

Journal of Worship for the Church of God

Fall 2007; Volume 1, Issue 2

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For information on writing for *The Journal*

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The future of *The Journal of Worship* is dependent on the creativity of the best of our worship leaders. Please send us a review on the recently released book that you found helpful to your ministry. Please send us your original writing on the theology or practice of ministry. Please send us the lyrics of worship songs you are writing. Or better yet, send us an electronic recording of your material. Through this medium your ministry can be a blessing to the Church of God.

Aligning A Worship Ministry for God's Richest Anointing

by Todd Braschler

Hunting and fishing are very enjoyable pastimes for me and our three sons. Last year as the deer season drew near, we gathered our tools and headed to the woods to prepare our tree stands for the upcoming 2006 bow hunting season. With hammers, wrenches and battery-powered drill in hand, we made the trek through the densely overgrown underbrush to the site where our first tree stand would be situated along the Ninnescah River.

In order to climb a tree with no branches like we have in Kansas, you have to use metal steps that screw into the tree. With an adaptor bit on my drill, this was such an easy process, as this tool clamped on each metal step and embedded the threaded point in place with very little effort.

How exciting to be in the woods, having fun with the kids, and preparing for the highly anticipated season of deer hunting. We gathered around the first tree, prepared the tree stand, and readied the tools to begin our work. But, wouldn't you know it? As I began to seat the first step with my drill, nothing happened. There was a battery attached to the drill, but instead of inserting the battery charged the night before, I grabbed the wrong battery that was never charged. The drill was completely silent. Needless to say, a job that would have been fun and so easily accomplished became an extensive, straining, blistering effort. I never realized how valuable those charged batteries could be.

Sometimes serving Christ as a worship pastor/leader is very similar to this illustration. We seemingly have all the tools needed to lead a worship ministry around us. We have instruments and those who play them. We have music charts and vocalists who sing and read charts. We have technical people with many light and sound buttons to push. Yes, everything anyone could possibly need to lead a worship service is often at our disposal.

And as for us personally, most often we have been positioned, trained and honed for this responsibility and calling. Our education and influences have prepared us well in the worship arena to understand and lead a service facilitated by music, drama, creativity and the Word. How exciting it is every week to test our abilities and creativity. Working with people, attending conferences, and pushing imagination keep us on the cutting edge of our ministry. We are constantly coming up with new arrangements, new songs, new technologies to progress and improve the way we worship. There are so many challenges to leading in worship in today's church. With so much more music to consider now than ever before, the challenge to find what works for our folks, and choose music that also challenges them often to move into the 19th century keeps even the most talented worship pastor on their toes.

However, just like the illustration above, I personally found myself approaching worship services with a dead battery even though I was surrounded with tools and skills and talented people. I'm not talking about excitement, enthusiasm, or momentum. The dead battery for worship pastors is that sense that we are leading and working so hard, but our church doesn't seem to be fully getting it. By that I mean, they don't seem to be growing in their passion and understanding for biblical worship. They aren't responding like we had hoped they would. We seem to be "powerless" in terms of the Holy Spirit truly using us as a worship team. Yes, the people love our music, and they love us as a worship pastor. There aren't any real battles or struggles going on, no major criticism. Yet, we continue to worship the same way, with the same broken heart and commitment from our team that we had as a church 12 months ago. The Holy Spirit seems stifled, held back from our efforts for some reason.

In Haggai 1:3-14 we read about a community who also experienced an "empty battery" situation, left powerless to accomplish their mission.

Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: "I am with you," declares the Lord. So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God...

God had already sent his command to this community –build my temple FIRST, then use the leftover materials to rebuild your homes. But instead, they took the finest trees and materials and built their own houses first, with plans to build the temple later. The result – a drought in the land sent by God to dry up their crops. All harvest was blown away by God after their hard work. Their great expectations of the final outcome were dashed by a lack of support from the hand of God.

I'm sad to say, this description sometimes resembles a worship ministry– missed blessing and anointing from God. This “powered battery” of the anointing of God is sometimes missing from the many tools and resources available to us as a worship leader. We know God wants to bless and anoint our ministry, but for some reason he doesn't.

I guess I, like many of my colleagues, assumed that because our church had the name of “God” in our title, because we were a God-believing church, because we sang songs about Him and prayed before we provided a worship service, we automatically were eligible for God's anointing, his blessing, his Holy Spirit.

The story of Asa in the books of II Chronicles 14-16 contains a very interesting passage that has forever changed my belief in “automatic blessing and anointing” from God. II Chronicles 16:9 reads: “*For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth, that He may **strongly support** those whose hearts are completely His.*” In other words, God is searching for places to offer his strong support, his anointing, his blessing. It's not just out there like air for me to breath in whenever I wish. What I began to realize is that there were pieces of evidence in our church and our worship ministry that God was, in fact, passing us by in terms of blessing what we were doing.

I found 10 pieces of this evidence that I felt kept us from receiving this powerful component of God's blessing the his Holy Spirit resulting in powerful worship experiences.

- 1. Conflict resolution between members of the worship ministry remains OPTIONAL.**
- 2. Members of the worship ministry remain RELATIVELY committed to rehearsals and preparation.**

3. Performance takes precedence over the MESSAGE of our music and ministry.

4. Worship is prepared and presented short of EXCELLENT.

(Where in multiple service situations we use the first service as a live rehearsal/throwing tunes together on Sunday morning/etc..)

5. Worship pastors are seen as teachers more than as EQUIPPERS.

6. Corporately supportive, but privately CRITICAL.

7. A CONDITIONAL offering of our gifts and talents.

8. Leading worship without personally WORSHIPING.

9. Portraying a leader of worship without being involved in further WORSHIP LEADER activity in the church. (seeing my role as a Sunday morning corporate leader more than as the main worship leader waving the flag for the value of worship, establishing worship as a value in my church – one of

the elements necessary to every ministry – rather than just a ministry unto itself occurring on Sunday morning.)

10. **Worship is seen as an activity or a RESPONSE.** (teaching our people to worship only on Sunday, leading them to an expectation that we are here to charge them up, to fill them up for the week, rather than the biblical concept of worship that leads people in how to worship throughout the week, coming to church on Sunday to empty out their praise rather than coming to be filled.)

How about you today? Any of these pieces of evidence strike a chord with you that says, “We may have something out of alignment with God, like those in Haggai, and the result is that God is withholding his blessing, his anointing on me as a leader, and/or on our worship ministry.”

The challenge in this article is simply this – discern and determine if there is any area of my life and our ministry that could be keeping God from pouring out his full and overwhelming blessing on us as a worshiping church. Discern, change and re-align any portion of ministry that seems “unblessable.” Do whatever it takes to move to pleasing God more in every area of our ministry.

A power tool with a charged battery is nothing more than a decoration. A worship ministry with the anointing power and strong support of Christ, however, is a lethal weapon God can use to stagger the spirit of a community through Christ. God’s blessings to you today.

This article is an excerpt from Todd’s worship ministry retreat entitled “The Call of a Tile Mover”.

Designing Worship as a Team

by [Tim Julian](#)

It is no secret that everyone is gifted and talented in at least one way and probably more. The scripture tells us that when someone becomes a follower of Christ, that person is given a spiritual gift(s). And usually that gift(s) is connected to the person’s talents, abilities and passions. It is not just the “professional staff” who have all the gifts necessary to lead, teach, help, encourage, create, etc., in the body of Christ, God’s church. Everyone is a minister, the “royal priesthood of believers,” who has the gifts and responsibility to serve, using what God has given to glorify Him and build up (edify) the church.

For most of the years I have served in music and worship ministry, I have used my gifts and talents to plan worship services – every week! (After 23 years now, that comes to almost 1200 weeks!) Of course, I have always used the musical, dramatic, and creative gifts of others to implement the worship plans I created. I always had a Worship and Arts Board made up of persons who had specific interest in the musical, dramatic, and visual aspects of worship. They served their term limit and were then replaced with someone else for another 3 years. They pretty much made sure that the nuts and bolts of programming were done year after year.

It was not, however, until just a few years ago, that our church began really focusing on and getting serious about utilizing teams of people in every aspect of our ministry together. It was then that I decided it was time to do what I had wanted to do for so long in my ministry...invite and equip other “ministers” to join me in what we call the **Worship Design Team (WDT)**. Who are they? What do they do? Why do they do it? How do they do it? When do they do it? Well, here is our answer to those questions in a nutshell purpose statement.

The Worship Design Team at Meadow Park Church is a team of totally committed, dedicated, creative individuals with a heart for worship who meet regularly to creatively design a plan to lead God’s people in experiential worship.

WDT members should first and foremost be persons who have a genuine heart for worship. They know what it means to truly worship and have a passion for it. Second, they must be totally committed to the process. Our teams do not have term limits. Persons are identified and invited to serve because they have the spiritual gifts, talents, creativity, and passion for this ministry. They agree to commit to the team until

they sense that they are being called to something else and this has happened more than once with some of our team members.

Third, team members must be teachable. We attend conferences and read books and articles together. We dialogue about worship resources and learn from each other. It is important to have persons on the team with a variety of spiritual gifts and talents including: leadership, shepherding, discernment, creative communication, hospitality, administration and craftsmanship, just to name a few. A mixture of ages and mindsets are important as well. If everyone thinks alike, it can sometimes actually hurt the process more than help.

Our team meets every week to creatively design our worship gatherings. We have found that meeting every week is necessary for our most effective advanced planning.

I have experienced huge benefits of utilizing a Worship Design Team in our church. In a team, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Working together brings about a creativity that is usually far greater than one person can produce. For me, the WDT has taken a lot of pressure off of my worship planning. It doesn't all have to come out of my head and others take responsibilities for implementing pieces of worship that fell completely to me to do before. There is greater variety and balance in worship and more ownership in the process. Because there are more eyes and ears and hearts involved, we have better evaluation of our "product." The time of evaluation becomes much more than "What can we do to improve?" More importantly we ask, "Where did you experience the presence of Christ in worship today?"

And finally, one of the great blessings that have come out of our team ministry is the support and love for one another. We share our joys and concerns. We pray for each other. This is a very important component of our life together.

This has been only a brief description of one way to do worship planning as a team. It is a weekly process and evolves as the ministry changes and grows. But I feel it is one of the most effective ways to create worship experiences for the corporate body of Christ.

If you haven't tried using a Worship Design Team in your ministry, I highly recommend that you begin. As leaders, we are called to equip the saints for ministry, not do it all ourselves. Begin with prayer, asking God to lead you to the right people. Keep your eyes and ears open for those God wants to use. Communicate your desire to develop this team with other leaders and ask for their help in identifying gifted, creative individuals. It takes time and discernment, but it is well worth the work.

The Cutting Edge

Here are some of the newer songs that Church of God worship leaders are finding useful. By linking with websites, we make available to you the lyrics and sound recordings.

Everlasting God	Chris Tomlin	LYRIC	YOUTUBE
What the World Will Never Take	Hillsongs United	LYRIC	YOUTUBE
When I Don't Know What to Do	Tommy Walker	LYRIC	see iTunes
Here I Am To Worship	Tim Hughes	LYRIC	YOUTUBE
Everyday	Joel Houston	LYRIC	YOUTUBE

"What the World Will Never Take" is written by Matt Crocker, Scott Ligertwood & Marty Sampson

Worship as Firstfruits

by Curtis Ferrell

There are three fundamental questions that need to be answered regarding Christian worship.

First, what is God-ordained worship? The essence of worship can be found in the first ten verses of the 26th chapter of Deuteronomy.

[Read Deuteronomy 26:1-10](#)

This portion of the law outlines the process that God established for encountering Him in a worship experience. Verses 5 and 6 call for us to remember who we were before we were transformed by the presence of God in our lives. Verses 7 and 8 call for us to remember what actions God took when He transformed our lives. Verses 9 and 10 call for us to remember the blessing of transformation that has been generated in our lives by God. This is who I was; this is what God did; this is where I am now. Praise and worship naturally flow out of our lives each time we walk through this process.

If our worship life is deficient in one of these “areas or remembrance”, then what we experience is something less than God ordained worship.

The second question to be answered is what is the proper posture in worship? We are not talking about an external posture but an internal posture. How are we to approach God? In twenty-first century America we are immersed in a culture of personal growth, self satisfaction, and a positive bottom line. In other words, how does this benefit me?

In direct contradiction to this cultural mindset, King David makes a remarkable statement found in 2 Samuel 24:24, considering that he was the ruler of all Israel. “I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing.” In this simple statement David indicates His posture when he approached God. He was not approaching God with the idea that he was going to benefit from this encounter. He was not even approaching with the idea that somehow he could use his position and authority to influence God. David came to offer a sacrificial gift to God, something that was costly to him personally.

Worship is not about getting anything from God. Worship is about giving something of worth to God. The posture of a true worshiper is one that indicates humble sacrifice, not prideful self-gratification.

Finally, what is the function of worship? True worship has one function with two products. Worship is a vehicle.

Worship functions as a vehicle in two ways. In the first instance, worship carries the individual, or a collected body of worshipers, into a realization of the presence of God. This means that as worship leaders, we need to understand who will be “riding” in the vehicle. If I am leading a gathering of Frenchmen into worship, my worship should be in the French language. If I am leading a group of children into worship, my worship selection should include elements of worship that are easily accessible to the child. If I am leading a group of senior citizens in worship, the structure of the “vehicle” I assemble needs to accommodate those that will be taking the ride.

Secondly, worship carries the individual, or a collected body of worshipers, into an environment where the Word of God can have its best effect on their lives. This second product of worship enables the worship leader to partner with, and serve, the one who is called to proclaim the Word of God. In this way, we “set the table” for the main course.

In the design world, form follows function. What a thing does, or is supposed to do, has a direct impact on how that thing looks or how it is structured. This brings us back to the answer to the first question.

If we follow the form found in Deuteronomy, we can create a vehicle that is designed to carry people into a realization of the presence of God, where they can offer sacrificial gifts of thanksgiving and praise, and where they can be transformed anew by the Word of God.

This article previously published in Courier-Times, Saturday, August 11, 2007. Used by permission of the author.

Classic Hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
by Joachim Neander

This is the first hymn found in Worship the Lord. It is often used as the opening song of a worship service with its stately form and overt praise orientation. This song comes from the 17th century from a writer not well known for other lyrics. These lyrics offer a paraphrase from Psalm 103 and Psalm 150.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of Creation!
O my soul, praise Him
for He is Thy help and salvation
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
Join me in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things
so wondrously reigneth!
Shelters Thee under His wings,
yes, so gently sustaineth!
Hast Thou not seen
how all thy longings have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work
and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy
here daily attend thee.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with His love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord!
O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath,
come now with praises before Him.
Let the Amen sound from His people again:
Gladly forever adore Him.

Heritage Song

I Am the Lord's I Know
by Charles Naylor and D. Otis Teasley

This hymn was a favorite of the late Dr. Robert Reardon who said that we will be singing this one years from now when the others have been forgotten. Charles Naylor's lyrics reveal a deep abiding faith that penetrates the troubles of life including years of paralysis. The last verse is an allusion to Romans 8. This is found in #639 in Worship the Lord.

Whether I live or die, Whether I wake or sleep,
Whether upon the land Or on the stormy deep;
When 'tis serene and calm
Or when the wild winds blow,
I shall not be afraid— I am the Lord's I know.

When with abundant store Or in deep poverty
And when the world may smile
Or it may frown on me.
When it shall help me on
Or shall obstruct my way.
Still shall my heart rejoice—
I am the Lord's today.

When I am safe at home Or in a foreign land
When on an icebound shore Or on a sunlit strand
When on the mountain height Or in the valley low,
Still doth He care for me—
I am the Lord's I know.

Nothing shall separate from His unbounded love.
Neither in depths below Nor in the heights above;
And in the years to come He will abide with me;
I am the Lord's I know, For all eternity.

Other Liturgy

Thanksgiving
by James Earl Massey

Best known as a homilectician, Dr. Massey was earliest a concert pianist and authority on worship. This responsive reading was first published in the 1971 Hymnal of the Church of God and is found as \$114 in Worship the Lord.

For the message of Christ and the shared life
which can never be exhausted:

O God, we give You thanks.

For seeking minds, for searching hearts for all
who seek the truth;

O God, we give You thanks.

For our nations and its leaders and for all martyrs
and unknowns who have served mankind;

O God, we give You thanks.

For the love of a man and woman, for the laughter
of a child, for all that in our lives gives meaning;

O God, we give You thanks.

For those occasions which cause us to humble
ourselves, and for the strength that has come to us
in our hour of weakness and despair;

*We rejoice and give thanks. Let the work of our
hands declare the gladness of our hearts, and may
kindly deeds speak forth our inner gratitude.*

New Songs

New praise songs are being written all the time. In the last edition of *The Journal of Worship*, we printed one such song that many are finding useful. How much better it would be to use this space to make known the best of the songs that are being written by our own artists? The Church of God has always been a pool of creativity for music and worship. We invite our composers to submit for publication their latest songs and other liturgy in order to bless the Church of God. As an electronic journal, we can publish text and sound.

What Are You Reading?

The *Journal of Worship* has no book report this edition. We invite you to submit a review of a recently written book that informs the theology or practice of worship in the Church of God.

About Our Writers

The editor thanks our current contributing writers: Todd Braschler, Tim Julian, and Curtis Ferrell. We did not collect bibliographic information by the release of this edition. You may respond to the writers using the hyperlinks with their names at the head of each article.