



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

Psalm 34:3

On Worship Leading

with Pastor Steve

The Worship Leader: Worshiper and Servant

I get e-mails on a weekly basis from young worship leaders who are struggling to understand their calling. Many of them do not have role models or mentors to help them as they develop their calling and talent. Confusion and frustration often arises because of the lack of communication between church leadership and these rising leaders. Much of this anxiety can be avoided if the worship leader has a clear knowledge of his role in the ministry of the church. Job descriptions are helpful, but they will vary from church to church. However, there are some key roles in ministry in which all worship leaders should fill.

The first role I want to mention is the role of a worshiper. That may sound somewhat obvious but it is very important.

A couple of years ago I was asked by a church to help them with their worship ministry. The pastor had somewhat filled the role of worship leader and at times had their guitar player lead worship. When I agreed that it was God's will for me to take this position I implemented a rehearsal night. The pastor and I agreed that if you don't practice you don't play. I quickly learned that the guitar player could not make rehearsals so I asked that he not play.

Sunday after Sunday I watched him stare at the words of the songs and never open his mouth to sing. Not once was there any outward expression of a heart that was in love with Jesus. Here was a young man who was part of the worship ministry, and at times led the Sunday morning service, yet appeared to be void of the heart of a worshiper. He was a very talented musician and a great performer but not a worshiper.

Those who are called to lead worship must worship. It makes no difference if they are on stage or sitting in the congregation. If a person can't worship without being "up front" they have no business being "up front."

Worship obviously goes beyond outward expressions. A worship leader should live a life of worship. Character building is vital. Daily devotion and time spent in worship when no one is watching are important aspects in leading worship. There must be time spent in developing a personal relationship with the One we worship. I have always felt it is easier to take someone to a place where you have already been. If I do not know what God's presence is like how will I know if I am taking someone else there?

The next role I want to mention is that of a servant. The role of a servant applies to every Christian, but especially to those who are called to lead a certain area of ministry.

Jesus put a high value on the role of a servant. He said, . . . *but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.* (Matthew 20:26) Again he said, *But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.* (Matthew 23:11)

My thought is this; it is one thing for someone to stand in front of the church to sing or play an instrument, but will they take their turn in the nursery? Will they show up for work day at the church? Will they help set up the sound equipment or manage the overhead projector? Of course there is no way a person can do it all. The question is, "What kind of attitude and willingness do they display when asked to do the "menial" tasks of ministry?"

It is very important that the worship leader be a servant to the pastor and other leadership in the church. This is accomplished by knowing and implementing the vision of worship established by the leadership, being flexible to last minute requests and coordinating special events that the pastor feels is necessary for the spiritual growth of the church. A willingness to submit to spiritual authority is at the heart of every servant.

A worship leader should also be a servant to those who labor with him to lead worship. Those who labor in leading the congregation into the presence of God are very important. The goal of every worship leader should be to make their job as easy as possible. The worship leader should make it a priority to see that each team member has the tools they need to perform their ministry well. This may include having lyric sheets and music available for musicians and singers, making sure visual aids are available to the people who need them, having the proper sound equipment set up and tuned to individual preferences. All of this means being the first to arrive at practice or church on Sunday and the last one to leave.

Several years ago while leading worship in a local church I received a blessing that I believe depicts a servant's heart. In those days I was playing an Applause guitar. After years of use it had become increasingly harder to play and would not hold a tune. It seemed like every other Sunday I was breaking a string. One Sunday morning I broke two strings during the worship service.

My finances were not so great at the time so I could not afford to have the guitar fixed nor could I replace it. Just before Christmas a good friend of mine who played bass on our praise team, began to approach individuals in our church asking for donations to buy me a guitar. He made it his personal goal to see that I had an instrument that would enable me to lead worship more effectively. Plus the fact that he wanted to bless me. Needless to say he succeeded in both. I was able to buy a very nice guitar which I still use to lead worship.

Today my friend is the worship leader at his church. Is it any wonder that God would call a person to lead worship who has such a servant's heart? Service is its own reward, but oh the rewards that await the servant.