



Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

Psalm 34:3

On Worship Leading

with Pastor Steve

Choosing Worship Songs

There are probably as many opinions about choosing worship songs as there are people. Choosing the right worship songs will greatly enhance the effectiveness of your worship leading and give your congregation an effective vehicle to ride into worship. On the other hand choosing the wrong songs will become a roadblock to your worship leading experience and the worship experience of your congregation.

I don't pretend to have the corner on the market, but here are some questions I ask myself when choosing worship songs. I'm sure there are many more.

1. What style or genre of music fits the vision of my church? This question should be answered by church leadership. The location of the church and the age group of people who attend the church can be determining factors in answering this question. Worship is for God and ultimately we want to choose songs that minister to him. However, as worship leaders we should use songs that will lead the congregation into the presence of God with us. Otherwise we aren't needed.

2. Can the song be easily learned by the congregation? Is the song "wordy" or does it contain difficult chord progressions and key changes? Most folks in our congregations are not professional musicians or singers. That's not to say they are inept and can't learn a difficult song. Yet, we must be careful not to lose them. If we do we will find ourselves singing solo to a group of confused and frustrated spectators.

3. Can I and the praise team learn the song without much difficulty? It is important for a worship leader to know his/her skill level and that of the team members. Playing songs that are difficult for you and the band to play will make it equally difficult for the congregation to follow. Wait about using such a song until the band can flow with it.

4. Does the song express my heart toward God? Can I worship with this song? I think it is important for a worship leader to use songs that lead him/her into the presence of God. Many times that is an indication that the song will lead others into God's presence as well.

5. Are the lyrics of the song biblical either implicitly or explicitly? That's a no brainer you might say, but there are popular worship songs (as well as old hymns) out there that are a stretch for biblical content and theology. A word of caution: Don't get your theology from songs!

Getting input from members of the worship team can be helpful in choosing the proper worship songs. If a team member has heard a song that lead them to worship, then it could be good for the entire congregation. Members of your congregation, especially those who are worshipers, may hear or know a song that would be good to use. As worship leaders we should always strive to be led by the Holy Spirit above all. However, listening to the worshipers God has placed around us can prove to be a tremendous blessing.

One final note: In choosing which of my original songs to use for congregational worship I use the same set of questions and criteria. Receiving input from others is especially important to me in this process. Of course I have to be willing to have "thick skin" when it comes to my little babies (songs). Some of the songs I write are best kept between me and God.