



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

Psalm 34:3

On Worship Leading

with Pastor Steve

Developing a Worship Philosophy

It is important for each church to develop a working philosophy for their worship ministry. Having a worship philosophy helps to establish the values, priorities, and practices of worship in the church. Once a philosophy is established the information can be disseminated to the congregation. This will help each person to understand where worship fits in the priority list of the fellowship. The amount of energy, time and money spent on worship will determine the value and priority of worship in each church.

There are a number of questions you want to consider as you begin developing your worship philosophy. Answering these questions will help you think through the value your church places on worship and how worship is defined by your church leadership. (I gleaned some of these questions from a conference I attended in 1987 at the Anaheim, California Vineyard Christian Fellowship. The workshop was taught by Carl Tuttle.)

1. What are the priorities and practices of your church?
2. Where does worship fit in those priorities and practices?
3. What kind of people do you minister to?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your church?
5. What is your definition of worship?

The following is a worship philosophy our church adopted while I was the worship leader at a Vineyard church. I still use it today. Some of the wording has been changed, but most of it is in its original form as shared in a workshop by the late John Wimber. You can use this philosophy or use it as a guide to help develop your own.

OXFORD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WORSHIP PHILOSOPHY

In order for you to understand the philosophy of worship, we have outlined the values, priorities, and practices of worship at OCF.

VALUES: The following are values which we hold at OCF and seek to instill in those to whom we minister.

1. Worship is given solely for God's glory and honor.
2. We are to be intimate and self-disclosing with God.
3. Nothing is done for effect or to manipulate God or the people.
4. We are committed to honesty and integrity.
5. Although our worship may be emotional, we do not want to work up emotions. We want to "dial down" in worship and let our emotional responses flow out of our interaction with God.
6. We welcome the ministry of the Holy Spirit in whatever way He chooses to work among us.

PRIORITIES: The following priorities control the philosophy of worship at OCF.

1. Our worship is directed and focused upon God.
2. Worship is a two-fold communication process. We worship God and He touches us.
3. Worship is practiced as a lifestyle on both the corporate and individual level.

4. We set aside time to worship. Quality worship be cannot hurried.
5. We invest money for musical instruments and sound equipment so that we will have quality in our worship.
6. We expend energy to rehearse, set up and prepare for worship. Spontaneity is best when it is under girded with thorough preparation.
7. We teach others to worship so they may experience intimacy with God.
8. We feel free to integrate change as our worship grows and expands. We are careful, though, to maintain consistency between our values and our priorities when we do initiate change.

PRACTICES: The following are practices which are found in the worship of OCF.

1. We engage in practices which are biblically sanctioned, either implicitly or explicitly.
2. We encourage the whole person to enter into worship through the use of the body (raising hands, kneeling, bowing, dancing); soul (reading of scripture, singing, shouting, recalling God's works); spirit (spirit to spirit, love tongues).
3. We worship whenever we gather in various groups or settings even if they are spontaneous.
4. We encourage an uninterrupted flow of worship. Thus, we will sing many songs in succession without interjections from the worship leader.
5. We worship in a contemporary musical style. This helps people to identify with what they are singing to God.
6. We generally encourage moderate practices when we worship in corporate settings so others are not distracted.
7. We always seek to expand and deepen our present foundation. We seek new songs, new modes of expression, and new experiences with God.

I personally believe that worship should be the first priority of every church. Worship is meant for God and our most important ministry is to minister to him. Therefore, it is my opinion that most of our money, energy and time should be spent on the worship ministry.

With that said, let me say that a worship ministry consists of much more than a song service during corporate gatherings. Worship should penetrate every area of our Christian walk and service. This means that worship should be the ultimate goal of every ministry in the church including teaching, preaching, evangelism etc. For instance, my personal motivation for converting the lost is not to keep them out of hell. It is to see them forsake a lifestyle that glorifies Satan and turn to a lifestyle that glorifies God. As the Apostle Peter wrote, *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* . . . (1 Peter 2:9) Our deepest desire should be to produce disciples who have a passion for Jesus and yearn to worship him in spirit and truth.

A lifestyle that glorifies God is a lifestyle of worship. It's all about him. He is our top priority. Keep that in the forefront of your mind as you work with leadership to develop a worship philosophy for your church.