



# **A MANUAL FOR WORSHIP LEADERS**

*A Guide to Worship at the High Kirk*



## CONTENTS

### THE THEORY OF WORSHIP

**Chapter 1:** A Definition of Worship

**Chapter 2:** The Presence of God in Worship

**Chapter 3:** The Experience of Worship

**Chapter 4:** The Elements of Worship

### THE PRACTISE OF WORSHIP

**Chapter 4:** The Ministry of the Worship Leader

**Chapter 5:** The Preparation for Worship

**Chapter 6:** The Principles for leading Worship

**Chapter 7:** Preparing the Worship Programme



*Stevenston High Kirk  
Schoolwell Street  
Stevenston  
North Ayrshire  
KA20 3DL  
Tel: 01294 463356*

## LEADING WORSHIP FOR THE ELDERLY

When we lead worship in retirement homes, nursing homes, or small groups for the elderly, it is important that we worship sensitively. As in any worship experience our desire is for the people to connect with God. Here are some helpful suggestions for leading worship amongst the elderly:

- ⇒ **Be relevant:** choose items of praise that are familiar and that will help your congregation engage in the worship. If you introduce new worship songs, consider familiar tunes or sing them as solo items where you can invite the congregation to join in.
- ⇒ **Be thoughtful:** at a nursing home you may have people who suffer from dementia. Why not think of hymns & choruses that will relate to their childhood? (Jesus loves me, this I know; The Lord's my Shepherd; What a friend we have in Jesus)
- ⇒ **Be open:** you may also wish to have a time where people can choose their favourite hymns and choruses (don't allow this to go on too long or you may lose the flow of worship; consider just 2 praise items!).
- ⇒ **Be focussed:** your desire is to take your congregation into a place of worship where they will "never grow old". Choose hymns and choruses that will take them beyond their disabilities and infirmities into the heavenlies (Soon and very soon; When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound; My Jesus, I love thee; What a day that shall be, etc).

## A SAMPLE WORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR A NURSING HOME

- **Blessed Assurance (Fanny Crosby)**
- **What a friend we have in Jesus (Joseph Scriven)**
- Prayer
- A medley of choruses: **Deep & Wide; Running Over; Wide, wide as the ocean.**
- Reading
- **Amazing Grace (John Newton)**
- Sermon/Message: When ministering amongst the elderly, give an opportunity for them to respond to the gospel. Invite them warmly to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour. When sharing from the Bible: be faithful, be gracious, and be relevant.
- Prayer of response
- **When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound (James Black) or To God be the glory (Fanny Crosby)**
- Closing Prayer & Benediction

## THE WORSHIP PROGRAMME

Here is a sample of a Worship programme that may be suitable for a Praise Night service:

- **Come, now is the time to worship (Brian Doerksen)**
- “We gather this evening for one special purpose—to WORSHIP. We have a wonderful invitation from God to come before him, not to sing, but, to WORSHIP Him. Let us join our hearts in WORSHIP as we enter the river of God’s mercy and love. Will you come now to the river of God’s unchanging grace?”
- **To the River, I am going (Brian Doerksen)**
- **Salvation belongs to our God (Adrian Howard & Pat Turner)**
- Prayer: “Lord, we offer up to you the worship of hearts. We give you praise and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, power and strength. We rejoice that Salvation belongs to our God. We come tonight in purpose and unity declaring that You are our God for ever and ever. Amen”
- Singing the refrain once again: “**Be to our God, for ever and ever...**”
- **Before the throne of God above (Charitie L De Chenez)**
- Reading: (Psalm 136 vv 1-9)
  - <sup>1</sup> O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he* is good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
  - <sup>2</sup> O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
  - <sup>3</sup> O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
  - <sup>4</sup> To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
  - <sup>5</sup> To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
  - <sup>6</sup> To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
  - <sup>7</sup> To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:
  - <sup>8</sup> The sun to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:
  - <sup>9</sup> The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- **My Jesus, I love thee (William Featherston)**
- Sermon/Message
- **Be still and know that I am God (Author Unknown)**
- Closing Prayer & Benediction
- **Be still for the presence of the Lord (David J Evans)**

## A DEFINITION OF WORSHIP

John 4:23,24 says that God is looking for worshippers not for workers or just for worship. Do you enjoy worshipping God? Is it your life's obsession to worship your creator? It should be, because the reason you exist is to worship God. You have been: *Created to Worship God* (Isaiah 43:7); *Chosen to Worship God* (1 Peter 2:9); *Called to Worship God* (Psalm 95:6); and *Commanded to Worship God* (Revelation 14:6,7).

The Westminster Catechism claims that “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” In Psalm 149:2-4 we learn that worship is God's enjoyment of us and our enjoyment of him: “Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.”

The English word *worship* comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, “Weorthscipe” (i.e. worth ship). It is a recognition of, and a response to the worth of God. When we value the worth of someone we usually do something to demonstrate their worth. Psalm 96:8 says, “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts”. This passage suggests that those who value God are the ones bringing offerings!

The words used in the Bible for worship: **(1) Old Testament Words** - there are two main Hebrew words: (a) *Shachah* - which means to bow down, Prostrate; and (b) *Abodah* - which means to serve a superior; **(2) New Testament Words** - there are two main Greek Words: (a) *Proskuneo* - which means to come forward to kiss the hand, as an act of adoration; and (b) *Leitourgia* - which means to serve.

Notice that worship has a dual aspect: (1) An *Attitude* of the heart; and (2) *Actions* of service. The definition of worship presented by Ralph P. Martin, shows the two aspects: "Worship is the dramatic celebration of God in his supreme worth in such a manner that His 'worthiness' becomes the norm and inspiration of human living."

*“Worship is becoming aware of God's presence and responding to His Presence.”*

**Warren Wiersbe** writes, “Worship is the believers response of all that he is – mind, emotion, will and body – to all that God is and says and does. This response has a mystical side in subjective experience, and it's practical side in objective obedience to God's revealed truth. It is a loving response that is balanced by the fear of the Lord, and it is a deepening response as the believer comes to know God better.”

**Judson Cornwall** also writes, “Worship is an attitude of heart, a reaching towards God, a pouring out of our total self in thanksgiving, praise, adoration and love to the God who created us and to whom we owe everything we have and are. Worship is the interaction of man's spirit with God in a loving response.”

## THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN WORSHIP

When we live in awareness of God's presence we experience: (a) *Intimacy* – when we interact with God we grow closer to him (Psalm 63:6-8); (b) *Security* – when we know that God is with us we will not be afraid (Psalm 16:8; Isaiah 43:1f); and (c) *Holiness* – when we spend time in God's presence we are conformed into his likeness (Acts 4:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

The solution to this lack of awareness of the presence of God lies in tuning into the presence of God. If we can learn to be aware of God's presence, learn to relate to the God who is always with us then worship will become a life-style and we will grow in Christ-likeness.

David, the Psalmist learnt to live with an awareness of the presence of God. We read these words of David in Psalms 16:8, "I have set the LORD always before me." It says literally, "I keep the Lord continuously in prominence". Again in Psalm 63:1-8 when David was out in the wilderness, far from the temple, he worshipped the God who was present. He had a spontaneous relationship with God because he was continually aware of the presence of God.



We need to practise the presence of God. But how do we do this? One thing is certain, as Brother Lawrence points out in *The Practise of the Presence of God* - it is not something that comes naturally. We will only learn to experience God's presence as an ongoing reality through much conscious effort and discipline. The following ways to practise God's presence are suggested:

- (1) **Remind yourself of the reality of God's presence** – throughout the day we are to find ways to jog our memories that God is with us.
- (2) **Decide to talk to God continuously** – we must make a conscious decision to communicate with God as much as possible throughout the day.
- (3) **When you forget God is with you, confess and continue with him** – we must not allow condemnation to fill our hearts when we realise we have forgotten God – just confess and continue.
- (4) **Do everything, even common tasks, for the Lord** (Colossians 3:17,23). If we can condition ourselves to see everything we do as done for God, we will be able to include him in our whole lives.
- (5) **Take control of your senses and let them direct your mind to God** – we need to use the senses that we normally use to experience our world (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch) to direct our attention towards God.
- (6) **Make it your aim to experience God continually** – we need to come to a point where we purpose in our hearts to increase our awareness of God's presence and consciously decide to experience God as much as we possibly can.

## REHEARSING THE WORSHIP PROGRAMME

It is essential that musicians are well-rehearsed. The worship programme should only include songs that musicians can play well. The psalmist encourages the worship leader to "play skilfully". As well as playing skilfully, musicians ought to be playing from the heart.

It is important to understand the songs that we sing in worship. We must be sensitive to the words of the songs. We can be sensitive to the songs by not playing with reckless abandon. If there are four or more musicians in a group, some verses to the songs can be played with a fraction of the group (a quiet verse could be sung with only two musicians. You may also have a verse sung unaccompanied).

If you can, it is more beneficial to memorize the songs that you will sing in the worship programme.

On a more practical level, it is a priority for any praise group to establish a night each week for rehearsals. Before the rehearsal, pray together and pray for one another!

## LEADING THE WORSHIP PROGRAMME

- ◆ **Be flexible:** listen to the leading of the Spirit. As you flow through the different areas of worship (call to worship; praise; engagement; intimacy and response) the Spirit may lead you to spend more time in one particular area. Don't feel you have to stick to the prepared programme. Be open to repeating the last verse of a song or reprising a chorus.
- ◆ **Be prepared:** when the Spirit leads you to spend more time in a particular area of worship, it will be helpful if you have prepared other worship songs that you can draw upon.
- ◆ **Be Spirit-filled:** there is a major difference between being anointed of the Holy Spirit in worship and being emotionally charged through the excitement of leading in worship. It is therefore important that the worship leader connects with God through the worship.
- ◆ **Be creative:** during a worship song why not consider playing a verse instrumentally? While playing instrumentally the worship leader may lead the congregation in prayer. Be sensitive to allowing for silence in worship and talk sparingly.
- ◆ **Be sensitive:** Don't just plough through your worship programme. Lead sensitively and prayerfully.
- ◆ **Be alert:** respect the time given for worship, giving consideration to time restraints. If you sense the programme is too long, create signals for the band so they know if they are to stop earlier than programmed for. You may also drop songs out of your programme as the worship service progresses.
- ◆ **Be servant-hearted:** don't live for the affirmation. Guard your heart from taking any glory to yourself. A worship leader is to serve and give glory to God.

## PREPARING THE WORSHIP PROGRAMME

When we lead in corporate worship, it is a most sacred, delightful privilege. Worship is not just an act, it is the life of the Christian. As worship leaders, we are called to a Christ-centred, God-honouring and Spirit-filled life. Our lives must become the greatest musical instrument.

Worship is also a place where we go and meet with God. We don't come to church to be impressed by the preacher, the music or the talent of the musicians; we come because our hearts cry for an encounter with the living God. When we consider the choice of worship songs, it is imperative that you choose them prayerfully. Don't just create a selection of "old time favourites" to please a certain target group.

### THE CHOICE OF WORSHIP

When we consider a worship set for a Praise Night, for example, it is helpful to select praise that the people will actually enjoy. This will involve integrating the classic hymns (Praise my soul, the King of heaven, And can it be, O for a thousand tongues, etc) with the more contemporary songs. Consider the people you desire to see encounter God.

As well as the classic hymns and the more contemporary songs, you may also want to consider the gospel song tradition and the metrical psalm tradition. Many of the metrical psalms can be put to new tunes or tunes that are more popular than the recommended one. We must be sensitive though with the introduction of new songs and tunes. Worship leaders can often be guilty of disengaging the congregation from worship by overwhelming them with too many new songs.

When we consider the classic hymns, many of them are quite lengthy (some may be 6 or 7 verses long). With the more lengthy hymns don't feel bound to using all the verses in the worship service. Be selective.

### ESTABLISHING A FLOW IN WORSHIP

- ⇒ **A Call to Worship:** when we begin our worship set, the opening songs should encourage the congregation to come and worship (Come, now is the time to worship; Give thanks to the Lord; Holy, Holy, Holy, etc). In the hymn books they are known as "hymns of approach".
- ⇒ **Praise & Adoration:** the call to worship will then lead naturally into songs of heart-felt praise which focus on God himself. These songs will seek to express our adoration and love for God.
- ⇒ **Engagement & Petition:** the worship songs in this section connect with the reality of people's longings (Lord have mercy; revive thy work, O Lord, etc).
- ⇒ **Intimacy:** when we feel our hearts connecting with God the praise should now express the goodness and closeness of God.
- ⇒ **Response:** It is important that our worship programme gives people an opportunity to respond to God (Reign in me, Sovereign Lord; Change my heart). There can be a temptation for the worship leader to "go out with a favourite hymn" to end a service. Be sensitive to the Spirit when closing a worship programme.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF WORSHIP

Isaiah chapter 6 is a classic experience of worship. Under King Uzziah, Judah experienced prosperity second only to Solomon's reign. But the prophet had just learned of the death of their earthly king and as he enters the temple his eyes are lifted away from the earthly situation to eternal realities. He sees God, enthroned in holiness, and the excellence of his glory fills the whole earth. As Isaiah set his focus on God, he received a visual experience of God's glory, ushered in by the presence of the Seraphim. Isaiah suddenly becomes conscious that he is not able to stand in the presence of this holy God. The response of confession from his heart to the holiness of God was met with the inflow of cleansing and renewing power and the result is a new commission to service.

This experience of Isaiah's gives us a pattern for our encounter with God.

- A. Revelation (v 1) - God reveals himself to his people.
- B. Adoration (v 2) - God's people respond in awe of God's character.
- C. Confession (v 5) - God's people confess their sin before a Holy God.
- D. Forgiveness (v 6,7) - God forgives his people their sin.
- E. Proclamation (8a) - God proclaims a message to the cleansed audience.
- F. Dedication (v 8b) - God's people express a desire to be used by God.
- G. Commission (v 9a) - God commissions his people to service.

According to Colossians 3:16 ("Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.") there are three dimensions in which our worship services minister:

- (1) **The Vertical Aspect of Worship** - *the Worshipper Communicates with the Lord*
- (2) **The Horizontal Aspect of Worship** - *the Worshipper Communicates with others*
- (3) **The Inward Aspect of Worship** - *the Worshipper is Personally Affected*

Think for a moment about what you expect God to do when you worship him? We do not worship to get a response - worship is not an "open sesame", but we can be assured that when we truly worship, God will, according to his sovereignty, respond. The following are Biblical examples of what we can expect of God:

- A. God Listens Actively - Jeremiah 33:3
- B. God Changes Lives
- C. God Changes Situations - Psalm 149:6-9
- D. God Makes Himself Known - Matthew 28:17-19; Acts 2:11; 13:2-5
- E. God Makes His Plans Known - Joshua 5:13-14
- F. God Breaks Spiritual Bondage - 1 Samuel 16:14-23
- G. God Breaks Physical Bondage - Jonah 2:9
- H. God Makes His Presence Clear - 2 Chronicles 5:13f



## THE ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

In worship we express the following attitudes: *adoration*, *gratitude*, *repentance*, *neediness*, *submission*, and *commitment*. The elements of worship are the means by which these attitudes are expressed. For example *adoration* is expressed in praise; *gratitude* is expressed in thanksgiving; *repentance* is expressed in confession; *neediness* is expressed in dependence; *submission* is expressed in surrender; and *commitment* is expressed in obedience.

The New Testament gives few examples of what happened when the early church met for worship. One is found in 1 Corinthians 12:26: "What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church". Even here not all possible elements are included. This passage does, however, stress the *purpose* behind the use of elements ("the strengthening of the body"), and the importance of *participation* in worship ("everyone has a...").

In Clement's personal letter to the church of Corinth, written about A.D. 96, there are a number of exhortations concerning various worship elements:

- \* Read and revere the Word of God
- \* Repent and confess sins
- \* Show humility before God's majesty
- \* Proclaim the Word of God
- \* Acknowledge the Holy Spirit in their presence
- \* Give offerings for the support of workers
- \* Prayer

The first full worship outline is found in Justin Martyr's Apology (dated 140 A.D.):

"And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in the city or the country, the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites (us) to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all stand together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the Amen; the distribution, and the reception of the consecrated elements by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons".

This worship service included the following elements:

- \* Reading and Proclamation
- \* Congregational Prayer
- \* The Lord's Supper
- \* Prayer and Thanksgiving
- \* The Amen
- \* Offering



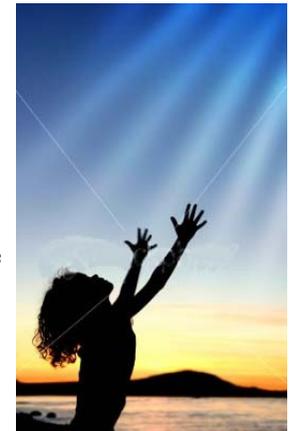
## PRINCIPLES FOR LEADING WORSHIP

The following guidelines will help worship leaders prepare for special events; Praise nights, conferences, and other worship events:

1. Spend time before the service in prayer and preparation. Obey the leading of the Spirit. Ask the church leadership how long you have at your disposal.
2. Be relaxed, smile and show genuine enthusiasm. Inspire the people to take their minds off themselves and centre their thoughts on Christ.
3. Announce songs clearly and repeat the location. Know the key the song is to be sung in.
4. Don't be a choppy leader (fast, slow, fast). Several songs with the same theme, key and tempo will move the people into unity and true worship. Unless the Lord directs otherwise, start the service with faster songs, then move into slower worship songs.
5. Don't make people stand for too long. Alternate sitting, standing, kneeling as expressions of worship.
6. Don't scold the people. Inspire by exhortation, as the Lord directs, but don't preach between songs or fill up the gaps with idle words.
7. After intense worship - wait - don't move too fast - silence is not harmful. Let God minister to his people and let them respond to God.
8. Know when to stop. The best time is at the spiritual peak of the service. Silently step back from where you are leading, yielding it to the ministry of the preacher.
9. Remember, obey the Spirit. Every service is different!

### **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADING WORSHIP**

- \* Make a clear and definite start - begin by confidently taking control of the service.
- \* Watch out for dead spaces - thorough preparation will help with the flow.
- \* Use Scripture in worship - build your theme around Scripture and creatively use it.
- \* Make offering a part of worship - ie. as a response or a sign of commitment.
- \* Plan prayer in the service: opening, pastoral, offering, intercession, etc.
- \* Check the direction of the songs: testimony, praise, worship, etc. Increase intimacy throughout.
- \* Use a variety of music: old and new choruses; old and new hymns. You could also consider using hymns & spiritual songs by local worship leaders and preachers.
- \* Use creative ideas to involve people - find fresh ways to do old things.
- \* Reflect societal events in worship by referring to what has happened during the week.
- \* Reflect the theme of the sermon in worship by coming at the topic from a different angle.
- \* Lead naturally into the sermon - avoid ending the 'worship' time before the message.



## THE PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Preparation for the worship leader is both long-term and short-term: some are on-going and others take place prior to every service. It is more than practicing a list of songs for the Sunday Service.

### **A. Spiritual Preparation Throughout The Week**

A regular and disciplined prayer and study life is essential, because ministry to God comes before ministry to people. If we are far from the Lord in the week we will not be able to lead people into a sense of God's presence during the service.

### **B. Spiritual Tuning Before The Worship Service**

Set aside a time on Saturday night or Sunday morning to draw close to the Lord. There is no time to "tune into the Lord" once we are before the people. It is essential that there is no hurrying before the service - make a commitment to be at the venue long before the start of the service.

### **C. Vocal Tuning Before The Worship Service**

That early morning "frog in the throat" must be cleared before you stand in front of the people. Warm up the vocal chords by singing a few songs in a low key and gradually get higher, or do singing vocal exercises, if you know how!

### **D. Determine The Message To Be Delivered**

In the week check with the preacher to determine the passage of scripture and the burden God has laid on his heart to preach. This information could help in the selection of music to be played as processional & recessional or background items. Try and get a copy of the draft Order of Service list (including full text of praise items) from the Church Administrator—Elaine Dorey (471505).

### **E. Communicate in the worship team**

Speak to the preacher if you have a wide choice of music for a specific praise item. The preacher will often know which tune will be more popular with the congregation. The choice of music should also flow in style with the whole worship service. Don't pick a fast piece of music followed by a slow piece and then returning to a fast item. The worship must have direction. Worship leaders should communicate regularly to confirm who is leading each item or section of the service.

### **F. Practical Details To Prepare**

The following will ensure confidence and efficiency in leading worship:

- \* Have information available at a glance - Go through the Order of Service sheet, check verse lengths of the praise songs (this will stop you going onto verse 4 when there are only 3 verses selected for the praise sheet)
- \* Ensure all equipment is ready - i.e. Overhead, sound system, instruments, etc.
- \* Check and read through Scripture references to get direction in the worship
- \* Make sure all the participants understand their roles

Remember these words of Charles Spurgeon, "The man who guides others into the presence of the King must have journeyed far into the King's country and looked upon his face."

In order for a worship service to be effective there must be a smooth flow between these various elements. Worship can be compared to either a freight train or a passenger train. In *freight train worship* the sequence of events is stilted and obvious. In this context the praise is only a means to getting to the sermon. The content of the worship time is haphazard with no apparent theme to connect the songs, prayers, etc. Worship leaders on the freight train endure the journey in order to get to their destination as quickly as possible. In *passenger train worship* there is a logical unfolding drama that takes place. Worship here is intellectually, emotionally and spiritually continuous. The content of the songs, readings and prayers all contribute to the theme. There are no jarring emotional shifts. The elements are seen as building blocks designed to point the worshippers to God. In *passenger train worship* we no longer need to endure the journey but instead we get to enjoy it.

Praise ploughs the soil of our hearts so that we are prepared to have the seed of the Word of God implanted. Hearers are more open to hear the Word of God after a time of praise and worship than before. The sermon flows naturally from the time of Praise and is a natural part of the Worship.

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORSHIP LEADER

William Hendricks wrote *Exit Interviews*, in which people who had left the church were interviewed. In answering the question: "Why is church attendance declining?" he says: "*Perhaps the most common complaint was that worship services were boring. It was not that these gatherings were not interesting; they were not worshipful; they did little to help people meet God.*" He goes on to say that the most significant benefit of a worship service is connecting with God. "People expect to find God in church. And why not? If you can't find God in a church...where can you find him?"

The ministry of a worship leader is critical in creating an environment in which people will encounter and experience God. People are looking for an encounter with God – especially today where people want to connect with God.

Douglas Coupland, a secular author, wrote in *Life After God*, "When I was younger I used to worry so much about being alone - of being unlovable or incapable of love. As the years went on, my worries changed. I worried that I had become incapable of having a relationship, of offering intimacy. I felt as though the world lived inside a warm house at night and I was outside, and I couldn't be seen - because I was out there in the night. But now I am inside that house and it feels just the same." "Now - here is my secret. My secret is that I need God - that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love." People want to encounter God - not just hear about him! The worship leader is critical to this.



There are three different perspectives on the role of the worship leader: (a) *Bringing God down to His people*; (b) *Lifting people up to God*; or (c) *Helping people celebrate the God who is among them*. On the basis of the foundation we established for worship (ie. the presence of God) we must conclude that the worship leaders cannot bring God down, because God is universally present all the time. While there is a sense in which the worship leader helps people to focus on God, we should be right-fully concerned about leaders who think they must get people into an emotional state in order to worship God. The most correct view is the third one, which sees the role of the worship leader as helping people to experience God who is among them.

It follows then that the goal of the worship leader is *to bring the congregation into a corporate awareness of God's manifest presence and to facilitate an appropriate response*. The role of the worship leader is to help people together become aware of God and to make an appropriate response to his presence.

The following guidelines will help worship leaders to help people experience God's presence in church:

### 1. Encourage People to Prepare for Worship

We read in Acts 4:1-22 of how Peter and John were arrested and jailed for having preached about Jesus' resurrection (vs 1,2). As the authorities interrogated them they were amazed at their boldness (vs 13). They could not argue with the testimony of the man who Peter and John had healed (vs 14). So they decided to release the disciples urging them not to speak any more about Jesus. Obviously they were not going to keep quiet. The first thing that Peter and John did was to go to church (vs 23). I believe that they were prepared to go to church because they had been living for God the whole week. Leaders must teach people to practise God's presence during the week and live a lifestyle of worship.

### 2. Teach People to Expect to Encounter God

In Acts 4:23 we discover that as Peter and John came together with the other believers there was real sense of excitement and anticipation. They knew that they were going to meet with God. Otherwise they would have gone into hiding out of fear. God did not disappoint them - he met with them (vs 31)! We must teach people that as they prepare to meet with God they must believe that connecting with God is possible. They need an expectant attitude.

### 3. Help People to Participate in Worship

In Acts 4:24-30 we discover some ways in which people participated in worship:

(i) **They Gave Glory to God** (vs 24) - they came in *humility* (they confessed their sins); they came in *gratitude* (their two pastors had just been released from Jail); and they came in *worship* (humbly bowing to kiss His feet in worship).

(ii) **They Listened Intently to the Word** (vs 25-26) – we should encourage people to bring a Bible to church; to ask the Holy Spirit to apply its truths to their lives; to read the Scriptures for themselves; to take notes.



(iii) **They Focussed on Jesus** (vs 27-28) – they did not worry so much about who was upfront and whether their favourite songs were sung...their attention was directed at Jesus.

(iv) **They Prayed for Empowerment** (vs 29-30) – they prayed in praise and not in pity; they prayed for power not for protection; and they prayed with confidence not with cowardice.

### 4. Facilitate an Encounter with God

A worship leader can assist the meeting of people and God by:

- \* Giving God and people space in which they can relate to each other.
- \* Being personally connected to God.
- \* Being sensitive to God and his directing during the worship.
- \* Being sensitive to people – there is usually diversity of ages; cultures and spiritual levels.
- \* Releasing control of the service to other elements within the worship service through the leading of the Holy Spirit
- \* Fulfilling a role as mediator between God and people.
- \* Inviting people to engage with God who is among them.

## QUALIFICATIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRAISE LEADER

### The Praise Leader's Qualifications:

Here is a list of qualifications that should serve as a guideline for praise leaders or qualities for the praise leader to continually strive to reveal in their lives:

- \* A worshipper - a daily submission to the Lordship of Christ
- \* A deep and proven spiritual walk
- \* A knowledge of the church worship style and songs
- \* An acceptable level of musical ability - "Play skilfully" (Psalm 33:3)
- \* A good reputation in the church fellowship
- \* Able to function as part of a team
- \* A positive attitude towards the church leadership
- \* A commitment to leading in worship
- \* An enthusiastic and friendly personality

### The Praise Leader's Responsibilities:

Here at the High Kirk the worship is shared between organist, praise band and from time to time we welcome special guests. This gives our worship leaders the ability and flexibility of serving the whole congregation with various styles.

- \* **Participate** – Enjoy worshipping in song when you are not leading through music.
- \* **Focus** – keep attention focused on God. Remember who you are playing to—God!
- \* **Prepare** – if you are playing in the background, play prayerfully, keeping the theme and flow of the service *in the Spirit*.
- \* **Worship** – We must always remember that we are here to worship and not perform our favourite music styles. Any musical interludes should be a continuous flow of heart felt worship.