



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

Psalm 34:3

On Worship Leading

with Pastor Steve

Who Would Have Thunk It?

My journey in worship leading had a humble beginning to say the least. Like a lot of children and teenagers growing up I had an infatuation with lead guitar players and rock-n-roll bands. However, it wasn't until I was 23 years old that I actually began to learn to play the guitar.

While training to do mission work I met a man who has become a life long friend. He motivated me to learn to play the guitar. Not having a clue as to the type of guitar to purchase, I bought a Yamaha classical guitar. My friend gave me a copy of a chord chart, taught me how to read it and told me to start practicing. That was all the instruction he gave me, but I was determined to learn so off I went.

In those early days I almost drove my newly wed wife crazy. I plunked and planked practically every waking hour I was at home. The first two chords I learned to play were E minor and A minor. A worship song I was familiar with had those two primary chords in it so I played in incessantly. A few months later, having learned about six chords, I wrote my first worship song and played it one morning during Sunday school. I don't remember the song, but I do remember the people looking at me as if they were saying "Don't quit your day job."

A few months later my wife and I moved to a different city to take a youth pastor position. By this time I had eight to ten chords down pat; bar chords had not yet come into the picture. I didn't know a lot of chords, but the ones I knew I could play fairly well. Each week we met with the youth I used my newly found talent in an effort to lead our young people in worship.

Two years into this project the church fell into financial woes. As a full time paid church employee I was forced to find another job while continuing to be the youth director. Months later the church leadership made a decision to eliminate the youth ministry, and I was asked to play guitar with the Sunday morning worship team. The church eventually folded and merged with another church.

Discouraged and disappointed I informed the new church leadership (which included my pastor from the former church) that I did not want to be a part of any ministry in the church for a while. My thought was to be a "regular" church member with no major responsibilities.

About a month into the merger the new pastor asked me if I would lead a couple of songs at an organizational meeting. Reluctantly I agreed. Later he came to me and shared how God had spoken to him while I was leading worship that night. He said that God brought King David to his mind and how God had prepared him to be Israel's worship leader while tending sheep. His conclusion was that I had been through a season of preparation, and God was now calling me to be the worship leader of the new church.

My initial response, at least on the inside, was no way. I didn't want the responsibility. I wasn't ready to risk another disappointment if it didn't work out. Besides I had only stood before a congregation to lead worship one time and then I didn't play my guitar. I had played back up, but leading a band was not in my comfort zone. I wasn't that good of a guitar player and didn't have a clue where to start. My insecurities were having a field day. The reasons for saying no were mounting by the minute. Fear began to grip me as this pastor shared what he believed to be God's will.

I had been taught to respect and submit to spiritual authority. This left me somewhat afraid to share how I was feeling on the inside. I made the decision to trust that my spiritual authority was hearing from God and accepted the position.

All of those hours playing E minor and A minor chords, and all of the hours of planking, plunking and sore fingers had culminated in this. God had prepared me for something that I never dreamed of or aspired to.

Maybe you are out there learning your first chords. Maybe your planking and plunking are driving your family crazy. Maybe you don't believe God would use you to lead others into his presence. Well, he may be doing just that. These days could be days of preparation so don't despise small beginnings. Make sure all of life's circumstances become stepping stones and not stumbling blocks. Allow God to shape you into what he desires, knowing that all things are designed for his glory and your good.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

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