendiary statement and many worshipers would fail to

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:5.

recognize a small seed of this in our own lives because it's not our intention.

But let me ask you... When was the last time you stood at the door greeting people as they come into the church? When was the last time you served coffee on the coffee team or helped the ushers clean a messy bathroom? When was the last time you got off stage and laid your hands on a hurting individual or simply asked the people you are serving how they are doing... really?

Loving people means engaging them and if we don't put some level of intentionality behind our interactions with people we will quickly fall into the trap of allowing the worship team to be our primary if not only place of engagement. When you know people, it is so much easier to sense or discern where they are spiritually or emotionally and to minister to that. Engaging with people gives you insight into where they are at.

My challenge to you is to step off the stage and intentionally engage with people. Especially those you don't know. Hug a kid, kiss a baby, help a granny, love God's people and I promise it will make your job as a worship leader so much easier. People find it easier to be led by

someone they know cares for them. The stage can be a hindrance or a barrier. If we allow it to it can keep us away from the people we are meant to serve.

I have seen worship teams for the sake of convenience and ease separate themselves on a Sunday. They pray separately, they sit separately; they have a separate meeting area, etc. Beware that our functional separation doesn't slip into a heart separation.

This reminds me of the story of Daisy. A young down syndrome girl whose family had been part of our community for the longest time. As a worship team we had been operating at a level of musical excellence and we gelled really well. The harmonies were on point, the lead guitarists knew exactly when to do his riff, the pianist and the acoustic guitarist were doing so well. Then one morning as we were worshipping the spiritual atmosphere was a bit flat. You know those mornings when it's just okay... it's not bad but it's not great either. People were not engaging as we would like.

On this morning Daisy came running from the congregation and climbed onto stage with her battery-operated toy guitar that played a tune completely out of sync

with what we were doing. I could see the faces of the worship team trying to come to terms with this unusual occurrence and quite honestly I was pretty much put out by this girl who flaunted all worship team protocol with her out-of-tune guitar. The artificial sounds of her toy guitar completely clashed with the harmony of what we were doing on stage but let me tell you her enthusiasm and excitement for Jesus and this opportunity she had to worship God as part of her loving community galvanized the worship and the spiritual atmosphere was completely transformed. Her joyful abandon ushered in the joy of the Lord that was up until that point missing from our set. The church engaged and the Lord moved.

Let love lead our actions at all times and don't allow anything to separate us from the people we are called to lead in love. Loving people in this way also means overcoming personal insecurities. It requires risking your heart in a relationship. You don't have to become best friends with everyone you interact with but a few light touches of friendship will go a long way toward building a report with God's family.

**John Wimber said and I quote:** “Caring for people is our highest priority after submission to God because the

purpose of the cross was the redemption of men and women. To the best of our ability we will treat each person with respect, dignity, and loving patience—always seeking what is best for his or her life and growth” (*Rom. 12:9-13; 1 Cor. 13:4-9; Col.3:12-14*).

# Love Filled Preparation



Preparing for a time of worship can begin long before the Sunday morning you are meant to lead. I have witnessed too many worship leaders take preparation for granted. They rock up on a Sunday morning, print a couple of songs they feel like singing after a hastily constructed prayer for God's blessing, and trust that they have hit the mark for that morning and that the Lord will bless their minimal effort. There is no love in this kind of approach for the people you are called to serve. There is no recognition or respect of the grace you carry as a worshiper when you adopt this kind of preparation as a standard or even a fallback.

On the flip side, I have seen worshippers who put huge amounts of effort into the preparation of their setlist to the extent that they become so rigid that even the Holy Spirit doesn't get to move it in any direction other than the one they set!

When we as worshipers get love-filled preparation right we can be so much more effective in our ministry to the



church. God knows who will be in church on any given Sunday. How about asking Him on Monday who He wants to touch on Sunday? What Holy Spirit would like to do in that meeting a few days from now? Which songs would be most suited for the service you will be leading? Take a look at the chapter on song selection for a bit more meat on this subject.

It takes a pastor a load of time to prepare for his/her 30 to 45 minutes on a Sunday. Most pastors take this job very seriously because the word urges us that if we speak as the oracle of God we need to take careful attention to our ministry. We give almost the same amount on a Sunday service to the worship leader and his team. Shouldn't the weight of spiritual preparation for that time be similar?

God is always moving. Ask Him what He desires to do and prepare to lead into that. How about having conversations with those who are charged with the pastoral care of people in your church and asking them where the people are at? What difficulties they are facing, what has been an area of attack? Speak to the intercessors and ask them what they are sensing in the Spirit and get on board with that. Ask them to pray for you and your team, better

yet, join them and learn the art of soaking worship in prayer. We forget at times that we are part of a whole and as such, we need to get a broader perspective on what the Lord is doing in the body so that we can minister to God's people with greater effectiveness.

The importance of prayer in preparation can never be underestimated. In preparing for your time of leading worship I encourage you to spend about as much time worshipping as listening to the Spirit in prayer. As he leads you write down what he tells you. Never stop worshipping. Worshipping whilst preparing helps us to keep our eyes on the Lord and take our eyes off our own agendas and tune in spiritually to His agenda. Jesus said, I only do what I see my Father doing, Not my will but Your will be done. This is the foundation of a worshiper's preparation. Time spent listening to the Lord and hearing His voice and acting on what He tells you. Take a look at the chapter on prayer and see if there is something in there God can use to shape your prayer life.

At the core of our being let us become pursuers of God. Let the pursuit of a life-giving, love relationship guide our prayer life. There is no limit to the depth of relationship we

can enjoy with God. It is for this reason we seek after His heart, It is for this reason we wait on Him to show Himself mighty on our behalf. Not just on a Sunday morning but every day as we walk out our love relationship with Him.

*Ps. 41:1; 1 Cor. 2:6ff; Phil. 3:8-10) (John 4:34; 5:19-20).*



# Spirit Led Engagement



**F**or those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. One of the most critical tools in a worship leader's belt has to be the ability to hear the voice of the Lord and to respond to His promptings. Spirit-led worship is a fluid thing. We acknowledge that despite our greatest love-filled preparation the Holy Spirit is still the ultimate conductor of our worship experience.

The amount of latitude you have to follow His leading will of course differ from church to church depending on what the Lord is on you to build in any particular season but in a typical Vineyard or charismatic evangelical church where Spirit-led worship is a value we have some space to learn the rhythms of the Spirit and to co-labour with Him toward Kingdom purpose. When we learn how to follow His leading we put ourselves into a position to see Kingdom Breakthrough.

However, you can't follow someone you don't know or trust. This is the first love relationship we need to give

attention to. The cultivation of a personal intimate relationship with the Spirit is of paramount importance to a worship leader. We chat more about that in the chapter on Intimacy with God. When you have learnt the feel of the Holy Spirit and how He communicates to you and directs you personally, it becomes easier to lead into Spirit encounter in a meeting.

The mechanics of this deserves a chapter on its own but some of the tools we use are; **The creative use of space and silence**, or just allowing space for the Holy Spirit to move. Sometimes our worship experience is filled with words and musicality to the expense of the silences where the Lord can touch us and speak to us and His people. The Holy moments, the breathing spaces, the silences where the Spirit hovers and touches His people. In our preparation time, we can anticipate spaces where this will happen. However, if we have not experienced this for ourselves in our inner chambers it is hard for us to lead others into it. Are our own personal worship times with the Lord filled with words and musicality to the exclusion of His voice?

**Spontaneous worship.** I would like to dispel the myth that all spontaneous worship is born on the spot. Lots of it

is but many of the best spontaneous moments or songs by well know prophetic worshippers were born from their intimate relationship with the Lord. It was sung in the quiet place of intimacy with the Father first and it is released in a moment where the Holy Spirit deems it will have the greatest impact. Then, there are those spontaneous songs that are born on the spot comprising of a pre-dominant thought that the Holy Spirit is highlighting at that moment. It's caught in the spirit by the worship leader or someone on the team, sometimes in the congregation - set to a simple tune and released into the worship atmosphere, very often with great results. However it comes, we want to make space for those moments where the Spirit directs our words away from what is on screen and lays bare what we are experiencing in our hearts at that moment. Keep it simple and easy to sing. Try not to overcomplicate the message. A few simple sentences that people can easily connect with are much more effective than a sermon set to music. A prime example of a prophetic song that captured the prevailing spiritual atmosphere well is "This is how we fight our battles." This song was born in a moment of prophetic insight and it became a war cry of a generation of worshippers. The lyrics are simple, the chord progression is simple but the song definitely is not.



**Spirit-led dynamics.** When you are playing music with worship musicians that have come to know each other through the virtue of playing together for a while it opens up possibilities for Spirit-led instrumentals like none other. This is unity in practice. Listening to the Spirit and being in tune with one another on stage is a powerful avenue Holy Spirit has often used in my times leading worship to touch people's hearts and bring healing. Moving in this level of dynamic requires sensitivity to the Spirit as well as a willingness to lay down self in order to make space for the person or instrument the Holy Spirit is on during this time of instrumental worship.

**Singing in the Spirit.** Again, I am not going to get into the theology of Spirit-led engagement especially on the topic of singing in the Spirit. I am highlighting what has been my experience of Spirit-led worship based on scripture. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will pray with my **spirit**, but I will pray with my mind also; I will **sing** praise with my **spirit**, but I will **sing** with my mind also".

I have found that singing in the Spirit is an excellent way of expressing your heart to the Lord when words are just

not enough. It focuses our attention on spiritual things and opens us up to be sensitive to the Spirit and His working in incredible ways. It is a tool for warring in the Spirit and extended periods of singing and talking in the Spirit builds spiritual strength like nothing else does in my experience. The environment in which we practice singing in the Spirit has to be carefully discerned.

Being led by the Spirit is an exciting journey into the depths of worship. Lock your spiritual senses onto the Lord, keep your eyes and ears open to see and hear where He wants to lead you, and take courage in hand and risk in Him. He is a safe God, you can trust Him to lead you and guide you and through your ministry bring hope, healing restoration, and joy.

**Prophetic acts** – There have been times during worship where the Lord will highlight a specific action that we are invited into as a congregation that will facilitate Kingdom breakthrough at the moment. Those are usually pretty scary moments and it does require loads of trust and buy-in from the congregation but if the Lord is on it be prepared to see some major shifts in the spiritual atmosphere.

I was leading worship at a Vineyard Conference in South Africa and I felt the Lord prompt me to put down my guitar

and to dance... African style! I have to admit it was pretty intimidating thought. In the front row, we had Phil and Jan Stroud, Costa and Lorraine Mitchel as well John and Eleanor Mumford and I didn't want to throw away my name in front of these Vineyard stalwarts. But there was a fire in my heart urging me to step outside of my comfort zone. When I finally obeyed, I put down my guitar and started doing the African two-step there was a sense of Holy Spirit freedom released in that building that allowed others to step into that place of abandoned, undignified praise and worship. Dave Pedersen, who was newly inaugurated as the leader of Vineyard South Africa jumped on the train and we danced in such freedom and abandon, giving glory to the Lord. When I eventually stepped back onto the platform the spiritual atmosphere was charged with Godly expectation and we had a great evening encountering the Lord in worship.

John Wimber taught us folk in the Vineyard that faith is spelt RISK and there is no safer place to risk than in the presence of God and a loving community. If we create environments where it is safe for people to take Spirit-led risk it will go a long way toward developing the gifts and graces that God has deposited in the hearts of man. It

behoves us to be patient with people as they learn to operate in their gifting.

A note to pastors. Adopting an openness to risk in the Spirit may lead to some real anxious moments as people experiment with listening and obeying. I am reminded of the scripture in Proverbs 14:4 that reads “Where no **oxen** are, the trough is clean, but **increase** comes by the **strength** of an **ox**.” For me that basically means that if we desire people to grow, if we desire for them to be strong in the Lord and operate well in their gifts it may become messy. A sterile church environment is not necessarily the best environment for growth. Be prepared for some messy oxen and have plans or people in place to help pastor people in this.

Let this be an encouragement to you, worship leader. You may not always get it right but stretch yourself and take a RISK on God. He is big enough to pull you back in line if you step outside of the demarcated area and those the Lord has put in loving authority over you can help you find the plumb line when you have overstepped the boundary. No growth has ever come from playing it safe. Take some risks, let God catch you.

At our core as Vineyard Churches, we are evangelical Christians so the council of Scripture is our final authority over opinions, dreams, revelations, visions, and any other authoritative source that we may look to for direction. Let's keep this front and centre as we pursue the more of God. (2 *Tim. 3:16-17*). (*John 21:15-19; Gal. 5:22-3*)



# Dealing With Me...



**L**ove your Neighbour as you love yourself. Do you love yourself enough to value change?

Being in ministry is not the silver bullet for low self-esteem or self-worth. Ministry from what you do rather than who you are will always lead to dead works. From our inner-most being rivers of living, water will flow.

Being a worship leader encompasses every area of our life. Later on, I speak about what is on the inside coming out. Jesus said from the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks so we always minister to people from what is happening in our own spirit.

People catch who you are. So, if there are still areas in your life that are in need of God's grace allow Him into those parts of your life to bring healing and restoration. Take what you are transmitting seriously. Allow His Spirit into those parts of your life that will transmit this in the Spirit. Your pursuit of healing opens up the doors for the healing of others.



The love of God that we minister from is also the love that brings healing and restoration in our own hearts. When we are established in His love for us we learn what it means to be secure. If His love is made perfect in us that casts aside all manner of fear in our lives.

His love sets us free to be fearless. Lead others into love instead of leading them from a place of fear and control. When we are not secure in our identity as children of God, Satan can wreak havoc with our spiritual quest and the administration of our ministry. Walking in this reality requires some intentional reprogramming of our own hearts.

To start yourself on this journey I recommend reading some scriptures that speak about who you are in Christ right now. Too many people live as paupers because they don't recognize the inheritance that they have been given in Christ. To be a son or daughter of God is huge. To be loved by Him is at the core of our security. Paul says we are to be grounded in love. Love is to be our foundation. The foundation upon which and from which we build our lives. God is love. This means that the person of God is our foundation. It also means that we are not just to be

grounded in the person of Love but also in an understanding of the lengths that Love has gone through to establish a relationship with you.

If we are not established in this love we will always be living in co-dependency.

John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard Movement and accomplished musician, once related the parable of the two dogs living inside of us. The black dog and a white dog. Which dog will win in a fight? The one we feed the most. The question we always have to ask ourselves is. Which dog am I feeding? What am I exposing my heart to? Am I feeding my spirit with the word of God or am I exposing my spirit to stuff that will ultimately undermine the purposes of the Father for my life?

# **Personal Integrity - Authenticity Lived**



**L**oving people means paying careful attention to your life and heart. It is so important for worship leaders and worshipers to know that the moment they step onto the stage they become leaders in the eyes of the congregation. By virtue of you being on stage people automatically associate your life with a Christian life that is worth emulating no matter where you are at personally in your walk with God.

In truth as pastors and leaders, we should not promote someone to that level of influence if their personal lives are still in shambles or if they are not in an accountable relationship with someone whilst working through hurt and brokenness. We have too many examples in the Christian community of men and women who have through some or the other moral failing fallen prey to the lure of sin, and the fallout of their mess almost always leaves a terrible scar on the Christian landscape.

For this reason, notwithstanding the most important reason being Jesus and his claim upon our lives, we have to be so circumspect about how we live our lives. At the root of a life lived well is the word Integrity. Integrity is crucial for those who are leading worship. The word Integrity comes from the Latin root Integer which means untouched, entire. In other words, a thing that is complete in itself, essential to the whole, sound and honest. To be a person of integrity means to be what you profess to be. There is no duality in your life. What you see is what you get. What you are on the surface is what you are at the centre.

The call to integrity is the call to mask free-living, walking in the light as He is in the light. Our society has become so adept at wearing a mask. People are always presenting their best side on Facebook, Instagram, etc. This is not reality. Jesus has never been interested in what we say about who we are; He is interested that we are what we say. It is important for us to understand that God is much more interested in us as people than He is in our ability to do ministry. Before He releases you into doing He will take His time to shape your being.

This is a lifelong journey for all of us. Someone once said God makes the man before He makes the ministry. Going

high means going deep. What does that mean? If God is going to use you for His purposes He will make sure that the foundations of your life can carry the weight of your growth. Many of us in our haste to pursue God's plan for our lives neglect the foundational works of grace and resist the hand of God in shaping us for His purposes.

Are we able to confront our own weaknesses and pain and allow others into that space? Confessing your sin one to another is a key value in an accountable, healing relationship. If we can create that kind of safe environment within our team where people are free to share their lives without fear of their confidence being breached and confident that their hearts will be protected we can help people on their healing journey and growth toward integrity-based relationships.

Integrity means loving people enough to confront them when necessary. It means not living with unnecessary bumps under the carpet from years of sweeping pain under the rug. To confront in love makes space for love to grow in even greater ways. (See the section on offense) Let's live lives of accountability in a loving community. Lack of integrity causes us to want to hide. In a worship, team

environment lack of integrity will play itself out in the way we integrate with the team.

Shame and guilt can keep us in incredible bondage. We go to great lengths to keep our mess hidden when God's heart is for us to just let Him into those places so He can bring healing. We are quick to point out the mess in others' lives to divert attention from our own. Let's deal with our hearts. Let's trust Him to heal us from being double-tongued, double-minded and double-hearted. He wants to use us but only when we can come to Him in authenticity. He promises that those who come to Him He will by no means cast out. Let Him into your heart of hearts and release you from all denial, pretence, and superficiality.

Let's be real, so God can use us. Let's choose to worship even when the devil accuses us, even when he points out all of our mess and tells us we'll never be worthy. Let's confess, yes I am that mess but that is why I worship because I want to be more like him. In Him, my mess becomes a message. I will expose my pain to the Healer and allow Him to bring the restoration and healing that I need. I will trust my heart to those close to me and in loving God honouring relationship I will pursue my healing.





# Let The People Sing!



There is nothing more beautiful than those moments when the music is quiet and the congregation starts to worship on their own. Those moments when the congregation hijacks the worship set and sets the tone for where the Spirit is going. Those moments don't have to be relegated to those rare times of engagement, hungrily anticipated by worship leaders.

You can lead into this by creating moments where the music is intentionally stopped to make space for people to sing. You do have to discern the moment well and it usually works best with a song that people have taken to already. An anthem that your people love to sing. An easy song with strong words that elicit high holy emotion will draw people to engage in congregational singing.

Prepare your musicians for this moment. Let them know beforehand that you would like to encourage congregational singing at a certain point in your set. When you get there, verbally encourage people to lift up their voices and make

sure that your backup singers are confidently leading along with you. Their confidence or lack of can set the tone for mission success or failure. Your encouragement should always take the form of an invitation. Invite people to participate do not command them to. We never want our people to feel coerced into doing something that is not authentic for them at the moment. Let the Spirit lead them. Your job is to encourage and to invite, His job is to move their hearts. If you would like to completely cut out amplified music and voices, work out a hand signal to stop your team, but please choose the moment to do this well. Clumsiness at this point or a perceived lack of direction can kill the momentum completely and leave you with awkward silence.

So, if it is your desire for the church to sing, You can sing the beginning and end bit of the song and allow the worshipers to fill in the rest with their voices. It's good to have prepped some of the worshippers especially those on the team with you that are not on stage that Sunday for this moment, they can help you sustain the momentum and lift the level tremendously. Having a percussion instrument keep tempo is also a good practice because it allows you to flow or transition back to the accompaniment in time.

The main thing is for you to get out of the way. Allow the people to hear their own voices lifted up in united worship unto the Lord. If you are still struggling with a sense of self this might seem like the perfect opportunity for people to hear just how great your voice is or for you to control the flow in case the Holy Spirit drops you and it all falls flat. Trust in the Lord in these moments, back off, and let Him lead. You won't regret it.

**No Praying... No Playing!**



**W**orshippers need to have a well-developed prayer life. We can't lead people to a place of intimacy if we ourselves have never experienced intimacy for ourselves developed through our prayer and worship inner life. My personal take on this is that if you're not praying you shouldn't be playing. I know a few of you will decry that statement with shouts of "that's religious man, my prayer life or lack thereof has nothing to do with grace" but I would disagree saying, how can you know someone you have not taken the time to have a relationship with. How can you lead people to His heart if you yourself don't know the way there? Prayer is a foundational building block of the relationship from which we minister.

**Prayer and worship are intimately linked.** In the tabernacle of David, it was the harps and the bowls - prayer and worship together before the Lord. So for every minute spent praying spend as much time worshipping God. Let your time of worship be the conduit through which the

Holy Spirit can lead you into what to pray, how to pray, who to pray for. Worship over the situations God reveals to you in your times of prayer.

**Our love for Him is shaped and refined in those times of prayer.** We get to know His love for us. Someone once said that we think our prayer time is the place where we get to lay hold of God when in actual fact Prayer is that space where God can get hold of us. It is in this place of prayer and worship that our understanding of God is developed. How we view God is determined by how we experience Him in times of worship, prayer, and time in His word. Our actions will always betray the beliefs we have regarding who God is. Times of prayer helps us to eliminate dissonance in our own hearts. Establishing integrity in our Spirit, where what we sing about Him and believe about Him match up and is also reflected in how we live.

There are many things that happen when we as worshipers build on our prayer lives. Allow me to list a few benefits.

- Our Love is refined in times of prayer. Love for God and His people

- Empathy, compassion, and hope is built in times of intercession
- Passion for your congregation is stirred up once again
- Prophetic revelation of future purpose recalibrates our hearts
- Prayer envisions us and softens our hearts especially when we have become jaded
- It's a weapon of spiritual warfare - breakthrough in the heavenly precedes breakthrough in the natural
- It helps the worshiper in the fight against temptation - become a frustrating force to the enemy

It is important to realize that there has been no awakening/revival without prayer. Across the world, we hear of worshipers that are pushing in for more of God. Trusting Him to once again renew His works in our day. If we have any hope of seeing the kind of revivals we have experienced in the past we must persist in prayer. Not because it changes God but because it changes us.

Someone once wrote a book called "Worship to the wall." and there was a time when we all coined the phrase "to the



audience of one”. These times of prayer and intimate worship are those moments where we take our eyes off ourselves, our agendas, our fears, insecurities, and inhibitions and place them firmly on God. It’s these personal times of prayer and worship that transform you more than anything else. It’s these secret moments with God that sets us up for our public ministry. It’s in this place where we declare our love and adoration to Him, we are enveloped in His love and released to carry His fragrance into the world. He is a jealous God and He is jealous for your heart, He is jealous for your affection and He is jealous for your time. Make the time to pray, it will change your worship forever.

These times of prayer are really great for taking time to Meditate on the words you sing in church on a regular basis. We often sing incredible biblical truths without allowing the truth of what we are singing to sink into our hearts. Personal times of worship afford us unhurried time to think through the implications of what we are singing and how it affects our own walk with Jesus. This understanding will elevate your public times of worship to new heights in the Spirit.



# Teaching The Church To Worship



**W**e make the mistake of thinking that worship should be natural for all believers. Especially those of us who have grown up in church and especially if you're a musician yourself. This is not necessarily the truth. If you have a growing church you'll find that there are people coming into church culture for whom congregational singing is not the norm. You'll also find people from different theological backgrounds who have a completely different view on how we should engage God and the forms that it should take. You'll also find long time Christians from your community who don't have established worship practices. They don't know about lifting their hands, waving flags, dancing before the Lord, quiet moments in His presence, singing in the Spirit – the stuff we take for granted as normal worship practice.

This is where teaching is invaluable. Get the lead pastor and the eldership on board to help you teach the values that we hold dear as a church. I believe that as a church we should speak into the areas of finances and worship at least

yearly if not more. Ask the lead pastor to do a sermon series on worship and run the same series through the small group network of your church, present it as an online course. Alternatively, develop or find a worship series that you can cycle through the small groups on a yearly basis. The idea is to be intentionally teaching into worship, shaping the culture, and building God's values deep into the hearts of His people. How will they know unless we tell them?

Be creative in how you approach this. Think outside the box. Use scripture before or during your set to encourage worship. Produce short video clips over an extended period of time. Let the congregation share testimonies of breakthroughs during worship. There are so many possibilities.

Most importantly model worship as a team. I can't begin to tell you how many times I have watched worshippers on stage and find myself asking: "Do they really believe what they are singing?" We have to enjoy worship and let it show! People will follow what they see. If they don't see you lifting their hands, they won't if they don't see you enjoying worship they won't, if you never dance they'll assume that you just don't do it in this church. Everyone on stage must be involved with their hearts and souls.

Konstantin Stanislavski said: “There are no small parts, only small actors”. We have to overcome our personal insecurities in the presence of God. They become barriers to other people’s breakthroughs. We have become so constrained by our music sheets and musicality that we are not modelling worship anymore. Especially for those in smaller or growing worship teams who don’t have professional muso’s. Being stuck to a music sheet is not an issue of ability it’s an issue of intentional practice. Learn to focus on Him, it’s worth the additional time spent learning the chords, it’s worth the additional time weaning yourself of chord sheets. Learning to Focus on Him in worship is worth every effort.

We teach by our lives. You know the old adage goes, people don’t learn by what you say but by what they see. If you have more than one worship team ask the other teams to deeply and authentically engage in worship amongst the people on the days they are not leading. To and model live what they want to see happening when they are leading from amongst the people.

John Mumford once told me, “The senior pastor is the lead worshipper!” So, when it comes to worship the pastoral

team needs to be on board with modelling what they want to see. It doesn't matter if they are gifted or not. People will grow to their level of freedom in worship or be constrained by their self-consciousness.

As I mentioned in an earlier story, I was privileged to serve with Dave Pedersen at Fountain Vineyard in PE. He is not the world's greatest dancer, in fact, he is quite rhythmically challenged, sorry Dave, but what he lacked in finesse he made up for in bucket loads of passion. When the music moved him he would dance his own styled dances before the Lord and his freedom in worship often inspired great times of freedom in our congregation. I'll miss my dance partner this next season as we are both serving in different parts of the Vineyard at the moment. He was and is an example of modelling worship to a congregation.

We have to help people take baby steps or leaps into freedom. It's different for everybody. Prophecy what you desire to see into the atmosphere, speak it over people's lives, call for it, expect it. I used to do a thing where I encourage people to just take one small step toward greater freedom in worship. The way I did it was simple. If their level of freedom was lifting their hands to waist height, for

instance, I'd ask them to dare to raise it to shoulder height. If their level of freedom was shoulder height I'd ask them to dare to raise it above their heads. If they are used to raising their hands above their heads I'd ask them to risk waving it a bit and so forth until we get to those who want to dance or run or jump or kneel or prostrate themselves before the Lord.

One small step in the natural can translate into huge steps in the Spirit. We can help people break into greater levels of freedom. Believe it, and trust God to help you by His Spirit find the keys to greater levels of participation or freedom in the congregation you serve and then implement them consistently over time. Before you know it you would have helped to shape the culture and get to see what you have always desired in worship.



# **Authentic & Intentional Modelling**



Most worship Leaders have an ardent desire to see the church just break out beyond their boundaries and worship God extravagantly. Voices lifted, hands lifted high, dancing and flags if that's your thing, but just passionate engagement is their hunger. Into this space I want to ask the question, how they will know how to do what you desire unless you are willing to show them how to get there. We can't ask people to do what we ourselves are not willing to push in for.

On a recent trip to Brussels, I saw this guy on stage. He was a backup singer in the worship team. To be honest I couldn't really hear his voice but from what I saw in his posture toward God I was inspired to worship. He was engaged, lifting his hands, moving at the appropriate times, clapping hands, and even doing a dance move or two as the Spirit-led. It was not at all contrived. Just a hungry heart giving praise to the Father. I was so impacted by his worship that I sought him out after the service for a conversation and his story of salvation gave me an insight

into why he worships so extravagantly. You see God had delivered him from a very rough life and his understanding of grace released worship. He had also studied drama and man could I relate, because I also studied drama and it gave me some insights into what I'd like to share with you next.

I feel we need to pay greater attention to our delivery. How we sing what we sing is as important as what we are singing. Let's bring back some dramatic emphasis! If we are singing about passion let passion shine from our hearts and postures. Don't sing about passion when you are on stage and secretly wishing for the service to be over already. If it's a song about passion then sing with passion. If it's a song about joy then sing with joy.

Make the choice. You have the fullness of joy, the Holy Spirit Himself living in your heart, choose Him. If that feels inauthentic we need to get back to scripture and look at what the word says about allowing our feelings to dictate our actions. We are a people of faith and there are times when we sing it until we feel it. Yet, I will praise Him, the psalmist says... the glory and the lifter of my head. What would really help in this regard is being intentionally prayed up before stepping into that early morning rehearsal on a

Sunday morning. I know this is a very hard ask as life throws curve balls at us all the time especially on a Sunday morning, especially when you have kids to get ready... but do as much as possible in any case to get your heart attitude ready to engage the Lord through the words you'll be singing.

Strategic Emphasis is a device we should not be afraid to employ. Emphasise specific words that carry the heart of what you are singing about. Use musical emphasis to a greater degree. You have drums on stage for a reason. Use them to accentuate and emphasize key thoughts. Please do this with much consideration and musical preparation because it can go bad when done badly!

Enjoy worship and let it show, be engaged, and eliminate anything that could possibly distract you or others from worshipping. As I said earlier, music sheet is a blessing and a curse. I feel that we are so constrained by our sheets we are not modelling worship for others at all. Our whole focus is on getting the chords right to the exclusion of worship. Practice at home. Worship the Lord on stage.

Everyone on stage must be involved with his heart and soul. From the leader to the drummer. If you don't have an instrument in your hands use them to worship the Lord.

Show the church how to lift their hands in worship by unashamedly lifting your own. Our focus should be on Jesus and Jesus alone. Focus needs to be learnt. You can do this as you practice his presence. Keep your eyes on Him whilst engaging heaven. Your physical eyes may be open but the eyes of your heart should be on Him.

Modelling worship to others helps you overcome your own inhibitions and insecurities. Trust the Father to help you overcome your own difficulties in His presence. Don't overthink it – Keep your eyes upon Jesus and not who is watching you.

Just keep it real. For me, this is the key to worshipping in spirit and in truth. My heart before the father. Personally, When I walk into any worship environment I have already decided to worship the Lord regardless of what is going on around me. He is worthy of my worship. What I struggle with personally is the high level of choreography I have recently started noticing to create “the worship experience”.

Please hear me out on this. I believe that every church has a specific mandate from the Father regarding how and what they are called to go after and build. Some of us are called to reach those people who would never set foot in a

traditional church, some of us are called to build centres where children of God can be taught, refreshed, etc. However, when it comes to worship we should always keep the end in mind. Giving Him glory. Allowing people the opportunity to give Him glory in song and dance. When the worship experience is contrived and excessively cheer led and choreographed we move from worship to a performance or concert which is not wrong in itself but an over-emphasis on performance will take our eyes off Jesus and put it on our own man produced ability that will never really satisfy. Keep it real. Stay authentic. Keep your eyes on our Kingdom mandate. Build what God has called you to but never undermine the gospel by building toward yourself and away from Him and His glory.

# The Search For Fame



**W**e have YouTube celebrities popping up like popcorn, social media stars pushing themselves into the limelight, Hollywood stars, and Famous musicians being worshipped as gods. Upon closer inspection, you'll find that many of these so called stars have no real foundation for their fame, especially the social media stars. (No offence) Unfortunately, I feel that the sickness of celebrity has crept into the church in major ways.

Celebrity pastors, celebrity worshippers, big name television preachers... the list goes on. Not all of them are in a mess don't misunderstand me, but in some cases, I have to ask myself... Is this blatant self-elevation and profiteering really what the Lord had in mind when He said to make disciples of all nations?

Social- and other digital media is such an incredible God opportunity. A platform that the apostles would never have dreamt of having at their disposal. We are going to see these tools gaining more traction in the days to come as more



people are gravitating toward online connections. As God's people, we have to be in there using these mediums as a means to draw all men to Christ, but we have to ensure we live by our principles as we engage with using these mediums. The key to dealing with abuse is not non-use, it is to use correctly.

I agree with using every tool to spread the gospel and draw people to Jesus, but I get uncomfortable when Jesus takes second place to any man. The tool is never the problem, the manner in which we utilize the tool is what we have to pay careful attention to as digitalization becomes the norm and more and more churches are leaning toward the online church.

In a world where people are gaining instant celebrity coupled with financial benefits, we have to be careful that we guard our hearts against envy and greed that can pull us off track as God's people and put us on a road that we have not been called to walk. We have all seen the stories of successful "Christian artists" who have fallen prey to the trappings of fame and success. The antidote to this is trust. Can we trust that God has us in the palm of His hands and that He will bring promotion in due season as we surrender

our talents to Him. He told Solomon, your gift will make room for you and bring you before kings. If God has gifted you and you are stewarding your gift well, with wisdom and courage, I believe that He will open doors for you that no man can shut.

In the meantime... We know that God makes the man before he makes the ministry. He takes His time shaping us so that we can hold the weight of what He wants to release in us and through us. He does it in His time. Sometimes in our impatience with the process, we want to bypass crucial seasons of formation and we hurt ourselves in the process. Like a baby chick being hatched before it's time. It might survive but it will be stunted in its growth and it will bear the marks of being pushed out before its time for the rest of its life.

Our society is so self-absorbed. Everywhere we look people are chasing the dream to be known. We have to be careful to guard our hearts against our own desire for personal aggrandizement as worshippers. This is the place where Lucifer fell. Worship is an upfront ministry and the temptation to take glory in what is essentially a ministry unto the Lord is huge. The stage is not a space for us to fulfil our unmet emotional needs. Our job is to point people

to Jesus. No, I am not saying that we should cover our face our stand in a completely different space whilst we are leading worship, with a picture of Jesus on the screen. What I would love to see are worshippers whose hearts are hidden behind the cross of Jesus. Worshippers who understand that Jesus has to be the focus and are willing to be open and transparent before the Lord, helping the church put their attention on Jesus. Even if He elevates you, Christ will always be the central theme that will dominate your ministry. I have seen some worshippers doing this really well and their upfront, high-profile ministries bless us and the world. Let's take our cue from the Lord and allow Him to bring the increase.

Don't allow ambition to drive your worship. We all need to operate according to the grace upon our lives and not live ambitiously desiring to operate in the grace of another because of the perception that their grace is better than ours. Ambition can cause us to imitate others wanting what they have and are neglecting what God has deposited in us. Lucifer said I will exalt myself above the throne of God. his jealousy for what God is corrupted his heart and stirred rebellion in his heart that ultimately got him banished from the throne room of the Father. 1 Peter 4:10-11

Jesus said He who is first shall be last. I personally don't believe that there is anything wrong with the desire to be first as long as you pursue being first through a desire to be last. Living as a servant, serving God's people in love is how we get to the top as Christians. We are not part of the world system where dog eats dog in an ever-unfolding competition for supremacy and fame. The disciples entered into this conversation in the book of Luke 4 - "Within minutes they were bickering over who of them would end up the greatest. But Jesus intervened: "Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It's not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant." Luke 22:24-26 MSG

Promotion comes from the Lord. When we try to promote ourselves in our own strength we set ourselves up for pain. Our trust in the Lord will lead us to believe that He has our best interest at heart. There is a huge difference between self-actualization and developing the grace that God has placed in your life. One leans heavily on the human effort the other leans on the grace of God undergirded or founded in an understanding of the love the Lord has for you.

Satan will consistently come to challenge your identity in Christ. He did the same in Matthew 4 when he came to tempt Jesus. He dared asked Jesus... If you are.... in the book of Matthew 4 verse 3. What was he trying to do at the moment? He was trying to sabotage Christ's confidence in who God is and who He is. This is one of his primary weapons and as worshippers, we need to be alert for this strategy because Satan didn't hesitate to use it on Jesus.

Very often talented kids get praised from a young age for their ability to perform. Their parents and friends clap them on the back, give them candy and load them with praise because of the talents they display. Very soon we can become addicted to the praise and affirmation of people without even recognizing it ourselves. We wait for the praise of people after an especially great worship set and if we don't receive it we feel like failures or we wait for comfort from people we love or our team when the set didn't go as we planned. It's great to be affirmed and honoured for our grace by people we love and who love us but when our source of affirmation replaces or carries more weight than the affirmation of God we have substituted our heavenly reward for an earthly one that is empty in the long run.

Unfortunately, if we don't deal with the illicit desire for affirmation outside of the truth of God it will lead us to want to perform in order to receive our fix. God didn't give us our ministry or grace to hoard accolades upon ourselves; He gave us our grace to serve Him and His people in love. If we don't deal with the issue of who we are in Christ we will fall victim to evaluating our performance through our own eyes. How many people lifted their hands this morning? How many people sang during a particularly anointed part of the song? How many tears did our music elicit? How many felt blessed. All good things but evaluated from a very subjective point of view that can be divorced from the purpose of God.

Will our sense of success be determined by the results we see with our eyes? Will we base our sense of worth on our performance? This lack of understanding of who we are in Christ just opens the door for Satan to wreak havoc in our lives. We may even build huge ministries where we are recognized by many and yet never fulfil the desires we have in our hearts and miss the mark with regards to the call of God on our lives. We have everything we need for our lives already. God has given it to us. If He decides to make your name famous I pray that your foundation in Him is secure

and that you know who you are. Make His name famous. Lift Him up, glorify Him and He will lift you up.

The bible is clear humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and in due time He will lift you up. Humility or servanthood doesn't mean that you become a doormat... by no means. The way I see it is the same way I believe Jesus saw it. He said I only do what I see my Father doing. Listen to His voice, obey Him in the things He asks you to do, and do it well. You are a prince in His kingdom and yet you are under the Lordship of your King. Let Him promote you as you remain diligently working with what He has given you, serving His people in love and establishing your heart in His promises.

Let Fame never be your motivation. let being known as the next Bethel or Hillsong never be your motivation. Let your love for the Father and serving His kingdom purpose be the rudder that keeps your boat going in the right direction. If He raises you up awesome!

**Allow God to develop you in hidden places.** We live with a desire to be exposed to the world, for our gift to be lauded by many and we very often shun the gift of growing in hiddenness. TD Jakes, a famous American preacher, once

said: “Obscurity is a gift from God”. You see it’s God’s love for us that keeps us hidden from fame. In those seasons of hiddenness God builds into our lives, He shapes our character, He refines our hearts because He knows that nothing exposes cracks or flaws quicker than pressure. As I alluded to earlier, so many celebrities crack under the pressure of fame because they have not been developed enough in the womb of obscurity. I look at the slew of child stars who made their names on internationally known television programmes, and others who were exposed to fame from an early age without characters who ended up with messed up lives or breaking down publicly because their foundation could not hold the weight of what they had built upon it. Hiddenness allows God to shape us, mould us, and build into us so that when or if we are exposed to a greater audience we have the grace to carry the weight of being known. Don’t despise the day of small beginnings.



**It's About Him...  
Isn't It?**



I know, I know, this should go without saying right. The title of this chapter reminds me of the story where a church goer tells their pastor, man I really didn't enjoy worship this morning. His pastor turns to him and says... It's a good thing we're not worshipping you then. That interaction speaks loads of what I believe to be a prevailing mind set in the life of the church that needs to be broken.

Yes, I hear you saying, but Ricky, you say we should love the people and focus on leading them to interaction with God. Isn't that feeding into this mind-set that it's all about them and not Jesus? Your leadership of God's people does not nullify the personal responsibility that every believer has to push into the presence of God. Your love-filled leadership of the congregation coupled with their fervent desire to touch the heart of God for themselves empowered by the Spirit will yield great times of worship. It is worth a page or two to share a few thoughts regarding this very important understanding. We need some recalibration in this area.

We need to hold two important truths in tension. God is the only one worthy of our worship and our worship is all about lifting Him higher. God made it about us when He placed such a great value on us that He would send His Son to die on the cross for us. He calls us His pearl of great price. His love for us establishes our worth and this great act of loving mercy becomes the fountain from which our worship flows. This thought is depicted in the story of Jesus and the lady who broke the alabaster jar on His feet. She was worth so much to Jesus that he would never turn her away, in fact, he loved her so much despite her mess that He allows her to anoint Him for His burial. She is consumed with such love for Him displayed through his loving acceptance of her even though she was a prostitute that her one act of worship cost her a years' worth of wages. When was the last time we were moved to such extravagant levels of worship displayed in giving?

We live in a very self-centred, bordering on narcissistic, consumer-orientated society, we make it about ourselves constantly. Yet, we don't have answers, the answers we seek can only be found in Him. When in worship we take our eyes off our own woes and turn our eyes upon Jesus we turn our eyes toward the Author and Perfector of our faith. This

helps us to take our eyes off ourselves and to place it on the One who is so much bigger than us. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

“Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1).

**I wonder, has our worship become self-centred and not God centred?** Loads of the modern worship songs we sing have moved toward being songs about our condition instead of songs about the Lord of all that has the ability to change any circumstance including our condition and turn it around for our good. Hear me out I am all for declaring the truth of God over our lives, I am also a huge fan of intimate worship where we pour our hearts out to Him, we bare our souls before the Father, and beseech His loving touch to bring healing and restoration to our hearts, but a whole set of songs of that nature doesn't help people enter in. It glorifies self and elevates our circumstances and our human condition above the nature and character of God.

What we focus upon comes toward us. I want more of God and for this reason, He is the object and the Focus of my worship. Be circumspect when choosing which songs

you'll include in your worship set. Make sure that it is in actual fact a song of worship and not just a Christian Contemporary song with a great theme and nice tune that doesn't really qualify as a congregational worship song.

Our worship runs the risk of becoming self-centred when we make the reason of our worship us and what God can do for us and not Him and what He has done already, praising His mighty works. When the benefits we are to receive from us worshipping the father outweighs the benefit of sacrificial worship as unto the Lord. Gimme Gimme Gimme. The prosperity gospel has had much to do with a proclivity in men's hearts toward self and what they can get out of God. Let it not be like that amongst the people of God.

We all enjoy different styles of music and musical preference can be a hot potato to juggle in church. The old folk wants hymns, the younger guys want contemporary worship, the kids want father Abraham! There is no issue with all of us wanting different songs or styles of music. The issue is when you start getting offended when you don't get your type of song played in church. We need to learn to love the diversity that the Lord has placed in His body. We are

going to be together for an eternity, maybe it's a good thing to start enjoying each other this side of heaven already! If we make it about Him we will circumvent all the messiness that comes with a self-centeredness that we want to avoid in the life of our churches.

**Psalm 21:3, Psalm 57:5 Psalm 121**

# **Excellence Looks Different In Different Contexts**



I have been hearing the phrase "Excellence in worship" being bandied about so often in worship circles these past few years that I would like to add a few thoughts to the discussion. I believe that the pursuit of excellence is a worthy one. The word excellence means "the quality of being outstanding or extremely good", and the pursuit of excellence in that context would mean the pursuit of being outstanding or extremely good.

The biblical base our understanding of excellence in worship is derived from is often from the life of the bible's greatest worship leader, other than Jesus, David. The bible teaches us that he played skilfully before the Lord. The Psalms also call on musicians to play skilfully. In other words, to hone their skill and to become excellent at what they do. Our God is an awesome God and He is worthy of our best at all times, so I agree this is a worthy pursuit for worship leaders, and how it is walked out needs to be done with loads of discernment and courage.



What has caused concern for me personally is the potential for the word excellence to stir up a spirit of striving and comparison in the hearts of worship leaders that move us from operating from a place of love and grace into a place of works. Like everything else, excellence has to be born from a place of love. The love that we have for our congregation will determine the level of effort we employ in the manner we serve God, His people, and His Kingdom's purpose.

We need to recognize when our pursuit of excellence is not authentic to where we are at in terms of our own development and circumstance. We all are at different places and stages in our walk with God. As we are exposed to the big name worshippers and big name churches that are far along on their journey we need to be realistic about where we are personally as leaders and where our church is at. It is only when we have given ourselves an honest once over that we can plot the best course ahead. Do not allow the idea others have about excellence to be your blueprint.

As well-meaning as most folks are we often want to shape others into our own image and determine for others what accepted standards for excellence are. You can't wear

another man's armour. What is God on for you in your community right now? Keep in step with that. I have seen churches get into trouble trying to emulate what they perceive to be excellence and lose their God given identity in pursuit of what is not authentic to them or appropriate to the level and stage the church is in at that moment.

Excellence at its best looks like you being who you are. The questions we have to ask ourselves are:

- “What would my best effort look like in this situation?”
- “Do I feel that I am doing everything within the scope of my capacity to serve God's people?”
- “Am I being true to myself and the grace of God inside of me and to the people He has given me?”
- “Am I giving my best and doing my best to inspire others to give their best?”

The pursuit of excellence has nothing to do with professionalism or perfectionism even though we may grow towards greater levels of professionalism. It is an ongoing journey to give our best to the Lord. It has to be born from an understanding of the nature and the heart of the Father

and very importantly it has to be born from a place of understanding your own worth. You need to know who you are in Him and the value God places on you as an individual. When we don't value ourselves we will never give ourselves fully to the development of the grace that God has deposited in our lives. If we can't value ourselves, or love ourselves well it is impossible to love others well. You are worthwhile and what God has placed in you is worthwhile. Give yourself to this truth.

My caution to you worship leader. Don't automatically take on someone else's standard of excellence as your own. Know where you are. Know your stage and live into that with everything inside your heart.

On the flip side, I have seen worship leaders intentionally lead away from getting better or more excellent in their expressions of worship because of a stunted understanding of what it means to be excellent. For these worship leaders, big worship movements have become the exact representation of what they want to avoid because of the perception that it is flashy or showy nature and in their hearts, they have built a resistance to growing in excellence as a reaction to this. Or, in their own hearts, they are

fighting the mess of fame and celebrity but don't know how to give expression to this struggle in a healthy way and therefore rejects everything that resembles it!

This is not great either.

One of the key values from the Vineyard movement that has impacted my life tremendously is the value of Simplicity.

The following statement has underscored my personal worship philosophy:

“We want to be “naturally supernatural,” avoiding behaviour that draws attention away from God and to ourselves. Simplicity affects our worship style, how we pray for the sick and minister to the poor, carry out discipleship, teach the Bible, and so on (1 Cor.2:2-5; James 3:13; 1 Thess. 4:11-12).

# Unity And Dealing With Offences



**W**here there is unity God commands a blessing! If you are truly desirous for the presence of God in worship do everything you can to preserve the bond of love and unity in your team. Getting on the same page is so much more than just being able to read and play the same chords of a chord sheet. It is a heart position that we have to choose to adopt toward one another that allows the presence of God to flow freely without relational hindrances amongst us.

Jesus said if you bring your gift to the altar and realize that you have an offense in your heart toward someone leave your gift, sort your relationship out and then bring your gift. How much more important is this if you will be leading worship from the same stage with someone you have issues with? Worse still is getting on stage and having someone from the congregation shoot daggers at you while you are trying to worship Jesus! Sort it out quick!

If you live in this world you will get offended or you will invariably offend someone else. It's not a matter of if it happens, it's when! So when these offences occur, how do we deal with them?

Leaders, it's best to get ahead of the game on this score because there are just so many things that could cause offence in a worship environment. Present your team members with an ideological road map that will help navigate the potentially destructive trap of offence. The bible teaches that a brother offended is a city hard won. That's why talking about the inevitability of offense, in the beginning, leaves a small door in the wall that will allow your entrance into an offense situation that you would not otherwise have had if you had not presented your team with a roadmap to dealing with the offense. We don't run from offenses.

One of the first videos we would play for new members to Fountain Vineyard in Port Elizabeth was an age-old DVD by Rick Godwin called "Taking Offense!" It was so dated that when we tried to get an updated version from Rick's offices even they didn't have it. I can tell you from experience that it was a worthwhile investment in a

common understanding of offenses and how we deal with them as Christians.

Offenses are often used by God to expose some growth needs within our lives and the lives of others and if we walk through it well I have seen God turn offensive situations into tremendous stories of Kingdom breakthrough. Don't let unresolved issues linger for long. The longer you avoid dealing with mess the greater the chance for the evil one to take advantage of the situation and wreak havoc in the Spirit. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, it's against the devil, and his principalities and unresolved offenses are one of his favoured weapons of warfare. don't fight the person address the issue, deal with the spirit. Get to the root cause of the offense and help people walk out their response.

Talk to your team, let them know we don't run from offenses. We engage one another in love and we figure it out. Our relationships will be stronger on the other side of transparent interaction based on our love for Jesus and one another. If we can't figure it out one on one we ask for mediation and prayer, but we don't let it go until there has been a reconciliation. Protect unity! Unity is not necessarily based on everyone being carbon copies of everyone else. In



fact, in a worship environment, you will probably have liquorice of all sorts. We can be diverse in our opinions, on different sides of arguments but our unity is not based on our agreement it is based on Christ and even if we disagree on some issues we can still be united in love and purpose. Work on this, I promise you it's worth it. Have you built this understanding into the thinking processes of your team yet?

Love your local congregation, Love others in churches associated with yours, and love the body of Christ across denominational lines. We are called to preserve the bond of peace. Let's do it in love.

*(Eph. 4:3-6).*



# Clean Up Your Mess...



**I**f there is one thing I know about human beings, Christians or not... is that we have a tendency to mess up. It's inevitable. The bible is filled with examples of great men who made great mistakes but still went on to do incredible things for the Lord. Gives you hope, doesn't it?

So what makes us as God's people different from the world? Well, firstly we have the Holy Spirit and he will let us know when what we have done has missed the mark and secondly we love ourselves and other people, so when we do mess up we'll know about it, thirdly we have been charged with keeping short accounts and to fix up our mess when we have made it!

Jesus was clear. If you remember you have something against your brother or he has something against you leave your gift at the altar and go sort it out! There's no use trying to hide your offense, your pain, or your mess. Man, it will show, no matter how you try to hide it or hide from it. A good man brings forth good things from the good stored up in his heart. Let me put it this way... what's inside you

will start to ooze out of you given enough time. What you do in secret, who we are when no one is watching will come out no matter how we try to hide it.

We need to learn to man up to our mess. I tell my kids every decision, every action has a consequence and you will have to carry the weight of those consequences all by yourself. If we don't learn to deal with our stuff we become a danger to the people around us. Someone once said, wounded people – wound people and it's true. So love people enough to deal with your own heart. If you have messed up on the team It doesn't diminish you as a leader to say you were wrong and that you are sorry - in fact, you are increasing your clout with your followers by being a real person. Don't let unresolved issues linger for too long. Take the bull by the horns and fix it. Keep short accounts!

It is so hard to trust someone who consistently tries to hide their stuff. The basis of our ministry needs to be integrity or we are deceiving both ourselves and our listeners. Your earnest pursuit of wholeness and relational integrity brings such glory to God. When we allow Holy Spirit into our mess and trust Him to bring healing and restoration it releases testimony of grace that becomes so powerful in helping others to deal with their own mess.

In the places Satan wounds you, God gives you authority to bring healing to others. Our greatest victories are often the places of our greatest struggle. They become the war stories that inspire others toward their own victories. Don't allow Satan to keep you locked up in bondage. If you know there are unresolved relational issues in your life, don't rest until you have sorted it out. What does this have to do with leading worship you ask? My answer.... Everything.

Very often the fear of being rejected or judged keeps people locked into hiding their sin. As His bride, it behoves us to live with a bias toward compassion and mercy. In the Vineyard, another core value is accepting any believer into fellowship who is attempting to walk in obedience to God, is repentant of his or her sins, and is in submission to the authority of the church. In a loving, healing environment like this, we will inevitably see the mercy of God bringing healing and restoration to hurt and embattled souls. His mercy always triumphs over judgement.

If we confess our sins the bible teaches... he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*(James 2:13; John 8:1-11).*

# Servant Kings



Jesus was a servant King. He became the sacrifice in service of His people. We see this reflected in the life of Jesus.

*Philippians 2:5-11 English Standard Version (ESV)*

*<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup><sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,<sup>[c]</sup> being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

His primary desire was the glory of the Father. He lived to please His Dad and He only did what He saw His Father



doing. Even though he was King He didn't feel that living His life in service was somehow beneath Him. That somehow one day He would graduate from service and be able to boss others around because He paid His dues. By no means, He served in life and He served in death and after His resurrection He still serves, making intercession for the saints by the throne of His father.

Let us never forget what it means to serve the Father and to serve others in love. When we forget servanthood we forget one of the core values of the gospel.

One of my life messages is the message of Identity in Christ. That because of Jesus we are co-heirs of the Kingdom, sons of God, adopted into His family. What an incredible reality. This is a truth we should hold on to with the greatest of reverence. I am a son of God.

On the flip side, I want to encourage us to not become so enamoured with our sonship that we neglect our servanthood. When I think of kings and their princely vassals or ambassadors it brings to mind this relationship we have with the King of Kings. We are sent as sons, princes to do the work of the Father. We carry His authority, yet nothing He asks of us to do is beneath our station. We will

do His will because we belong to him. We are His bond slaves. We have given our lives freely and how He wants to use us is His prerogative. We are in service to the king and in being in service to the king means that we are in service to the people.

John Wimber said: “We are small change in His pocket, He can send us anywhere He likes”.

How is he asking you to serve today? How does service to the King look in your environment? How will you serve your Senior Pastor and the church leadership? How will you serve God’s people?

I remember a sound engineer in one of the churches I served in who had real issues with the manner in which the pastor was conducting the Sunday morning meeting. He came from a very conservative background and he also had a very exacting personality. So when the pastor would preach too long for his liking he would start showing the pastor his watch from behind the sound desk and he even went as far at times to mute the microphone whilst the pastor was “coming in for a landing.” He tried to lead the service from the sound desk.

I have unfortunately at times been witness to the love-hate relationship between Senior Pastors and worship leaders. The Senior Pastor has a vision of how a Sunday morning service should like with set parameters within which this should happen: “You know it’s the Word that people come to church for, that’s the stuff that changes lives”. Worship leaders are at times a bit more fluid and feel that their vision of what the worship meeting should look like should be given preference:” You know people don’t change without an encounter with God, that’s the stuff should be given more time”. What’s worse is when the relationship between the worship leader and senior pastor becomes strained because of a misunderstanding of each other’s gifting. Like any other human relationship, there are many more reasons this relationship can become strained that I won’t go into right now. These two upfront ministries are so important that we need to give attention to how we serve one another in love especially in these roles according to Galatians 5:13. Mutual submission is born from a place of loving understanding of each grace, each one carries and the role it plays in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.

Worship leader, I encourage you to serve your senior pastor. Take time to get to know him as a person. Get to know his heart and the desires that he carries. Take the time to hear what dreams God has placed inside his spirit and you might be surprised that your poles are not that far apart. Two visions cause division and if you and your senior leader share different visions the stage cannot be the place where this lack of unity plays itself out. We need to guard the unity at all costs.

**We are people first before we are functions.** Get to know the person behind the title and the function. Be a safe person. Someone your pastor can trust. If you are brave enough initiate some soul to soul conversations. Conversing about the song selection doesn't build a relationship. Sharing heart does. If you are holding unmet expectations in your heart as an example, talk about it. Maybe, just maybe when he finds you to be a trustworthy person you can develop a relationship that's deeper than a Sunday morning meeting. Let these meetings be James 5:16 times where you can open your mess up to each other and pray for each other's healing. That kind of unity can bring great spiritual blessing.

### **Generosity.**

We are stewards of God's gifts and resources (*Matt. 10:8, 39; 13:45-46*). This means that when God directs, we will be willing to give away what we have, to risk the security of current success in order to advance the kingdom on earth in greater ways. We do not own our ministries, so they are not ours to keep. We "give to get to give."



# Working With Your Team



**W**hat a great blessing to be able to work together with others in a team toward the extension of God's purpose upon the earth. I am happy that I don't have to do the stuff of the kingdom all by myself. I'm even happier that I don't have to be a one man band on a Sunday. Laden with every kind of instrument or surrounded by loads of electronic equipment to make up for every band member I don't have.

Many of us have been there. Some of you are still there. It's you... in a small church... on a Sunday, all by yourself. Responsible for setting up sound, doing AV, and leading worship. It's tough. How awesome is it when the Lord starts adding musicians? Everything improves but now instead of only having set up and sound to concern yourself with, the Lord stretches you in your ability to lead and grow others.

I was responsible for worship in a small church in Cape Town, South Africa. It happened in a school hall and we



would only be allowed on the morning of the service. Even if we could set up the night before the school was in such a rough neighbourhood that we'd never consider leaving the equipment over night. To top it off the church family didn't have a vehicle we could use to get the equipment to church. At the time my now wife, then fiancé had a small Fiat Uno and every Sunday morning she would drive in from literally the other side of Cape Town to be there on time to pack this little car with sound equipment so that we could set up in time for the morning service. It was like playing Tetris every Sunday trying to fit everything into that little car! After which we would drive to church, clean the floors and set up for the service. We did this every Sunday for a long time.

There is so much in leading in any ministry. Here are some thoughts that could help you grow in this grace.

**Don't be too quick to appoint people to the worship team.** Somebody once said that it's easier to appoint than it is to disappoint. I know that in the beginning you might be tempted to take just about anybody that can hold a note but I would advise great discernment and patience when allowing people to join your team. If you are the kind of

person that struggles to say no to someone work on an entry process that will outline the way into the worship team that includes an audition, you at least want to hear the person sing or play an instrument before they join, and a waiting period wherein which you can do some solid pastoral preparation work to ascertain whether the person is ready for an upfront ministry like worship.

Maybe I should have led with this but if you are a worship team leader you need to **consider yourself as a shepherd of the people on your team.** You are their pastor whether you have the title or not. I know this is a dangerous thing to say especially if you yourself are a megalomaniac, power-hungry, a self-serving individual who does not prize the unity of the brethren but I will give you all the benefit of the doubt and assume that you are in this thing to grow people and not to build your own kingdom. If this is you then you are their shepherd.

It's your responsibility to pastor the team God has given you. What does that mean? **Be intentional about knowing the people on your team.** Find out about what is going on in their lives, what they are celebrating as well as what they are struggling with. Help where you can refer on where you

can't. When things go wrong in their lives you want to be one of the first people to know about it so you can help them as well as protect them and the congregation.

Speak to your pastoral team about how far your responsibility goes. Be clear in your own mind about what pastoral issues are yours to take care of. Handle what you can in love and refer pastoral issues that are way beyond your pay grade to the pastor or pastoral team. We are our brother's keepers. We are called to look out for one another, shepherd one another. Build this into the team mind set. We take care of one another in this team.

**See your team for who they are and not objects or pawns to be used** to fulfil a ministry or to satisfy your own need for affirmation. Take time to find out what the dreams or visions in the heart of the people you are leading are. If it's in your power help them get to those dreams by creating an environment where they can live their gifting without fear. Find the gifting locked up in every person in your team and cheerlead it. If you can cultivate a culture where we champion one another it will kill jealousy and competition. Learn to recognize grace. Know what every person brings to the mix and how it all fits together.

**We are family.** A tough one for worship leaders who want the appearance of excellence is choosing heart position and character over capacity or ability. If there is a willingness to grow you can work with it. We want the best musicians we can find but not at the expense of those who carry anointing.

Here are some more practical leadership tips to help you lead your team well.

- Develop confident communication ability – take charge of the evening or musos will take charge of it on your behalf
- Deal with stuff as they come up – difficult people, domineering people, people who lack accountability
- Establish a leadership team - share the load. It's an excellent tool to use when multiplying yourself in others and transmitting values to a large group. When more people carry the same DNA it makes transmitting the DNA so much easier.
- Ask for support from the pastoral leadership team. In fact, ask the Senior Pastor or his delegated authority to come and input the worship leaders as often as you deem

necessary. This will help the worship team see that the church and leadership team value their gifting and sacrifice.

- We can never stop learning. Especially about what it takes to be better leaders? Work on your own leadership style and capacity. Ask people you trust about your blind spots and see if the Lord is on you for change or if there are others on the team that could help you deal with areas you may not excel at.
- Prepare for your team. Don't take your meeting time for granted. Go into rehearsal times with your eyes and ears wide open. What is working? What's not working? Don't be afraid to ask questions. We can only make good decisions if we have accurate information. Troubleshoot and fix.
- Again, bring people along slowly. Resist the urge to let the good musicians skip the steps. Having a predetermined entry process will help you catch the Spirits heart well and give you a chance to see where people are at for yourself. It's too late when they are on stage already. Let them roll cables, do AV, help tune guitars, learn the desk, etc. You'll quickly see where their heart is at.

- Ask the current team about prospective members. They can be a valuable resource if you ask the right questions.
- Don't have different weights for different people depending on ability. Be consistent with implementing your values. Treat people equally. Let love be your guide and be fair.
- Be consistent in your communication with the team. Don't chop and change every few weeks. Let rosters, rehearsals, worship times, etc. be consistent.
- The sound guys are part of the team, not a separate entity, teach the team how they need to interact with the sound guys and teach the sound guys how to ask the team for what they need in a respectful way.
- Something that has worked wonders for me personally in recruiting new members has been asking for a commitment of at least one year. When there is a time limit to the commitment people don't feel locked into life time membership of the worship team. You can choose to leave after one year or re-commit for another year. The yearly call for commitment talk is also a great way to re-emphasize values to the team and get

everybody on the same page regarding what we are pushing for in the Spirit.

- Honour your team. Pay attention to time. If you value people's time they believe you value them. Start on time and end on time. Give people opportunities to rehearse the Sunday set a few days before the Sunday they are meant to play. Give people time to practice a new song at home before you rehearse it. It will make your practice times so much more productive and it shows honour.
- Lead from example. Don't ask others what you're not doing yourself. If you ask them to practice make sure you are doing it and model it consistently.
- For the sake of the team and not just musicality, take time to arrange the parts and pay careful attention to transitions and teach the team how to transition.
- If you are leading a band with different instruments get to know the different instruments so you can speak to each musician in the language they understand.

Finally, pray together. Have times of worship and prophetic impartation where there is no other agenda other than practicing the presence together. These times of

worship set the tone for the heart carried in the team. It is in these places where we can intentionally make space for honouring the grace in one another's lives. It's in these spaces we can call out the gifting in others and encourage them to pursue greater heights in God. Don't limit yourself to these times, make it part of your culture but use these specific moments to engender DNA.

Remember we are called to equip. Learn to recognize training opportunities that arise naturally during rehearsals or on a Sunday and make use of it. Make time to train people in specific skills or find an expert to come in and teach on a subject you are not too great on. Give your teams feedback. Let them know what they are doing well but also let them know in which areas there is still room for improvement. Once people know you care for them they will allow you into those places and your correction will become sought after as gifts of grace rather than opportunities for offences.

I have heard it said that every team has its own unique **culture, defined** by a collective set of values and habits that condition the actions of people within that team. I want to encourage you as the leader to be the one who



shapes the culture of your team. Building a culture takes loads of time and perseverance, and lots of patience but nothing engenders long term change more than shaping a culture.

Ask yourself. What kind of culture would I like to build in this team? Once you have established that plan your worship evenings around building that culture. If your heart is to engender a prophetic edge in your team encourage it over a long period of starting your worship practices with prophetic utterances spoken over each other. Communicate vision with the team and allow them entrance to your dreams and add their own. Together you and your team can build something that others are attracted to. Something that others will want to be a part of.

Love your team, serve them well, and together you will achieve more!



# Kingdom Realities



I take tremendous comfort and joy knowing that the Lord is at work. His Kingdom work is continually moving ahead. Scripture puts it this way: He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and **of his kingdom, there shall be no end.** Isaiah says of the increase of His government there will be no end. God is at work! The influence of His government is increasing and what is exciting is that it is increasing through the efforts of ordinary men and women who have a heart for the King and His kingdom! This stirs my passion like none other. If He is at work what is he doing? I want to know what He is doing because I want to throw my effort behind His efforts. My own effort may or may not bring the Kingdom results we desire but His efforts will always make an eternal impact and I want in on that! The love we have for the Father and the love He seeds in us for the family of God will necessarily awaken in us to see His people set free, healed, delivered, and walking out their ever-unfolding salvation through the journey of sanctification.

The incredible thing about our King is that He calls us into this work alongside Him. We get to co-labour with the Lord to the extension of His kingdom. So we have to ask ourselves what is He doing and how do I tap into what He is busy with. Ecclesiastes says there is a time and a season for every purpose under heaven. So that means that right now you and the church you are serving are in a particular season.

Ask the Lord, what season is the church in right now and what do you want to accomplish in this season Lord? Before the worship, meeting ask the Lord what it is He wants to accomplish that morning and when you are in the meeting and His Spirit is moving ask Him what He is busy with. Look around you and use the spiritual and physical senses God has given you to discern what the Holy Spirit is up to and jump on board with that. Tailor your music and song choice to undergird what the Spirit is doing. If it is within your purview make space for prophetic word or song. Bring words of encouragement or words of release to those the Lord highlights, make declarations or quote scripture in line with what is happening in the meeting.

Never lose your expectation. How we position our hearts for Kingdom breakthrough is so important. Someone once

said if you bring a cup to a waterfall all you'll get is a cupful. Don't bring cups, bring rain water tanks! Be expectant in the presence of the Lord. The seemingly mundane can turn into moments of glory when His presence rocks up. How can your worship facilitate the in-break of the Kingdom? Position your heart for the more of God. Be aware of your spiritual posture at all times. Your heart attitude before the Lord if you will. David says: "**Search me, God**, and know my heart; test **me** and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in **me**, and lead **me** in the way everlasting." He was so aware of the inclinations of his wayward heart that he always took the time to bring his heart before the Lord and to ask Him for recalibration. Be sensitive to your own heart and strive to align yourself with heaven at all times.

When we push into heaven with expectant hearts we can bring what is reserved for the future into our present reality! Kingdom Theology 101. David our favourite worshipper was a man out of time. He connected with a relational dimension with God that was reserved for a new covenant. He worshipped God outside of the temple model that was ordained as the expected route to God and cultivated a living relationship with God that up until then was reserved for

Priests, prophets, or Kings which he wasn't yet as a shepherd boy.

Remember our worship carries a dimension that is way larger than the room we are ministering to at any given moment. Let your worship reach beyond man made boundaries and affect the atmosphere of your neighbourhood, your city, your country, and the world. Our worship is for greater purposes than the church we're serving. I urge you to remember that you are part of the kingdom of God. You are part of the church universal. The Spirit of God knows no boundaries, His touch extends way beyond our physical limitations. The Spirit is not restrained to a physical location. We may be worshipping in South Africa and God may be affecting change in China!

Worship as warfare must never be underestimated in its ability to release the power of heaven. The scripture is filled with stories of God using worship as a tool for supernatural breakthroughs! The weapons of our warfare are not of this world but mighty unto God for the pulling down of strongholds! Worship is one such weapon. It pierces the darkness, making its way straight into the enemy's camp and setting the captives free by the grace and power of our God!

In our times of worship, God makes war against our selfish desires as we turn our eyes on Him. Worshipping God opens our eyes to the wonders of who God is and sets us free from our foolish and selfish pre-occupation with ourselves. It allows the Lord to have dominion over areas in our hearts that are not under the Lordship of Christ as we turn our eyes on Him and acknowledge Him as Lord.

Prophetic worship that looks into God's heart and reflects His thoughts on the state of our own hearts in relation to His holiness. Worshipers like Keith Green were ahead of their times in capturing the heart of the Father for a generation. His willingness to be real before the Father opened up his spirit to receive and transmit a prophetic message to the church that still carries weight today. Where are the Keith Greens of our day? I pray that the Lord will deliver us from writing music for commercial success and bring us back to writing music that touches His heart and moves His people closer to their prophetic destiny in Him. In our times of worship, we must have our ears and our hearts open to His voice at all times and then have the courage to reflect through our words what we believe we hear the Spirit saying.



These are risky moments, but what do we have to lose? Maybe we miss it, that's okay. In an environment that has been fostered to make space for risk, there should be an apostolic voice that can bring correction if it is needed. There should be other prophetic voices in the congregation that are able to discern truth from error. There should be pastors ready to shepherd people if mistakes are made and teachers willing to bring us back to true biblical understanding if in our eagerness to discern the voice of God we misinterpret His Spirit's promptings to our hearts. If we have these kinds of safe guards in place we can encourage trusted worship leaders and eager prophetic voices to take risks.

Nothing great has ever been born from safety and comfort. Let's create spaces where we can push beyond the sterility of organized church and push into Holy chaos. On the day of Pentecost when the Spirit fell the disciples were so influenced by the Spirit of God that those around them said that they were drunk! It was the voice of the apostle that brought correction saying: "These are not drunk as you suppose!" When the Holy Spirit breaks in It very seldom looks as organized and composed as we would like it to. What do we want his presence or our programme? Lord

help us to walk this line, this tension with so much wisdom and Godly fear. Our hearts are not to chase away the seeker but to present them with the realities of life-changing, future-shaping, heart inspiring, dead raising, and nation delivering God. Help us not to box You, but also help us not to use our freedom to bring others into bondage and confusion.

# Song Writing



Very often I hear guys asking where does the inspiration to write a song come from? There are a few avenues we can explore as fonts of inspiration but for a Christian song writer, our main source of inspiration is the Holy Spirit Himself.

Of course, our personal intimate relationship with the Trinity is the baseline for inspiration. It is often in our times of worship that the Lord will download a new melody or a phrase into your spirit that becomes the seed from which a song is composed.

However, you cannot separate yourself from the influences around you. You have walked your own journey, you have lived your own life, and you have been exposed to different genres of music. You have your own life experiences, pain, disappointment, joy, frustrations the whole gambit of human experience lived out in the context of our faith is our source of inspiration. Very importantly, you are living out your Jesus walk in the context of

community and many of your songs for the church will be born from this collective experience of God at work amongst you.

So, this is what I want to focus on. The songs are inherent in every congregation. Every church has its own God stories. Right now God is moving in your congregation in a unique form in some way or the other. God never uses cookie cutters in relation to His children. We are all unique. In the same manner, every expression of His bride upon the earth is unique and He is moving uniquely in every congregation.

As I have said earlier it is so important for us to be spiritually aware of what is happening in the realm of the Spirit in our environment so that we can co-labour with God on what is currently on His heart for your congregation. This awareness forms the base from which we draw our inspiration and ideas for congregational song writing. So often when writers set out to write a song we want to write songs that will have an international impact, sung on the stages of the world. However, if the songs you write don't even move the hearts of the people God has called you to serve in your local congregation how can you expect it to have greater exposure in the world beyond.

As worshippers, we should seek to give expression to the God stories among us. When you embark on this journey there will be a steep learning curve you will have to follow. My advice to you... just get started. No one is asking you to write the next big hit song. Sometimes we put undue pressure on ourselves. The idea is just to start. You will probably write hundreds of mediocre or even bad songs as you hone your skill and lean on the skills of others, but as you push into this grace you will start seeing the Lord add to your ability in leaps and bounds. The biblical principle of being faithful in little and ruler over much applies strongly in this arena. Having said that, we have to be careful to examine the intent of our hearts. Why are we desiring to write worship music? For our own personal gain or for the cause of the kingdom?

As far as you are able make the song writing process very inclusive. Tell the church about your desire to capture your own God stories. Invite them to submit lyrics or melodies. I know this might cause huge amounts of work for you as you will need to sift through loads of coal to find diamonds but the goodwill and sense of ownership you will elicit from the congregation will be well worth it. They will be the people that will ultimately cheerlead or champion your

effort and if your song writing community is far removed from the people you are not doing yourself any favours.

I endorse collaborative writing big time. So often in a writing circle, I have experienced that one guy will have an incredible melody but no words, the other would have a bridge or a lyric or a very catchy hook, and when you put it all together, something great happens.

Song writing is a vulnerable thing. For many people, it is akin to public speaking... one of the top 5 fears in the world. Our songs are very often penned when we ourselves are in a vulnerable space before God and sharing our songs often feels like sharing our vulnerability as well. Our self-esteem or sense of worth is also on the line. What if they don't like what I have written? Worse yet, what if they outright reject this idea I have grown so fond of. I have heard it said that we should view our songs as plants and not babies. If someone insults your baby you will take it personally, but if someone says something about a plant you won't necessarily find it offensive. In fact, you can prune a plant and make it better but there's nothing you can do to improve a baby. I think the idea behind that analogy was to not be too attached to your ideas when you are first stepping into the

song writing arena. Allow other access to your songs. People you can trust to be completely honest, yet caring enough to take your feelings into account.

I would encourage you to write prophetically. What do I mean by that? Write songs that echo the heart of the Father for your congregation. You might not yet see all the wonderful things God has promised your particular outpost of His Kingdom yet but nothing stops you from prophetically declaring or singing about the things you are trusting God for in your community. You may not have seen physical healing in your church for ages but yet long for the expressions of His Kingdom amongst you. Sing about it. You may be experiencing high levels of oppression and depression in your community. Sing about His power to break those chains and about His joy that heals. I will sing about a fruitful vine! Position the church for future breakthroughs through your worship. Gordon D Fee once said: “Show me a church’s songs and I will show you their theology”.

There are many resources available on the dynamics of song writing. All I want to do is encourage you to start looking around and identify the God stories amongst you



and to write them. Give Him the little you have. You'll be surprised at what He can do with what you give Him.

A collective of people who have really taken this to heart and who are writing songs born from their community is the bunch from "Singing our Stories" led by Sharné and Matthew Osborne. They are based in Fountain Vineyard in Port Elizabeth and their stuff is available on iTunes, go take a listen.



**Passion**  
**VS...**  
**Hype and Manipulation**



I love passionate worship born from the heart of passionate worshipers. When I see men and women engaged in worship I am intrigued. I want to know what their story is. Their outward expression of worship unto the father very often is an indicator of the depths of their love and gratitude for his wonderful works in their lives. It is real, it is authentic, it connects them to the heart of the father and it releases such a fragrance of grace!

I live for those moments when the Holy Spirit rocks up and the voices of the congregation is raised as one unto the Lord, hands lifted high, tears streaming down our face, rocking, swaying, twirling to the heavenly rhythms released in our midst. I love seeing young men and women fist pumping, jumping up and down in praise – just giving their all in worship to the Lord.

I love these moments so much that I often want to recreate these moments using my ability to hype a crowd and whip them into a frenzy and in so doing moving into

the realm of performance and forfeiting the very thing that I am so passionate about seeing in reality in the lives of those I serve. I have to be so mindful of the voice of the Spirit when I lead that I never lead people from selfish ambition or desire but from a place of genuine love and care for them and their love connection with God.

You see passion is not born from an outward experience. Passion comes from the heart. It is born from experiencing the reality of who Christ is and it overflows from our lives and it finds expression in the way we live our worship, the way we embody worship, the way we love, and the way we live. The lady who breaks the alabaster jar on the feet of Jesus as an act of worship does so from a heart filled with profound gratitude that the master found space in His heart for her, a prostitute, a sinner condemned unclean. To whom much is given.... much is required. Her heart burns inside of her with gratitude and she would risk the ire of the disciples and other religious men to express her heart of love to the Saviour.

We see this passion born from experience in the famous “dancing in underpants” story in the bible. The first time David brings the ark back into Jerusalem, someone dies

whilst trying to keep the ark from falling. It shakes David so much that they leave the ark outside the city. The person who has the ark representing the presence of God starts to experience the blessing of God in great measure. David sees this and realizes he needs to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. This act of bringing the presence of God back to Jerusalem overwhelms David to such an extent that he literally strips himself of all dignity and dances before the Lord's presence with such gratitude that His presence has been restored to Israel!

The lame man at the gate beautiful goes away leaping, shouting, and praising God because He had an encounter with the power of God that transformed his life forever!

What am I getting at? This is the basis of our passion. I once was lost but now I am found I was blind but now I see!

It's not the lights, the smoke, the thumping bass, the choreographed moves, and the telegraphed clapping that stirs our hearts to the passionate expression of worship! No. It is Christ in me the Hope of Glory. I love the trappings but when the trappings of modern worship robs us of an authentic expression of worship and digress into nothing more than a great concert or performance that tugs at our

emotions but never connects our hearts to the reality of the King of Kings I would rather go without.

Let us as modern worship leaders always be aware of “the why”. Why are we doing what we are doing? Does what we are doing help or hinder the mission of Christ and His Kingdom? Is this coming from a place of passion and Holy Spirit inspiration or have I unwittingly or wittingly fallen into performance?

On the flipside... I have seen churches kill passion and a genuine pursuit of excellence in ministry unto the people and the Father because they are afraid of falling into... hype and manipulation.

Church, we are nothing without discernment. Hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. He is as much in the thumping bass as he is in the lonely acoustic. He loves it when His people get passionate. There are times we need to encourage our people to clap or lift their hands, to raise their voices in song, or to dance with abandon before the Lord. Follow His leading, do what He tells you to do and you can't go wrong.

Let's not kill Godly passion in an effort to avoid hype! Sometimes because we don't want to do anything that

resembles hype at all, we dumb our passion down just in case it is misinterpreted as hype. That is also folly. Strike the balance. Find Holy Spirit and follow His leading. If you're building a mega church with all the bells and whistles, go for it! I back you one hundred percent. Just make sure that you keep the cross front and centre. Jesus is enough to stir our passion.

Remember love. It is not our place to demand that our congregation or our team do anything. Lead people in love. Inspire them to action, teach the truth. Let Christ be formed in them and let that be the foundation of their passion. When things don't go exactly how you want them to go or how you pictured it should go, be patient, don't get angry or resentful, and start to demand from people what they are not ready or even willing to give.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT) So encourage each other and build each other up...

Someone once wrote: "A good worship leader is constantly encouraging their team during the rehearsal and their congregation during the service. Things probably won't go exactly how you want them to go, and that is okay. Understand that it is always God's job to move people, not yours."



# Multicultural Worship



This is a topic that lays close to my heart. I had the privilege and pain of growing up in Apartheid South Africa. A social system of laws that legislated racial separation in our country.

I am grateful for my history because the redemptive heart of God has taken all the painful experiences of my past and shaped them into a testimony of such grace and freedom. My history exposed me to worship across many different cultures in our country of 11 official languages. Many styles, many expressions, many languages, many cultures... One God over all.

As I tackle this subject for the sake of worshipers serving in an ever growing multicultural environment allow me to lay one or two foundations.

Firstly, when we give our hearts to Jesus, accept Him as our Lord and Saviour we become part of a new humanity. A new race no longer classified by skin colour or socio-economic or class distinctions but by the blood of the Lamb running through our veins.

If any man is in Christ He is a new creation, the old has passed the new has come.

I have had the privilege because of my own mixed-race heritage to lead worship in many different cultures in a racially diverse South Africa and abroad.

Another thing that underscores my experience with all of these different nationalities, cultures, and languages is that People are people. When we can change the lenses that we look at people through and start looking at them from a Kingdom perspective we can recognize and receive great gifts from them and they from us. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another. When we look at people through the lens of God's love and His Kingdom mandate, the issue of multicultural worship becomes a non-issue. There is one culture that unites us and that is the culture of the Kingdom. The fact that we have been bought with the amazing love gift of the blood of Jesus has connected us in brotherhood, all of us sharing the same bloodline.

Yes, styles may differ. The instruments might look different. The rhythms and song structures may be

different from what we are used to in a world that elevates contemporary soft rock worship over most other forms but in heart and message you will find that the differences are negligible. When you enter into a multicultural environment with a heart filled with love for the people you have been called to serve you will not try and impose what you are familiar and comfortable with on them but instead seek to understand what moves their hearts. Very often you will find that what moves their hearts moves the heart of God because he is the one who is responsible for this incredible canvas of diversity. Instead of asking an entire culture to shift why don't we make a shift?

That being said, allow me to share some personal insights that have made leading worship in multicultural environments one of the greatest joys of my life.

When leading worship in a multicultural environment you have to take the following things into account.

**Understand the context in which you are ministering.** Who are the people represented in this building today? In South Africa, we have immigrants from across Africa who visit our churches. At a glance,

the people in a room might look like they are from the same nationality but as you speak to them you may find that in Africa some are from Malawi, others from Zimbabwe, others yet from the Congo and then there will be the indigenous people also represented in the crowd. In the church I am currently serving in Europe we have Swiss, French, Belgian, Romanian, Congolese, the list includes about 50 different nationalities.

In such a context it is extremely difficult to please every nation that is there and the truth is our goal is not to please man, it is to worship God. The question then is how do we engage all these people in our shared goal of worshipping God? What I would do is actively engage people before I was meant to lead worship.

What are people listening to right now? I was in Tanzania and I was called on to lead worship in a Vineyard Church led by Doug Buckley a friend from Columbus, Ohio at that time. A day before I knew I was meant to lead I asked some of the locals to sing me a few popular songs that were being sung in their local vernacular. I sang one or two I had learnt from South Africa thousands of kilometres away and lo and behold

one or two of the songs they sang was exactly the same tune as a song we sang in South Africa but in their language. I took the afternoon and learnt the new language and when I opened up my worship set it almost instantly connected with where the people were at and even though I sang songs from different styles after that the stage was already set for engagement and the people worshiped.

If you are going to be leading in a multicultural environment often I would encourage constant experimentation and evaluation until you hit on a style that works best for the environment you find yourself in. Take risks and be creative in the manner you introduce new songs. David set the psalms to tunes of popular tavern songs in his day. Incorporate elements of the culture into your set. A funky African beat, local instruments, and singing styles all help to facilitate a worship experience that people can connect to.

The first time I introduced African style worship into our traditionally “White” Vineyard church I remember the storm it created with one or two of the original Vineyard musicians. In fact, one guy disliked it so much

that he took it upon himself to let me know exactly how this style of worship didn't fit into his classic understanding of the Vineyard style of worship. He left the church. By God's grace, the two of us started engaging in conversations regarding this topic, and very slowly I was able to help him understand that even though the style was different the values and ethos of what we were conveying in our music had not changed. Today the two of us are best friends, in fact, he is part of an outreach team that leads worship in a predominantly black environment ever so often and when the worship pastor at his new church needed help to start engaging his team on the issue of multicultural worship, he made sure they asked me to come.

What's my point...? When you are introducing elements of multicultural worship into your environment I would advise that you do so very slowly. Bring the church along with you in the process. Use wisdom to explain what you are trying to achieve and how you plan to achieve it and you will bring the church along without losing too many on the corners. We want to have a church that is a representation of heaven. Our worship on earth, our churches on earth should be a

reflection of what is happening in heaven right now. Every tribe and tongue making melody before the Lord, experienced on earth in our congregations.

Make sure that the songs you introduce hold true to the ethos and the value set of the church you are serving and make the songs easy to sing for those of other cultures yet deep enough to mean something. Ask yourself which songs carry our values but are yet culturally relevant. Not all songs can be translated into an indigenous language so it's time to write songs that are culturally and ethnically relevant. I encourage worshippers to write music that reflects the culture they are serving.

Not every church is meant to be a Hillsong or a Bethel, even though they are both great. We all have a unique voice and if we go around trying to be an expression of worship that has been /birthed in the heart of/God for those specific churches we forfeit the grace God wants to release through our music. We have to recognize that the love of Jesus sees no colour and when we copy others without ever exploring or giving expression to what we carry inside we are basically saying



that who we are is not good enough. What we carry in God has no value and that is a lie from hell. Go ahead, Incorporate different beats and formats - experiment with different styles and explain the value of doing so to your congregation. If a song works and is done well it will translate well into all cultures. Don't be afraid to risk, put your faith on display with what God has given you.

One thing I love about leading in an ethnically diverse environment is very often the passion for worshiping God that I see in these environments. There are times when I would wonder who is leading who today as the congregation would just pick up on a line of music and worship the Lord with abandon.



# **Multicultural worship & Reconciliation**



Reconciliation is not just the job for the church ... it is the job of every person that calls him- or herself a child of God. The unity that is displayed through worshipping together as a team or a church consisting of many nations can be an incredible model of what the true kingdom expression of Christ's body could look like.

What is reconciliation? "Reconciliation is the spiritual practice of seeking loving, liberating and life-giving relationship with God and one another, and striving to heal and transform injustice and brokenness in ourselves, our communities, institutions, and society."

Reconciliation is at the heart of our message as Christ-followers. It was exemplified for us by the Lord Jesus Himself who gave Himself up to death even unto a cross to reconcile man unto God. This charge has been given unto us, His people. We have been called to fulfil the new commandment to love the Lord our God with all

our hearts, mind, and strength and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Racism, blatant, inherent, subtle, or systemic is not a pretty thing and I think that often as Christians no matter our skin colour we can close our eyes and pretend like it does not happen in our churches. You see the issue of racism is linked to the issue of sin and whilst there are still un-regenerated hearts in this world we will deal with racism. Sundays are probably the most racially segregated days in countries around the world. Our churches still gather around ethnicity and race and it's rare to find a true multi-ethnic expression of church in our cities.

You may be saying to yourself. I would like to be a change agent but I would not know where to begin, navigating the waters of racial reconciliation can be tricky and I don't know if I am qualified to lead into something as big as this. The good news is that you are qualified. Being a son or daughter of God qualifies you because he has given us a spirit of reconciliation. We carry this as part of our inheritance in Christ. I would like to offer some practical tips for those who find themselves leading worship teams or just plain leading in a racially diverse environment.

Maybe the first thing we can do on this journey is to recognize whether there is a problem or not. We can start the journey by asking ourselves a few simple questions... without being defensive about it at all.

How many people of colour do you have in your congregation? Are these people adequately represented on your leadership teams? What kind of work are they currently doing in the church? Do you as a church connect or relate to other churches of colour in your area? Is your church demographically representative of the community it is situated in?

You can't fix anything if you can't even recognize the signs of its existence amongst you. The word intentionality has been bandied about a lot in recent times but it speaks to the heart of the kind of attitude we should display toward recognizing and addressing the issues of racial inequality amongst us as God's people even in the area of worship.

So, ask yourself and your team. How could God work reconciliation through our ministry today?

# Creative Forms Of Worship



I love that our Father is so multi-faceted. The angels surrounding His throne are constantly faced with a new aspect of His glory that brings the elders to their knees casting their crowns before Him and making the angelic hosts cry holy! Inasmuch as our God has so many facets our expressions of worship can be just as multi-faceted and diverse in their expression.

For the longest time, our idea of worship as art has only included the traditional forms like singing, instruments, dancing but I believe that the Lord is opening our eyes to the reality that worship is so much more than singing in incredibly fresh and creative ways.

God Himself is the giver of gifts abilities and we get to choose what to do with the gifts that He has so graciously bestowed. There is no higher purpose than to bring God glory and bringing Him glory with our gifts does not just bless Him it also blesses us as we get to live our greatest expression of purpose in the worship of our God and King.



We have all been given different gifts and we need to decide how we will use those gifts as expressions of worship.

Why must the church constantly look to the secular world for the latest craze or the newest artistic expression be it in dance, art, media, poetry, spoken word.... The list goes on. My belief is that we have the author of the universe Himself living in us. He is able to download into our spirit things that no eye has seen or no ear has heard of! I believe the church needs to once again lead the way in artistic expression in the church and in the world.

Let's not limit ourselves to the traditional forms only. Make space in your worship expression for spoken word, prophetic dance, painting, flags and movement, disc – jockeys if you have them and the context allows. Why not? Encourage those that are on the fringe of our worship expression who may love music but has a different style or flavour than what we are used to. Hip-Hop, Dance, Dub-Step – all these musical expressions can be redeemed for kingdom purposes. The old adage goes... it's not the tool that is evil it is the wielder of the tool that decides to either use the tools for good or nefarious purposes.

My aim with this small chapter is not to give you an exhaustive list of creative forms of worship but rather to

encourage radical creativity. Pursue excellence in what the Lord has given you. That pursuit often opens up new avenues of creative expression birth from our passionate pursuit and radical use of the gift that the Lord has given us.

Let your mind soar. Ask Holy Spirit what the next big thing is and how you can leverage it for His Kingdom purposes.

Scripture is filled with radical examples of creative worship. One thing that all expressions of worship have in common is a passion to utilize our gift for the glory of God.

Take the limits off. What we think of as “ACCEPTABLE” can often rob us of what is “POSSIBLE”. Radical innovators never accepted the status quo as the established norm and were willing to leave it there. No, they pursued new ideas, new inspirations, and worked with it until they saw something new materialize. We would still be in the dark, using candles for illumination if men like Thomas Edison quit after his first attempt at bringing light to the world with his lightbulb.

Our need to fit into what is normal for our church experience at the expense of what is possible from a Kingdom of God perspective often robs us of the “New Thing” that we are all so hungry for.



# Take Ground & Grow



**N**ever stop growing. If I could give my 20-year-old self some advice it would be to grab every opportunity to learn and to grow in the grace that the Lord has given me. Don't waste time! It is so much easier to just go with the flow than it is to pioneer, take new ground, and excel with intention. I love the ever-expanding nature of God. He is the God that moves us from glory to glory and takes us from strength to strength. Let's follow His lead and decide that while we are going we'll be growing.

Ask the Lord... What is next? What does the next step in our adventure look like? When you as a leader follow hard after Christ it gives those that are following after you something to follow. You lead the way. Paul wasn't afraid to say emulate me. Follow me as I follow Christ. Is your life worth emulating? Would you follow you? As you push into the more of God for your own life, as you shine your light and trust the Lord for growth in your own life it inspires others to grow as well. Follow Him and give others something to follow.

God is not limited by our fears. He is not limited by our thinking or beliefs about ourselves. His desire for you is to Break free and allow Him to expand you. Pray the prayer of Jabez over your life. Expand me, Lord, not for my sake but for the sake of Your kingdom! Living small has never benefited anyone. You are a child of God, believe it... live it.

I've heard too many people say... someday when. You know, someday when I am the leader I will... Someday when I have the money I will... Someday, someday, someday. It is a trap from the enemy. Someday is today. I love it when the scripture says, "Today." Today is the day of your salvation. Today! Don't allow your limitations to define your shine! Shine your light and let the world see the transformational power of Christ in you, the Hope of glory.

Don't wait for opportunities, create opportunities, and take your worship onto the streets. The church is not your only platform. There are prisons that need to hear your voice, there are street corners waiting to be bathed in worship, there are juvenile delinquent centres, old age homes, children's homes.... So many more places for you to share your gift, to live your grace. Look up, the fields are white unto Harvest. How is your worship ministering to

those tormented by devils? Those that are stuck in oppression and depression? Those that are sick and hurting, broken battered, and bruised? How will the song of heaven that emanates from your heart bring healing, hope, and restoration to a dying and lost world? Use your gift to pierce the darkness and take ground. Use your gift of worship and make war in the heavenly places! I don't have to remind you that the bible is full of stories where worshipers went before the army!

Keep contending for the more... don't settle there are always higher heights and deeper depths in God- the angels have not plumbed the depths of His majesty in millions of years. They are still living in the expectation that they will see new aspects or facets of His glorious nature. Why should you settle? There is a difference between contentment and laziness. The Lord is more than enough for me right now, yet, Lord, show me Your glory... I want more.

Be faithful in administrating the gift the Lord has given you and watch Him bring growth! Be intentional about your growth in God. Find some mentors and find some people you can look up to. Emulate them, model yourself after them but BE YOURSELF!



# Vineyard Distinctives In Worship



I have been deeply impacted by the Vineyard and its music for many years. As I related earlier, I remember as a teenager hearing True Love by David Ruis. The idea of God as a loving and approachable Father wrecked me. We still had tape cassettes in those days and I remember rewinding it over and over again. Crying like a little baby, overwhelmed by the loving presence of the Holy Spirit. It was a formative moment for me that changed not just my worship style but my understanding of Father God forever. What a privilege it was to attend the International Vineyard Conference in Columbus and see David Ruis worshipping live!

So, I have included what is known as the Vineyard Distinctive in Worship as my final chapter. These values have really helped me to build a strong foundation and understanding in regards to how I personally want to live a life of worship. I pray that it blesses and helps you as much as it has blessed and helped me over the years.

## **Vineyard Distinctive in Worship**

The Vineyard movement is, at its very roots, a worship movement. Our vision of the fulfilled life is found in John 4:23-24, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

If God is always seeking honesty and authenticity, what “in truth” may mean in the passage above, then there is no aspect of life – no struggle, no victory, and no challenge – that He will not use to open our hearts to His love.

## **Worship – Our Highest Priority**

As John Wimber said in 1992, “We in the Vineyard have, from the very outset of our ministry, made worship our highest priority, believing that it is God’s desire that we become, first, worshippers of God.” For this reason, we value both a vision of worship that permeates every aspect of our lives, as well as the gathered worship experiences that energize us and empower us as we say, “I love you, O Lord, my strength” (Ps. 81:1) in song.

In order to create worship environments that open the heart to God's love in a give-and-receive posture, certain values shape our approach to gathered worship. Here are just a few:

We value intimacy with God, believing that making ourselves vulnerable to God's Spirit as He has made Himself vulnerable to us (Phil. 2:5-11) is vital to knowing God as He desires to be known.

We value accessibility in our worship environments, seeking to create an open path for every person, of every age and background, to meet with God.

We value integrity in our worship lifestyle, desiring for our lives to match the lyrics we sing – whether they be about caring for the poor, loving our neighbour, or joining God in His work.

We value cultural connection in our worship styles, appreciating that sounds and forms of music provide a “bridge for the heart” for different generations and people groups.

We value Kingdom expectation in our approach to worship leadership, believing that as we respond to God in

song, His Spirit is with us to heal, deliver, and set us free – in the midst of worship.

These and other values shape both the content and style of our worship times in local churches. We value spiritual gifts, creativity, diversity, healing, and prophecy, caring for the poor, and other themes that all impact the way worship is uniquely expressed in our churches.

### **Worship Overflows in Mission**

Because the Vineyard movement is committed to equipping the saints for the work of ministry in all areas of society (Eph. 4:12-16), we see our worship experiences taking us beyond our church services.

Worship, in our understanding of the Gospel, is to overflow in mission. We are committed to an understanding of worship that recognizes that we meet with God within the four walls of our churches to remember our calling, be healed in His presence, and offer God the praise that is due Him. Yet that experience also trains our hearts to express Jesus' love to a waiting world.

To use an analogy, we breathe in God's presence as we yield to Him in worship, then we breathe out in fruitful

work that heals individuals and society at large. For this reason, you may hear Vineyard leaders talking about worship in a way that goes beyond what happens when we gather to sing.

You will hear about worship being expressed through the giving of substance from our resources, caring for the poor, serving those in distress, praying for those in our workplaces, planting churches, administering justice, furthering the life of the mind in scholarship, and extending the Kingdom of God in every nation and people group.

To be a worshipping people, for us, is to experience the love of God. Then we have to carry that love with us into a desperate world.

# Note from Author

I sincerely hope and pray that you have found this book helpful and that you feel more equipped to help lead others into the throne room of our king!

Should you have any feedback, questions, or comments I would love to hear from you!

Please feel free to contact me on [rickyventer@icloud.com](mailto:rickyventer@icloud.com)

If this book has been a blessing to you, please can I ask you leave a review on Amazon. This will encourage others to make use of this resource.

Blessings in Christ

Ricky Venter