

Jason Soroski Worship Ministry Philosophy

1. What is the first responsibility of a worship director/pastor?

The first responsibility of a worship pastor is explained in the title itself: to lead and shepherd people by personally living a life of worship and pouring into others, encouraging them in their walk and worship. As a worship pastor I define success by the answers to these questions:

- Is my team growing relationally, spiritually and numerically?
- Is our congregation engaged in worship?
- Does my team see themselves as servants, and not performers?
- Are there goals for improvement, and are those goals being met?

I believe that being an effective worship pastor involves as much pastoral knowledge as musical knowledge in order to be truly successful. Ultimately, if a worshiper walks out of the room and can't necessarily remember my name, but can say that they encountered God, I consider myself a success. To me, worship is not just about music, but also encompasses teaching and building up.

2. Is Worship just about music?

To answer this question, I cannot help but reference a piece I wrote for Worship Leader Magazine last year, which can be found at <http://worshipleader.com/worship/whats-your-worship-like/>.

"When newcomers walk into a church service on a Sunday morning, chances are their first impression will be based in large part on the music. The first person they hear speak from the front of the room will likely be the worship leader, and the first thing they see will be your worship team. So what will the things they see and hear say about your church? What will these things say about Jesus?"

As Matt Redman once said so well, the heart of worship isn't about the music anyway; it's about Jesus being honored and lifted up. We need to find and use the best songs for our congregations, but true worship is more than a song. It's a sacrifice.

After all, worship is not about music. Worship is not about a set list.

Worship is about Jesus.

Worship is about bowing our hearts and minds and families and jobs and cares and worries before the Almighty Creator of all things and saying we trust Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Worship is about bringing honor and glory and thanks to Him who gave all for us.

Worship is exhortation and praise, and it is a prayer born of the deepest longings of the heart.

Worship is the very Words of God set to a melody and shared amongst us.

If we are doing things right, a personal daily walk with Jesus will yield worship focused on Christ and not on the songs we select, and worship will become infectious and empowering to your church; a highlight of every week. Set your mind on things that are above, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and your worship music will truly become more than a song.

3. How should we choose songs for church services?

1. **PRAYER** - This should be a given, but before I go about choosing songs as a means to lead our church in worship, I must spend time in prayer; spending personal time with God and seeking His direction.
2. **PURPOSE** - There should be a purpose of introducing each and every song into worship. With so many songs available today, it can be tempting to use the latest hits in worship just because a certain artist did it, or it is receiving a lot of airplay. Each song should have a reason for being included, and should 'fit' with the other songs around it, and I should have had conversations with the pastor about the direction and theme beforehand. The song should fit the style of the church, and should be relevant to the way the church worships.
3. **PARTICIPATION** - If a song is not one the church will be able to understand or sing, then how will they actively participate in worship? The worship service must be built with the people in mind, and each song must be singable and understandable by the majority of the people in the room. A song should be evaluated by its theology, its melody/singability, and its memorability. Songs for worship should be balanced, accessible, inspiring and meaningful.
4. **PROCLAMATION** - Every song should be one that clearly proclaims Christ and focuses our attention on Him. Whether a song of celebratory, joyful praise or a song of reflective worship, the focus is Christ.

3. What does it mean to “Lead in Worship”?

Any effective ministry is defined by the following: it is designed to clearly present the Gospel, to edify and equip the saints, and to bring praise and honor to God.

Worship therefore is not just music on a Sunday morning, but a lifestyle of prayer, study of Scripture, and a conscious desire to become more Christ-like.

This makes it important to encourage our congregation to consider the thoughts behind what they are singing about, and not to just sing along because it is the time to sing along.

Each member of the congregation is needed and wanted in the musical aspect of church. Just as we are a body with many parts, a worship ministry reflects that there are those with differing abilities, gifts, and talents, and all are needed.

Each member of the church is encouraged to participate in corporate worship each week, and it is my goal to strive for musical excellence while never losing sight of the fact that music for the sake of music is futile. We sing for a reason.

Defining ‘Praise’ and ‘Worship’:

“What is the worship like at your church?” Have you ever heard that question? The terms ‘praise’ and ‘worship’, as used today, almost always bring to mind a type of church service, or a “style” of music. Sadly, for centuries many of our greatest and most bitter disagreements in the church as a whole have been concerned with music. However, history has proven that this type of arguing never leads to revival. However, when searching the Scriptures for the true meanings of these words in context, we are faced with something that shows that praise and worship are not synonymous with music, and are actually very distinct and separate ideas from each other.

Worship:

The word ‘worship’ as used in Old Testament Scripture is most often translated from the Hebrew word *shachab*, meaning literally to depress, to bow down, or to prostrate oneself. The Greek word *proskuneo* often carries the same meaning when used in the New Testament, is the root of the word “prostrate” in our language.

The Biblical concept of worship then is one of complete prostration and submission to a Holy God. It is the purest form of reverence, when the believer literally and spiritually bows down prostrate before God.

It is important to acknowledge that this word is not necessarily linked to singing; worship may be found in a lifestyle of humility and prayer, and in silent awe.

Worship is at its core is our reaction to knowing how great a chasm exists between us and God, and the great lengths to which our Messiah went to eliminate it.

Praise:

The word praise, on the other hand, is used in a very different way. The words most typically used in the Old Testament are *halal* and *yadah*. The word *halal* carries the connotation of joyful singing, boastfulness, and goes so far as to suggest acting foolish, or like one who is mad. This word suggests praising God without concern of what others may think. One may think of David dancing before the Lord (II Samuel 6:14)

It is *not* undisciplined chaos, for our God is a God of order. It *is* a celebration of our Creator from the overflow of the heart. We boast in Christ alone, and not in ourselves. *Yadah* carries the same meaning of celebration, but is derived from the term *yad*, meaning ‘hand’, and oddly suggests throwing or the shooting of arrows.

These two words help define praise as used in Hebrew Scriptures, **a celebration where the body of believers figuratively “throw” our praises towards a deserving Father. We lift our hands to God in a physical expression of our desire to bring Him glory. We celebrate who Christ is in such a way that our entire physical self cries out in praise to Him.** We cry to God for clean hands and a pure heart as we enter His presence with joyful singing.

A Word on Worship ‘Styles’:

As stated before, worship is our response to the recognition of who God is, and that He alone is worthy to receive glory, honor and praise. Worship takes many forms (i.e. offering our bodies as living sacrifices, obedience to the word of God, singing, acts of service, prayer, etc.). It is therefore a fundamental mistake to consider all religious music as worship, and all worship as music. Nonetheless, a preference for a different “worship style” is something we often hear used in reference to different *musical* styles. From a Biblical viewpoint, there is no reference to varying “worship styles”. As long as worship music is orderly, lyrics are Scriptural, and the heart attitudes of the participants are proper, then one *musical* style is not superior to another, and there is no reason a unified congregation cannot embrace the most recent songs alongside songs that have been written over the last 2000 years. It would be a fundamental mistake to ignore either. The tapestry of our faith is captured in songs written throughout the generations, and they continue to be written to this day.

Ultimately, there is only an audience of one to receive our worship, and that is the object of our worship: Jesus our Messiah.

As a worship team, we can only lead the church in worship as far as our walk with Christ has taken us throughout the week. If our hearts are not in tune with God, our worship will reflect this no matter what songs we sing or how well they are musically ‘performed’.

The Bottom Line:

Worship ministry is fun, exciting, and rewarding in so many ways! But worship is not about music, and worship is not about us. **Worship is about God.** Serving God is our mission. Every ministry of this church (and every church) should have this simple ultimate purpose: to disciple believers and to reach the lost with the saving truth of Jesus. This should be our greatest passion and our highest goal, and it is my desire that God use us to grow this body of believers in a way we never imagined. In the words of J.S. Bach, *Soli Deo Gloria!* (To God be the Glory!)