



Support Your Local Worship Leader

by Pastor Steve

In my book “The Making of a Worship Leader” I share the following story.

I vividly remember the first worship band practice I led as a full time worship leader. Here I am the worship leader of a church that was once two churches. Many of the members of the praise team I didn't know nor was I totally convinced I wanted to know them. The truth was I didn't want to be the worship leader. Only out of submission to the pastor's request was I in that position. At first I had no job description, no training and no clue as to what I was doing.

The night of our first practice Murphy's Law was in full swing. If it could have gone wrong it did. To start things off the pianist didn't show up and didn't let me know that she wasn't coming. This really left me holding the bag. I was still unsure of my guitar playing ability and counted on her to be the lead instrument. Some of the songs I had chosen to use I couldn't play on the guitar. I found myself changing the song list while the other band members watched intently. I could hear them thinking, “This guy doesn't have a clue as to what he is doing.” They were right. (Also, the lady I had asked to sing a special during the offering didn't attend that practice as well.)

Once I had gathered my wits and plotted a new course of action, I began to share the order of worship with the praise team. Imagine my despair when some of the members began to complain about certain aspects of the service. I wanted to cry. I wanted to gather my belongings, walk out of the building and never come back.

Though none of the people involved in that first worship band practice had malicious intent, their complaints were devastating to me; in part because they were not privy to some important pieces of information.

First of all, though some of them knew I had never been a worship leader before, they were not aware of the tremendous amount of insecurity I was feeling; which came from inexperience and from (other than my wife) being the youngest member of the team. Secondly, they did not realize the enormous pressure of taking what was once two worship ministries and making them one and trying to make everyone happy with it. Another factor was that none of the church leadership attended that first practice to lend me support.

Occasionally I receive e-mails from worship leaders who are experiencing difficulties with band members. Let's be honest. Sometimes musicians are not the easiest people to please. They want their microphone to be the loudest. They want their instrument to be the loudest. They want their monitor to be the loudest. They want to sing it their way. They want to play it their way. They want to hear it their way. I know this not only from experience but also because “I are one.” It's no secret that creative types can be very moody and in fact sometimes down right cantankerous. And when you get a group of them together you have the potential for disaster if there is not a sense of unity and purpose.

For all of you worship team members out there—being a worship leader, music minister or whatever title you may give it is not an easy task. Any leadership position is difficult at best. Those who minister among us are taking on a responsibility for which they will be held accountable before God. Not to mention that they cannot reach their maximum effectiveness if they are consistently “taking attitude” from those they are trying to lead. And if a leader is not effective the ones who suffer the most are those he or she is leading.

The writer of Hebrews penned this, *Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.* (Hebrews 13:17 NLT) The King James Version reads, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and **submit** yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

There it is! The ole dreaded six letter “S” word; submit. Let's face it, we hate that word. Our carnal nature doesn't want to submit to God much less someone God has chosen to lead us. One of the reasons I believe we hate that word so bad is because we have not understood it. Also, we have seen extreme cases where spiritual leaders have in essence brain washed their followers and led them to destruction.

Our first submission is to God and his word. No where in scripture are we commanded to neither submit to nor obey any man or authority who would lead us away from the Word of God.

There is more than one Greek word translated “submit” in our bible, but in Hebrews 13:17 the word is

hipeiko which means to yield, be weak, to surrender. In the context of this verse the word yield means to surrender something in deference, to grant or concede. In no way does it suggest we are to be puppets in the hands of a leader. Puppets have no voice and no choice. Submission is making a choice to follow. Submitting doesn't rob us of our uniqueness, but it may mean that we have to put aside our way of doing things in deference to the one who is leading.

The word obey in Hebrews 13:17 is peitho. Peitho means to assure, assent, agree, have confidence, trust, yield, make friend, rely. In other words be cooperative. A good leader will always make room for counsel and discussion, but eventually a decision has to be made; direction has to be given and followed if a ministry is to be successful. Those of us who are "following" must submit to that direction in a spirit of humility; doing all things as unto the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote, *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.* (Colossians 3:23-24) *Do all things without complaining and disputing...* (Philippians 2:14)

Worship leaders are not above making mistakes. They also should be subject to spiritual authority and held accountable for their spiritual growth and the decisions they make while doing ministry. However, those of us who minister under their direction should give them honor and show them the respect that is due their position.

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