

Ten Steps to Better Worship Leading

By Nick Alexander

For over sixteen years Nick Alexander has been immersed in the dynamics of charismatic prayer groups. He has seen all sorts of music-leading: good, bad, and ugly. Nick has seen it done with a full dynamic worship team and a cappella with a tape player. Regardless of where your group is at, Nick would like to share ten simple steps to assist worship leaders in improving their worship leading skills. Below are excerpts from his article entitled “Ten Steps to Better Worship Leading.” He invites you to listen and download his praise and worship songs on www.newspringtimeworship.com.

1. Live a holy life

If you are leading worship, you are, whether you like it or not, on full display. You have become a model Christian. You have all the more incentive to run the race, so that you could not be stumbling block for others.

2. Become open to the Holy Spirit

Far too often, I’ve noticed that many worship teams lead music like it’s the radio show “America’s Top 40.” They go into songs with no rhyme or reason, no understanding of flow. The purpose of the flow is to allow a person to shake off the dust of the concerns of the day, allow someone to slow down, and enter in the presence of God.

3. Learn how to create medleys

Ever drive a car that stalls all the time? You drive along, and then...HALT. You start the car up again, drive another few blocks...SCREECH. That’s what it’s like when you sing songs in a prayer group setting, in a Start-STOP format. For when we sing in a prayer group, we are going someplace—we are going to meet God. It is up to you as a worship leader to learn how to continue the flow of the songs, creating as few distractions as possible.

4. Focus on “vertical” songs

A vertical song is a song that allows the singer to sing directly to God. Examples of this include: “We Exalt Thee”, “Open the Eyes of My Heart”,

and “Entirely to Thee.” These songs use the “Lord” as One to whom we are singing *to*, not merely *about*.

5. Learn how to teach new songs

Have you ever been to a prayer group that has sung from the same well-spring for over twenty years? Ever notice the lack of fervor in singing the songs? What was once new and invigorating has become dated and dull.

6. Refrain from entertainment-oriented songs

I am very happy for talented musicians and singers who are performing at the top of their abilities. However, during a prayer session, it is important that this, too, takes a back seat, so that everybody, *everybody* has an opportunity to share in the singing. It’s not about the worship team. It’s not even about the congregation. It’s about God, and our whole collective offering to Him.

7. Learn how to modulate keys

Want to keep singing a song for an extended period, but don’t want it to grow stale? A quick approach is to change keys mid-song. This assumes that the song that you’re singing is easy enough to sing in the higher key. And in most cases, this will be true.

8. Sing outside the book

The best parts of a worship service, bar none, are when the congregant no longer is looking at the words of a song, whether holding up a book or seeing it on an overhead, but is just singing outright to the Lord. The best types of songs for this are the forgotten simple songs, songs with a single word or phrase that constitutes the entirety of its lyrics, sung repeatedly. Examples of this include “Alleluia”, “O Come Let Us Adore Him”, “Our God Reigns”, and “Come Into My Heart.”

9. Learn the Church Calendar

I’ve grown to love the Church calendar. I’ve found that it is a powerful opportunity for us to unite our worship with the liturgical church, which has sung in unison not only throughout the world, but through all times. Therefore it is important to learn to incorporate the church seasons in your worship.

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10. Get Copyright permission

Many worship leaders do not understand that if they do not seek permission, they are, in fact, stealing. I don't want to use harsh words, but that's what it is, even if the intentions are good. When we worship, we want to make sure that we are doing so with honest and giving hearts. We want to make sure our offerings are pure and blameless. Therefore, it is mandatory that every song that you have is cleared with full copyright permission.

Conclusion

There is no greater joy than to be able to give your offerings to God in a manner that is pure and gracious. The gift of worship leading is both a blessing and a great responsibility. It is a gift to be nurtured and always improved upon. But the blessings can take your prayer group to greater heights in the most gracious thing we can do—worship.