

# Worship Notes

by Christine Gofron

Because of your unfailing love, I can  
enter your house; with deepest awe  
I will worship at Your Temple.

Psalm 5:7

## The Gracious Worship Leader

Leading worship can be a struggle sometimes. We look at the congregation that we pray all week will be engaged in worship and more often than not we see what we perceive as boredom. Mouths moving to the words but facial expressions that downright alarm us sometimes! And we feel desperate. So we sing louder and smile bigger and wave our arms at them and occasionally we stomp our feet and “yell” at them. “SING OUT! BE FREE IN YOUR WORSHIP!” And behind the smile we panic. These people think I’m crazy, we say to ourselves. If you’re a worship leader don’t tell me you have never experienced something like this. I’m laughing to myself right now thinking of all the times I’ve done this. Waving my arms about like a mad woman trying to send the energy I’m feeling their way. As if I was capable of exciting these people like God can?

So standing back for a moment, and being (slightly) older, I can’t help but wonder if once again I’m being a more than a bit arrogant. After all - God’s called me to lead worship! He must appreciate the way I worship right? Which, of course, means those I’m leading should worship like me, right?! I hope you’re finding this amusing. I think God laughs to Himself - a whole lot. He’s not poking fun at us, but I would guess it’s like a parent watching their little one be stubborn and insist they can tie their own shoes now and you just end up with endless knots and a tear stained face. We think we have it all figured out. God shows us something and instead of waiting patiently to truly learn it we barrel ahead, in our own way shouldering God with a petulant “I can do it!”

I believe it’s us, the worship leaders, who need to realize that while God may enjoy our worship and hearing songs of praise from us, He called us to be worship leaders because of the passion in our hearts - not for our musicality alone. We have a heart for worship - that’s where you’re leading from, because God appreciates the congregation’s worship too. He appreciates



their style because that’s who He’s created them to be. I hear so often older adults speaking down about the youth today and their style of “rock ‘n roll” worship. They think it’s showy and loud and unnecessary. But the youth look at stuff that even I think is contemporary and they think it’s stiff and tired. And seriously - David? King David? At one point he was dancing around like a crazy man. In public. In his un-

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*“It makes sense that people will find it difficult to enter into worship if they are not engaged in that style.”*

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derwear. His own wife despised him for it. But God was honored by it because David was worshipping with his whole heart - which validated it and made it entirely appropriate. (See Samuel 6:12-23)

Just as God gave us all unique personalities, we also

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# The Gracious Worship Leader *continued*

have a unique style of worship. Even in congregations where everyone is engaged and clapping - something different is happening to each one of them. God is meeting them where they are at. And the same goes for those services where a few here and there have their hands raised, but most are standing still looking unmoved. If they are truly not worshipping God and wasting this time with Him, they will have to account for this, not you. What is expected is that we



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*“Get to know the people you lead...engage in relationships with them.”*

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set the example and stay sensitive to God’s leading. Without drawing outlandish attention to ourselves we can freely worship God the way we like to - but be open to addressing the needs of the different types of worshippers in your congregation.

Music is one of those unique expressions that cause a physiological response in the listener. It triggers memories, strong emotions and it inspires. I can hear a song from my youth, and it will actually trigger a scent sometimes, other times I can remember the sensation of touching an object. Music is absolutely powerful. So it makes perfect sense that some people really struggle entering into worship when they aren’t really engaged in that style. Now there is much that can be addressed with a congregation on really worshipping God in spirit and in truth, but this

post is for the worship leader, so that’s why I’ve left that alone.

We really need to have grace as worship leaders. We need to understand that although we are, in fact, called to lead this group of people in our church; we need to see them through the eyes of Jesus and not our own selves. And again - while I believe the congregations need to step it up sometimes, I don’t believe that it will look the way we think it will when they do. There will still be some quietly worshipping at even the most boisterous of times. There will still be some with their eyes wide open during times of intimate worship. They are expressing themselves through who they are - not who you are.

So, just as God is gracious with us, let’s be gracious with those who we lead into worship. Show them what it truly is to be a worshipper - even when the music stops. Engage in relationships with them. We get so busy and caught up in the process of leading worship I think we forget that they don’t often know us very well. Talk to someone new every Sunday. Reach out to them as their brother or sister - get to know them. This is the only way to understand their needs - and this gives them the opportunity to encourage you as well! How often has that one person with the stoic face come up to you after worship, grabbed your hands and said “Thank you!” They were deeply blessed by God during worship, and here you thought they were missing it. So don’t look at them too much. It’s okay to close your eyes during worship because you’re not singing for the congregation, you’re singing for God. You just happen to be amped at the time.

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