



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

Psalm 34:3

On Worship Leading

with Pastor Steve

Let's do a Jericho March

In 1983, upon finishing a short term mission in Haiti, my wife and I moved from our home in northern Alabama about fifty miles south to become youth pastors in a small church in Alexandria, Alabama. We had a strong sense that God wanted us in full time ministry, but we struggled at times with exactly what it was he wanted us to do. When we were asked to take this position we jumped in with both feet. One thing we didn't realize was that in a small church full time ministry doesn't always mean full time pay. So, I had to do some work outside the church while still being expected to be a full time youth pastor. It was in this church that I had my first experience leading worship in front of a congregation.

I will never forget that first Sunday morning Renae, my wife, and I led the worship service. I had played back up guitar in the worship band but didn't feel confident enough to lead worship and play at the same time. I opted instead to let the piano player serve as the lead instrument. Renae and I stood up front on the stage with the ensemble to the side of us. At this juncture in our worship experience we only knew to do what we had seen modeled by the worship leader at this church. This was the way he did it, so we followed suit. With the help of the supporting cast we proceeded.

In attendance that Sunday was a lady who came to our church maybe three or four times a year. She came across as one of those people who make their rounds to various churches. I noticed each time she came to our church she brought ballet shoes and a tambourine. When the music began she had on her dancing shoes and she went to town on her tambourine.

We were into our second or third song that Sunday and just as I was gaining some confidence, this lady ran down the center isle, right up to the stage demanding my attention. "Let's do a Jericho March!" she exclaimed. For those who are unfamiliar with the term Jericho March, it is simply a dance where most of the church members get in a line and march around the sanctuary. It acquired the name from the story of Israel marching around Jericho.

Needless to say I was horrified. I had not planned for this nor had I been briefed for such a situation. Not knowing how to respond I asked, "What?" I had heard her, but I was hoping she wouldn't repeat it. I thought maybe the question would buy me some time to figure out how to respond. "Let's do a Jericho March!" she yelled. I am sure God saw the predicament I was in and dropped my answer in my mouth. "Well if that is what God leads us to do." I said to her. I am not sure if my answer satisfied her or offended her. All I know is that she turned around and danced to the back of the sanctuary. I never saw her in that church again. By the way, we didn't do a Jericho March, and the rest of the service went without a hitch.

Although at the time I was clueless how to respond to this lady, looking back now I see the wisdom of God in the answer I gave. After leading worship for close to thirty years I have learned that there are as many opinions about how to direct a worship service as there are people. The calling of a worship leader is to know the direction of the Holy Spirit in any given worship service.

This principle in no way negates the fact that a worship leader is to be submitted to spiritual authority and open to correction and suggestion. It is vital that church leadership communicate to the worship leader the vision for worship for the congregation. This will enable the worship leader to respond to situations in a way church leadership will support. It is equally important that church leadership give the worship leader freedom in the midst of a worship service to lead as he is directed by the Holy Spirit within the given vision. Church leadership should also be open to suggestions from the worship leader. Working together will produce worship that will please the Father.

Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing. He said, *I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.* (John 5:30) That should be the mind set of every worship leader as he leads others to the throne of God.

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