

# Spirit-Led Worship Leading

## Spiritual Foundations

- **Intimate relationship with God**
  - Eternal life is why Jesus died (John 3:16) and eternal life starts NOW by knowing God!
    - *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3*
  - First and greatest commandment is loving God (Matthew 22:36-37)
  - Being rooted in the reality of God's love for us (Ephesians 3:17-20) will free us from fear that would hinder stepping out in faith/spontaneity (1 John 4:18).
  - Without relationship, trying to be "spirit-led" will amount to new religious formulas, and copying those who are sincerely prophetic. Playing Jason Upton songs does not amount to being spirit-led. God has a unique and personal way for you to relate to him, specific things to speak to you, and creative ways to use you in leading worship.
  - Many of the practical things that we will discuss happen naturally as worship leaders develop deeper intimacy with God. Do NOT miss this point. First things first.
- **Lifestyle of Worship**
  - Submitting your life fully to Him as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1).
  - You can't be "Spirit-led" if He is not your leader (Galatians 5:16-26).
  - Do all you do for God's glory (Colosians 3:23).
- **Lifestyle of Prayer and Fasting (Matthew 6:5-18)**
  - Personal and corporate prayer
  - Learning to hear God's voice - journaling helps
    - *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:27*
  - Fasting regularly (Matthew 9:15)
- **Intentional Bible Study and Meditation**
  - Read through the whole Bible, preferably once a year (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - Take verses to pray through, sing through, meditate on, etc. (2 Tim. 2:7)
  - Youversion.com - Bible reading plans, mobile Bible app, etc.
- **Local church commitment**
  - Provides accountability, humility, perspective, relationship, Bible teaching and spiritual authority (Hebrews 10:25, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 Timothy 5:17, Acts 2:42-47)
- **Ministering prophetically**
  - Learning to relay God's word to others prepares you to do the same when you are leading worship. (Acts 2:17, 1 Corinthians 12-14)
  - The book "You May All Prophecy" by Steve Thompson is a great resource
- **Personal praise & worship**

- Sing alone to Jesus as much as you sing to Him in front of others

## **Musical Foundations**

- **Playing by ear**
  - Allows us to more easily follow one another in spontaneous moments
  - Recognizing progressions, intervals, harmonies
  - Simply put on music and try to learn to play it
- **Music theory**
  - Nashville number system
  - Rhythm, keys, scales, chord theory, harmony
- **Multiple instruments**
  - Being able to recognize a guitar or bass playing a “G” or “C”
  - Watch the keyboard player’s left hand to learn the root notes
- **Various styles**
  - Rock, pop, jazz, gospel, metal, classical, blues, etc.
- **Songwriting**
  - Spontaneous worship is essentially writing a song
  - Helps to understand the interplay of chords, melody, lyrics, harmony, phrasing and rhythm
  - Learn what melodies and scales work with what chord progressions
- **Excellence on your primary instrument**
  - God can only sing/play through us to the extent that we have prepared ourselves in excellence.
  - If God wants you to play something that is beyond your ability, then you have limited yourself.
  - Good stewardship of the gifts and talents He has given you (Matthew 25:14-29)
- **Memorize songs**
  - Allows us to focus on hearing God’s voice and being led by the Spirit
  - Allows us to watch and communicate with the band during spontaneous moments, instead of staring at a chord chart

## **Spirit-Led Planning**

- Being spirit-led does not mean no planning, and planning does not mean the Holy Spirit can not be involved
- The key is to invite the Holy Spirit into your planning, and allow Him to change/alter your plans throughout the entire process, even at the last minute
- Ask Him to give you themes, songs and ideas - use a journal to write them down
  - If He doesn't speak specific songs, assume there is freedom to choose
  - Trust your heart in God's presence. If you are in prayer/worship and a song pops into your head, it's probably the Holy Spirit
  - God will allow a certain song to connect with you personally as a way to lead you in what songs to sing
- Spend time worshipping with the songs and see how the Spirit leads
  - You may discover other songs to which you can transition easily.
  - You may develop spontaneous choruses that can be repeated during the gathering
- Practice spontaneity and prophetic worship at your band practices. Do not wait until you are in front of others. If you do not practice, you either won't do it or it will be rough.
- Arrange your songs more loosely.
  - Arrange the beginning and ending
  - Plan to have moments that will linger - a guitar solo, a bridge/chorus
  - Plan to have parts that will repeat indefinitely until the worship leader cues the band to move on to the next part.
  - Example: quiet chorus on Chosen Generation
- Plan for spontaneity in a realistic way.
  - This is especially important when time is a factor (churches with multiple services).
  - If you usually do 4 songs, maybe do 3 songs and plan on some extended and/or spontaneous worship. Give the Spirit some room to move!
  - Example: Most songs are 4-5 minutes. Friday nights at the Boiler Room usually have 1½ hours of worship. Instead of 18 5-minutes songs, we usually plan for around 8 songs. This is about 15 minutes per song, because I know that we regularly extend the songs, stop and share a word/Scripture, have extended musical interludes/jams, and sing prophetic songs.

## The Specifics

### Biblical and Practical Suggestions

- **Play and sing with other spirit-led worshipers**
  - Prophetic worship is better caught than taught
- **Extend existing songs**
  - Repeat the chorus, return the bridge and play through the last 1/3 of the song again, etc.
  - In a Burn or prayer room context (where you are trying to fill the time), parts of the songs can be repeated A LOT.
  - This can actually help people start to think about what they are singing and why. It moves from just singing into worship.
  - This also helps if there are no lyrics displayed. It takes people a while to catch on to a song, even a catchy chorus.
- **Spontaneous Worship**
  - Worship leader and/or singer(s) worshipping from their heart in a free-flow style
  - The Psalms instruct us to sing a new song (Psalm 33:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149: 1)
  - Moses and Miriam sang spontaneous songs after being delivered from Egypt (Exodus 15). Likewise, we respond to Jesus' salvation by singing a spontaneous song (Isaiah 42:10).
  - Simeon respond to Christ's birth with a spontaneous song (Luke 2:29-32).
  - There are seven Hebrew words for praise. One word, **tehillah**, has implications of spontaneous song
    - *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise [tehillah] unto our God (Psalm 40:3)*
    - Tehillah is used each time the word praise appears with 'new song.'
    - Psalm 22:3 says God is enthroned on our praises [tehillah] which helps us understand why God's presence comes in a particularly strong way when we sing spontaneously.
  - This can be done during instrumental breaks or a repetitious part
  - Many times this happens at the end of a song as the band worship leader is vamping on a certain chord progression
  - Singers can all sing together at the same time to encourage the congregation to join in with the team
  - Spontaneous, repeated choruses can develop and be sung in unity by all
- **Prophetic Oracle/Singing**
  - Communicating God's heart through song.
  - Prophetic songs in Scripture include David's messianic prophecies in the Psalms (2, 8, 16, 22, 34, 45, etc.), Song of Solomon, Mary's song (Luke 1:46-55), Zacharias' prophecy (Luke 1:67-79), etc.
  - Most biblical prophecies were actually sung.
  - Music helps facilitate prophecy, because it helps us to engage with God in our spirit/heart.
    - *But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 2 Kings 3:15*

- “...I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with understanding.” I Corinthians 14:15  
(context is discussing tongues and prophecy)
  - Similar to spontaneous singing, except usually only one singer at a time
  - Singer sings over the congregation from God’s perspective as the Holy Spirit speaks to the singer
- **Antiphonal Singing**
  - Multiple singers singing in an alternating way - can be spontaneous worship, singing prayers or prophetic singing.
  - “And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD” Ezra 3:11
  - *And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jesbua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise and give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the man of God.* Nehemiah 12:2
  - Example: one singer sings prophetically and one responds worshipfully  
Singer 1: “My beloved I desire you to draw near to me”  
Singer 2: “I will draw near, oh God”
- **Worship with the Word (Singing Scripture)**
  - Musician plays and repeats a simple chord progression
  - Singer(s) sing the Scripture by
    - 1) singing the exact wording of the verses
    - 2) singing the same idea in fresh language
    - 3) expounding upon the verses’ theme
    - 4) singing prayers based on the Scripture (intercessory worship - see Revelation 5:8)
  - *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* Colossians 3:16
  - Spontaneous choruses can develop based on the Scripture
  - The Psalms and other devotional passages are great to use for this
  - Gives us deeper revelation of God’s word, helps us remember the Scripture, and helps us to engage our hearts with God through His written word
- **Selachs (Instrumental Interlude)**
  - Biblical instruction to play instruments before God - I Chronicles 15:16, Psalm 150, etc.
  - *And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.* I Samuel 16:23
  - Can happen as a chord progression from the previous song is repeated
  - One band member can take the lead and the rest of the band can join in
- **Prophetic Instrumentation**
  - Instrumentalists communicating God’s heart on a spirit-level.
  - The musicians in David’s tabernacle were trained to prophesy on their instruments (I Chronicles 25).
  - A certain sound, lick, progression, riff, melody “speaks” to the gathering
  - The difference is that instrumental worship is a musicians expressing His love and worship

to God with music, whereas prophetic music expresses God's heart to the congregation (hard to differentiate).

- Can also be vocalists singing melodies without lyrics - "oh oh oh"
- *As you begin to flow with the Holy Spirit, it will be difficult to determine whether it is spontaneous worship, singing a prayer, prophetic worship, etc. THAT IS OK! Separating these different ideas just helps us to think about ways to engage with the Holy Spirit in a spontaneous way.*

## **Practicals of Flowing as a Band**

- Leadership must be very clear - who's directing the band during spontaneous moments?
- Arrange the players on the stage so that everyone can see one another
  - The typical rock band setup with a “front man” is limiting
  - Consider how an orchestra is arranged on stage
- Hand signals help communication
  - Repeat, half-time, double time, end the song, go to a certain part (chorus, bridge), to the top/beginning, etc.
  - Especially make sure the drummer can see
- Having a consistent band lineup allows the members to learn each other - how they play and how they communicate
  - Where team members are interchanged often, a more structured approach is probably necessary.