

# Best Practices for Worship Leaders

## 1. Title

[Slide 1: Title]

Hey everyone.

The title of this workshop is **Best Practices for Worship Leaders**.

That can sound like, "Here are the rules. Go do all of this."

That's not really how I want to approach this.

I just want to share a few things I'm learning and a few things that have helped our team.

If one or two of them help your church, that's a win.

## 2. Intro

[Slide 2: Intro]

My name is Luke.

I'm married to my wife, Brenna.

I serve as the Creative Director at Word of Life Assembly of God in Baldwinsville, New York.

We're a church in Central New York, and I get to lead some really incredible volunteers.

My background is originally in the studio world, so I care a lot about preparation, excellence, audio, arrangements, and using tools well.

But the deeper thing for me is this:

I want to help create spaces where people can encounter Jesus.

And I'm still learning how to do that well.

So this is not me coming in as the expert.

This is more, "Here's what God has been working into me and our team."

## 3. The Tension

[Slide 3: The Tension]

There is a real tension in worship ministry.

**Structured vs spontaneous.**

**Preparation vs surrender.**

**Rehearsed vs responsive.**

Some people love the plan.

They want the arrangements clear, transitions planned, keys set, tracks ready, everybody knows where to go.

Other people love the open space.

The bridge goes again.

The room leans in.

You follow the Holy Spirit in the moment.

I naturally lean that direction. I like the open space.

But I've learned that if I only lead from my strength, I can make it harder for the team to follow.

So the point is not picking one side.

The church needs both.

## 4. Called By God

**[Slide 4: Called By God]**

If you're leading worship, you're not just filling a slot.

You're **called by God**.

We're called to be spirit-led and intentional in the **Preparation and the Presence**

## 5. It's All Worship

**[Slide 5: It Is All Worship]**

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men...

Colossians 3:23-24

This verse has been big for me.

Because worship ministry is not only worship when the congregation is singing.

The planning is worship.

Rehearsal is worship.

Choosing keys is worship.

Making charts is worship.

Serving volunteers well is worship.

All of that is part of serving Jesus.

## 6. Simple Frame

**[Slide 6: Simple Frame]**

So here's the simple frame:

**Prepare well. Stay present.**

That's really the whole talk.

Prepare well because people matter.

Stay present because the Holy Spirit is leading.

## 7. Part 1: Preparation

**[Slide 7: Part 1: Preparation]**

I'll be honest, I used to treat preparation like it was less spiritual than the moment.

Like the real spiritual stuff happened when we got off the plan.

But I don't think that's right.

One thing I felt like the Lord corrected in me was this:

My Spirit works in the preparation too.

That changed a lot for me.

Planning a set can be prayer.

Preparing a team can be pastoral.  
Clarity can be kindness.  
Preparation is not the enemy of the Holy Spirit.

## 8. Prepare The Setlist

### [Slide 8: Prepare The Setlist]

One of the biggest ways we teach our churches is through the songs we put in their mouths.  
So I like to grade songs really simply.

- **A songs:** primarily about **God**. His character, His works, His holiness, His goodness, His faithfulness.
- **B songs:** primarily about **us**. Our response, our need, our surrender, our relationship with God.
- **C songs:** fun to sing, but lyrically thin, unclear, or kind of confusing.

I'm not saying B songs are bad.

There is a real place for response songs.

But if most of our set is always about us, we might be giving people a thin diet.

So my goal is usually:

- build mostly with A songs
- use B songs where they serve the moment
- be really careful with C songs

Then I ask:

- Is it true?
- Can normal people sing it?
- Does it help our church worship right now?

## 9. Prepare The Team

### [Slide 9: Prepare The Team]

Preparation is not just about the songs.

It's also about the people.

Volunteers are carrying real life into rehearsal.

Jobs.

Kids.

Stress.

Busy weeks.

So clarity helps.

A good chart helps.

A clear key helps.

A note about the transition helps.

Telling the team, "Hey, we may leave space at the end of this song," helps.

None of that is about controlling the room.

It's about helping people feel less scrambled so they can actually worship while they serve.

## **10. Part 2: Presence**

### **[Slide 10: Part 2: Presence]**

Now the other side:

Preparation is not the finish line.

We prepare so we can be more present.

The goal is not, "Did we execute the plan perfectly?"

The goal is, "Did we serve what God was doing in the room?"

Sometimes that means staying with the plan.

Sometimes that means leaving space.

Sometimes that means cutting something.

Sometimes that means repeating something.

The plan is there to serve the room, not trap the room.

## **11. Communication**

### **[Slide 11: Communication]**

If we're going to leave room, we have to communicate.

Otherwise "spontaneous" can turn into "nobody knows what's happening."

And that's not helpful.

Before I was leading in worship spaces, I came from audio.

One of the first things I learned was:

Set up your communication first.

That can look different depending on your church.

Maybe it's a music director.

Maybe it's a talkback mic.

Maybe it's better notes in Planning Center.

Maybe it's just telling the band before service, "At the end of this song, watch me. We may go back to the bridge."

It doesn't have to be fancy.

It just needs to be clear.

## **12. Use What You Have**

### **[Slide 12: Use What You Have]**

Comparison is brutal in worship ministry.

It's easy to look at another church and think, "We need to sound like that."

But God did not give you their team.

He gave you your team.  
Your room.  
Your volunteers.  
Your budget.  
Your season.  
So use what you have.  
If your team is small, simple might be the best move.  
If your vocal team is strong, lean into that.  
If your tech is not ready for tracks, don't force it yet.  
Faithfulness is not copying somebody else's setup.  
Faithfulness is stewarding what God actually gave you.

### **13. One Next Step**

#### **[Slide 13: One Next Step]**

So here's what I would ask you to leave with:

**What is one small change that would help your team this month?**

Not ten things.

Not a full rebuild.

One thing.

Maybe you need a better filter for songs.

Maybe you need clearer rehearsal notes.

Maybe you need to pull your production team into the worship conversation.

Maybe you need to leave more room.

Maybe you need to give your team more structure.

Just one faithful next step.

### **14. Q&A**

#### **[Slide 14: Q&A]**

Questions we can talk through:

- Where does your team feel the structure/spontaneous tension?
- What is one thing that would make your volunteers feel more confident?
- Where do you need to leave more room for the Holy Spirit?
- Where would a little more structure actually help people?

# Best Practices for Worship Leaders

## Prepare well. Stay present.

Prepare well because people matter. Stay present because the Holy Spirit is leading.

### CORE TENSION

Structured vs spontaneous. Preparation vs surrender. Rehearsed vs responsive.

The point is not picking one side. The church needs both.

### CALLED BY GOD

## Not just filling a slot.

If you are leading worship, you are called by God. We are called to be spirit-led and intentional in the preparation and the presence.

**"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men..."**

Colossians 3:23-24

### IT IS ALL WORSHIP

## The planning is worship.

#### Before the room

Planning a set can be prayer. Preparing a team can be pastoral.

#### With the team

Rehearsal, choosing keys, making charts, and serving volunteers well are part of serving Jesus.

#### In the moment

Preparation is not the enemy of the Holy Spirit. My Spirit works in the preparation too.

### PART 1: PREPARATION

## Prepare the setlist.

One of the biggest ways we teach our churches is through the songs we put in their mouths.

#### A Songs

Primarily about God. His character, His works, His holiness, His goodness, His faithfulness.

#### B Songs

Primarily about us. Our response, our need, our surrender, our relationship with God.

#### C Songs

Fun to sing, but lyrically thin, unclear, or kind of confusing.

**Build mostly with A songs. Use B songs where they serve the moment. Be really careful with C songs.**

### SONG FILTER

Is it true?

Does it help our church worship right now?

Can normal people sing it?

Are we giving people a deep enough diet?

### TAKE-HOME TARGETS

# Prepare Well. Stay Present.

One faithful next step

### PREPARE THE TEAM

## Clarity can be kindness.

Preparation is not just about the songs. It is also about the people. Volunteers are carrying real life into rehearsal: jobs, kids, stress, busy weeks.

A good chart helps.

A clear key helps.

A note about the transition helps.

Telling the team where you may leave space helps.

None of that is about controlling the room. It is about helping people feel less scrambled so they can actually worship while they serve.

### PART 2: PRESENCE

## The plan serves the room.

Preparation is not the finish line. We prepare so we can be more present.

- Sometimes that means staying with the plan.
- Sometimes that means leaving space.
- Sometimes that means cutting something.
- Sometimes that means repeating something.

### COMMUNICATION

## Set it up first.

If we are going to leave room, we have to communicate. Otherwise "spontaneous" can turn into "nobody knows what is happening."

- Music director.
- Talkback mic.
- Better notes in Planning Center.
- Tell the band what to watch for before service.

### USE WHAT YOU HAVE

## Faithfulness is stewardship.

#### Your team

God did not give you their team. He gave you your team, your room, your volunteers, your budget, your season.

#### Your season

If your team is small, simple might be the best move. If your vocal team is strong, lean into that.

#### Your tools

If your tech is not ready for tracks, do not force it yet.

**Faithfulness is not copying somebody else's setup.** Faithfulness is stewarding what God actually gave you.

### ONE SMALL CHANGE THIS MONTH

## Not ten things. One thing.

A better filter for songs.

Clearer rehearsal notes.

Pull production into the worship conversation.

Leave more room.

Give the team more structure.

Practice communication before the moment arrives.

## My Next Step

WHERE DOES OUR TEAM FEEL THE TENSION?

ONE FAITHFUL CHANGE TO TRY

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