

LEADING

WORSHIP MODULE #4

We desire to create worship sets that are intentional, take people on a journey, and help bring them closer to God.

COMPETENCY: Creating a thematic worship experience

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Read Psalm 100

Assignment 2: Read the following 2 articles and answer questions.

ASSIGNMENT 1

Psalm 100

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

ASSIGNMENT 2

8 Questions Every Worship Leader Must Ask When Choosing Songs

David Santistevan

I'm often asked how I choose songs.

Let's face it. There are thousands upon thousands of worship songs. Even with all of us combined, we could never sing them all. There are many worship songs I like that I never lead. There's also a lot of worship songs others lead that I don't like.

I have a specific criteria for how I choose them.

These 8 questions give me a framework for choosing songs. I hope they'll help you too.

8 Song Choice Questions

Before we begin, it's important to remember that song choice isn't about you – your voice, your preferences, your creativity. It's more about who you're serving, who you're leading, and what will engage them in worship.

Think about your church. Do you lead for:

A group of wild and crazy Middle Schoolers?

Children with a very short attention span?

A multi-generational service?

An edgy, young adult experience?

Senior citizens?

Be sure to keep that in mind.

With that being said, here is the list of questions you can apply to your next song list:

1. Is Jesus at the center? – Now, every song I lead isn't solely about Jesus. But I find this to be the most helpful question. If a song isn't directly about Christ and His character, I need to know why. Because Christ-centered songs are the best songs, in my opinion. I desire the majority of my worship sets to be filled with these kinds of songs. This is what I want my church to be mindful of.

2. Is it engaging? – I want the songs I lead to be interesting, catchy, and fun to experience. There's not enough time to lead poorly written songs. I'm looking for songs that capture a room.

3. Is it singable? – Just recently I had my two summer interns suggest some new songs we should do for July & August. I found myself saying "no" to most of them. The main reason? They're weren't singable for our congregation. They didn't possess an "easily digestible" melody for our people.

Sure, they were popular songs. Sure, they would work in certain contexts. But I'm always thinking – "what will work for Allison Park Church?" You should ask the same. Remember, most of the people in your church are not musicians looking for something creative and challenging. They simply want Jesus.

4. Does it teach an important truth? – The best songs are songs that speak directly to what your congregation is experiencing. Of course, that's different themes at different times. I remember back when "You Never Let Go" by Matt Redman was released. Such an important song for our church at that time.

A well chosen song can unite a church in a special way. Ask – "What is my church going through right now?"

5. Can my band play it? – Want to know why Chris Tomlin and Hillsong songs find their way into so many setlists? They create methodical, simple, easily-understood arrangements. When I'm listening for songs, I'm thinking – "Can my band pull this off? Is it challenging, yet accessible?"

6. Is it declarative? – The songs I like to do most are songs that declare truth. They call people to rise up. They inspire people to sing at the top of their lungs. So I'm looking for songs with powerful choruses. I envision my church singing them acapella. How would it sound? Every aspect of a song is important, but a soaring bridge and chorus really does the trick for me.

7. Is it popular? – Now, I never start with this question, but it is something I consider. If a song is making its way around the world, I want to know why. If other churches are using a song, oftentimes it can mean there's something special about it and I'll give it a try. But never lead songs simply because someone else does. Consider it, but be sure to factor in the other questions.

8. Does it flow? – I like songs I can "land" on and flow with. These are the kind of songs I can lead with a full band arrangement but also work in a simple, acoustic guitar context. A great song possesses a simplicity, sing-ability, and arrangement that makes it hard to stop singing. The more you sing it, the more it stirs your heart.

QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the 8 questions the article states above?
2. Are there any questions you disagree with?
3. Which is the most challenging for you when it comes to choosing songs?

Do You Make These 5 Mistakes When You Choose Songs?

David Santistevan

Choosing songs for worship is hard. It's an acquired skill, akin to riding a bike in that you can eventually learn to do it well every time. Over the years I have made some mistakes in choosing a setlist and I hope to spare you the pain.

1. Your songs are in a bad range

This is the peril of many modern worship songs: In the verse, they are too low for people to sing, and in the chorus they are too high. I'm not saying to abandon songs with an octave jump, but be aware of what is comfortable for people to sing. The goal is engagement and if they are struggling to sing your songs, it will be a frustrating experience for them.

2. Your songs are unfamiliar

New songs are great and can breathe fresh life into a church, but if too many songs are unfamiliar, people will be lost. Good worship leaders have learned to marry the new with the old. They skillfully blend hymns and older songs that people know and love with new songs that are good for them. New songs need to be skillfully placed between the familiar so people can "ease" into them. This can be difficult for a young worship leader (like myself) who gets tired of the same songs over and over. It just takes discipline to "feel" where people are really at and ministering to them there.

3. Your songs don't flow together

Beyond key and familiarity, your songs need to flow together. Doing "I Love You Lord" into "One Way" into "How Great Thou Art" into "Let it Rain" reflects poor planning. Work to reinforce theological themes with your songs. Take your people on a journey. That's not to say you can't change direction in the moment if the Holy Spirit is moving. Just don't throw together a hodge podge of top worship hits. Connect your songs by KEY, by THEME, and STYLE.

4. Your songs don't connect with your congregation

Imagine you planned to lead your congregation this weekend...in Spanish. But nobody spoke Spanish. Epic fail, my friend. No matter how great the songs were, how tight the band was, how the great the keys were for singing, nobody would "get it". Connecting with your congregation starts with asking the question, "what is the predominant person in my congregation?" Are they senior citizens, youth, young adults, children? Each of those age groups will certainly gravitate to a certain song and style. That doesn't mean you can't lead youth in hymns or introduce seniors to modern music, particularly if you lead worship in a multi-generation church. Just be intentional about connecting with your congregation through your song choice.

5. Your songs are too rushed

This is more of a focus on "how" you lead your songs. Don't just barrel through your setlist. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit within your songs and between your songs. Getting through your songlist without a train wreck is only a small measure of success. Engaging the hearts and minds of your congregation with God is what we're after. That doesn't mean each song needs to be 15 minutes, preceded by a mini-sermon. Just be sure your truly worshiping and not simply 'getting it done'.

What is something from these articles that we do well at RLCM?

What is something from these articles that we can improve upon?

Being a church unchurched people love to attend

We desire to be a church that unchurched people love to attend. That is our vision. Our mission is to help people find and follow Jesus. We intentionally try to have a posture and culture that is welcoming from the time people step out of their car, to the time they hear the sermon. This can be tricky when it comes to worship/music. That space in our services, along with communion, is definitely created for people who are following Jesus/insiders. So how do we invite people to join in and feel comfortable singing along, or more importantly, engage with the lyrics when they don't believe?

When picking songs for our services I ask myself if the song has lyrics or concepts that most unchurched people don't know, or honestly sound strange. Ex. Altar, sanctify, anything about blood flowing. I think we can use songs with these lyrics, but we need to set them up first. One question I ask is, can I explain this word/concept to my kids? If I can't, I need to figure out what it means before I lead worship with it.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you had experience leading a song that you didn't understand it's meaning?
2. Would you be willing to start planning 30 second song set ups/intros with the goal of making songs easier for people to understand?
3. See the song lyrics below to O Come to the Altar. How would you set this up in a service?

Verse 1

Are you hurting and broken within, Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin, Jesus is calling
Have you come to the end of yourself, Do you thirst for a drink from the well, Jesus is calling

Chorus

O come to the altar, The Father's arms are open wide
Forgiveness was bought with, The precious blood of Jesus Christ

Verse 2

Leave behind your regrets and mistakes, Come today there's no reason to wait, Jesus is calling
Bring your sorrows and trade them for joy, From the ashes a new life is born, Jesus is calling

Bridge

Oh what a Savior, Isn't he wonderful, Sing alleluia Christ is risen
Bow down before him, For he is Lord of all, Sing alleluia Christ is risen

Verse 3

Bear your cross as you wait for the crown
Tell the world of the treasure you've found