

RESOURCE MINISTRIES
PRAISE AND WORSHIP SEMINAR
Session 6 - PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP LEADING

By Jim Stephens

- I. Because Praise and Worship is as important as anything else that happens in a service, it is as important for the Worship Leader and the Worship Team to be prepared as for the preacher to be prepared. The Worship Leader's preparation must involve:
 - A. Heart preparation.
 - 1. Be up-to-date with God; obedience, devotions, prayer.
 - 2. Be right with those around you; family, team, etc.
 - 3. Take time to be quiet and sense the direction of the Holy Spirit.
 - 4. Pray with the team before the service.
 - B. Practical preparation.
 - 1. Talk to pastor, others involved in the meeting to see what the theme or special emphasis may be.
 - 2. Find out exactly what is expected: A few choruses, a full-length worship service, who to turn over to, who to look to for direction.
 - 3. Make a song list; check the keys, make sure your team and musicians know the songs.
 - 4. Coordinate with the Overhead Projector operator; new songs written up,.
 - 5. Practice with the team, make sure there is a good flow. Be alert for any problems.
- II. BE A LEADER
 - A. It is essential that there be firm, clear leadership in the Praise and Worship service.

1. If there are any questions about direction, time, or procedure, get them settled with the pastor or whoever is in charge before the service begins.
 2. Once you take the microphone and the pulpit, you must know where you're going, what you're doing, and project that confidence and assurance to the congregation and the rest of the worship team.
- B. Tell the people what you want them to do.
1. Speak clearly and distinctly. Be aware of visitors and put them at ease.
 2. Use a simple greeting or introductory statement to put people at ease, then get on with it.
 3. Remember that you are leading worship and not preaching a sermon.
 4. Give positive leadership. Be clear, gentle, and firm.
 5. Don't "surprise the people" by changing the normal order of worship without a real purpose.
- C. Be careful about your countenance and appearance.
1. Smile and keep a cheerful expression on your face.
 2. Let your posture and body language communicate a message of cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and energy.
- D. Maintain eye contact with the people at all times.
1. The worship leader must not stand before the people with eyes closed. Others may, you cannot! "Blind leading the blind!"
 2. You must watch the people to know if you are leading them or just going along by yourself.
 3. There are many clues you need to watch for in the group, and they need to be able to see your eyes to know you are leading them.
- E. Develop a method of communication with the musicians and your worship team.

1. Use hand signals, body language, brief instructions.
 2. Make sure that you remain in charge of the team. If you have someone who does not flow well, who wants to take over or do their own thing, deal with it outside the worship service.
 3. Get help from the pastor if necessary. The principle of unity in worship is more important than someone's ego!
- F. Don't allow "dead spots" or lengthy silences to happen in the worship time.
1. Have a chorus ready, know what key you're in, and keep it moving.
 2. You don't have to rush or drive the people, but they have to feel your leadership in order to open up in God's presence.
 3. This is not to say that you can't have brief periods of waiting silently before the Lord, but do it intentionally and let the people know that.

III. DEVELOP AND PROMOTE A "FLOW" IN THE PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Praise and Worship is not a performance by a group of skilled musicians, nor is it a concert to entertain an audience. Praise and Worship is an attempt by a group of believers to rise above themselves and give glory and honour to God. It is intended to transcend the natural and move the people into the spiritual realm, into the presence of God. Therefore as a Worship Leader you should give special attention to the following things:

- A. Don't preach a sermon at the people.
1. Don't overdo it with exhortations.
 2. Don't browbeat the people, even if you feel they are not responding properly.
 3. You are leading them, not driving them!
- B. Start with faster-type rejoicing and praise songs and stay with it until you sense that they are experiencing a release of joy and faith.
- C. Plan your transition from Praise into Worship.

1. Have a song ready that fits the theme and key you are in that can take them from rejoicing to reverence, from Praise to Worship.
 2. Don't change keys at this point.
- D. When you move into worship, guide them gently but firmly.
1. This is not a time to stop and talk.
 2. This is not a time to try out new choruses.
 3. This should be a time when you are moving on familiar ground so the people can relax musically and respond spiritually.
- E. Don't try to lead them into "Worship" or "Singing in the Spirit" prematurely.
1. Don't do it after every chorus.
 2. You must let the Worship build in the hearts of the people before you release it or their response will be weak and shallow.
- F. Stay with a song or flow until you sense the people really responding to it.
1. The habit of "sing it through three times and go to the next one" will not produce real Praise or Worship.
 2. Move gracefully from song to song. By using songs in the same key you can avoid unnecessary stopping and starting. An alternative is to pre-arrange with the musicians to modulate from one key to the next so the key change is done smoothly without breaking the flow.
- G. When you lead the people into "worship in the spirit", you must remain the leader.
1. Stay at the microphone or keep yourself before the people so they don't get nervous.
 2. The leader must remain alert to watch for potential problems, be sensitive to the flow, and be ready to pick it up when the singing dies down.

IV. ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS ON LEADING

- A. You as the leader, or your worship team, must lead the people in appropriate actions and responses; clapping, raising hands, bowing, dancing, etc.
- B. When changing choruses, singing over the last part of a song again, modulating a song upwards, or at any crucial point in the worship, let your voice be strong and give clear, firm leadership.
- C. Don't teach too many new songs or choruses.
 - 1. When you do teach a song, try to have it on the Overhead, make sure that your musicians and worship team know it and are comfortable with it.
 - 2. Then be sure to use it frequently for a few meetings until the congregation has become comfortable with it.
- D. Sing the songs in the way that the people are used to singing them. Don't try to change things in minor ways that will cause more trouble than benefit.
- E. Learn to recognize special songs and themes that the Holy Spirit is emphasizing or anointing. When that is happening, flow with it. Be sensitive to know when it is over and be ready to move on.
- F. Don't try to duplicate or recapture a particular move of the Holy Spirit that you experienced last week. Each meeting needs a fresh move of God's Spirit.
 - 1. It seldom works to go with the same song list, the same comments, to get it to "happen again"!
 - 2. Just prepare diligently every time and let the Holy Spirit lead. We don't have to have a "bell-ringer" every time.
- G. Don't release the people into clapping or shouting or some other outlet of praise after every chorus.
 - 1. This will cause the Praise and Worship to stay at a fairly low level and prevents it from building up to a real intensity.

2. Keep moving from song to song until you know there is a real level of praise to be released.

V. WHAT TO DO WHEN:

A. It's just not working.

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what's wrong. Watch the people.
2. You may need to stop and pray or exhort briefly. All exhortations should be positive and encouraging. Don't beat on the people. After all, they did make the effort to come to the meeting!
3. You need to turn it over to the pastor to deal with something.
4. Don't keep plodding on as if nothing is wrong. Fix it! If you have started the song too high or too low, stop and start again.

B. You miss it.

1. When you miss the Spirit's theme and direction, it is usually best to stop and acknowledge that before the people and start again.
2. Your honesty will encourage the people and they will really "pull with you".

C. You start a song on the wrong key; too high or too low.

Unless you have musicians who can modulate up or down to the right key and do it smoothly, just stop, tell the people what happened, and start again.

D. There is a disturbance.

1. Try to carry on if possible and minimize the effects of the disturbance.
2. An usher, deacon, or other responsible person can deal with it while you continue to lead. You need to have trained ushers who have the authority and who are known to have the authority to deal firmly but graciously with disturbances. The manifest presence of the Lord can sometimes stir up emotional or even demonic outbursts.

3. If the disturbance is too big to handle that way, it is often best to stop, acknowledge the disturbance, let the people see that it is dealt with, and then pick back up the worship and praise.
- E. There is Prophecy, or Tongues, or some other spiritual manifestation.
1. Praise and Worship should be expected to create an atmosphere for the manifestation of the Gifts of the Spirit.
 2. When they occur, we need to be sure that they are done "decently and in order".
 3. The leader should also definitely maintain control of the service while the Gifts of the Spirit are manifested.
 4. The Worship Leader may want to turn over the mike to the pastor or an elder at this point.
 5. If there are many visitors present, it can be especially helpful to give some explanation of what is happening, and lead the congregation in an appropriate response to what has been said.
- F. You're not sure what to do next; which song to use, whether to move into worship, etc.
1. When you sense that a change is coming up and you're not quite sure just how to move with it, sing the song or chorus again and inwardly ask the Holy Spirit what to do.
 2. Look for impressions or thoughts to come up in your spirit. Sing the current song through a couple of times if necessary until the sense of direction comes.