

THE

EFFECTIVE

TEAM

Welcome

Thanks for downloading the Speaker Notes for the Worship Central Course.

In this fifth session, we've outlined the structure and key points for the talk, and left room for you to add your own examples. Feel free to personalize the examples and make it your own, but we'd please ask that you keep the core material the same, as we want people to be able to get the same Course wherever they are.

We pray this course will be a great blessing to you and your worship team, and we stand with you as you seek to encounter God, equip the worshipper and empower your local church.

Tim Hughes & Al Gordon

Introduction

Welcome to Session Five of the Worship Central Course. Last time we began to look at how we could release creativity, and this time we're going to look at how to work together effectively as a team. None of us can do this on our own. Worship was never meant to be a solo performance, but a team effort, one where the sum is far greater than the parts.

One of the vital questions affecting every worship leader is this: how do we help build a worship team that impacts our church and community in the long term? How can we play our part in developing the kind of worship team that doesn't just sound good, but the sort that profoundly enhances the spiritual life of our fellow Christian believers? How can we be the sort of team that works hard to be the best we possibly can, but whose egos are in check and whose attitudes are the right way up?

[Insert Story]

Al tells a story about leading worship with the HTB team in Europe. It was, in short, a bit of a nightmare. Everything that could go wrong, did go wrong. But it also taught each of them a vital lesson: that worship leading is not about us and is all about serving God, because they came back to the UK closer than ever before. They went out a band, but came back a team. Tell your own story here that helps get that same point across.

Lots of us in this room will have had experiences like this, the kind of wake up call where God gently - or perhaps not so gently in some of our cases - reminds us that being a team is an amazing privilege.

However we learn it's vital to understand that the challenges we face when leading worship - whether practical or physical - they're ultimately insignificant compared to the excitement and joy of seeing God at work. If we're united in the desire to see people set on fire with a passion for worshipping God then we stop being a band and start to become a team.

What Makes An Effective Team?

It's easy to be a band: just gather around you a group of the best musicians you can find and learn to play really well together. But being a team is something altogether different. An effective worship team is a committed group of worshippers who work together to achieve a common vision. However good our understanding of God, however wild our creativity, if we have not learned to be a team, things will fall apart.

In the Amplified Bible, Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish." No worship team can form or grow without an effective, God-given vision. Without it - and without that vision being something that every one of us on the team knows, understands and values - then we can easily end up misunderstanding each other, fighting and going round in circles. A vision is a 'redemptive revelation' - something that God chooses to show us that causes us to be changed. If we've not allowed God to open our eyes and allowed our lives to change as a result, we've not got vision in the first place.

So what is the vision? For each team in each community there will be different nuances and needs, different histories, different people, different futures and different dynamics. But all of us share this simple, core vision: that we, as a worship team, would encounter God, be equipped as worshippers and see the church empowered to worship in spirit and in truth. Or,

to put it another way, we're here to meet with God, to be changed as a result and to help others do the same, living out our worship with integrity in public as well as in private.

It's often said that 'vision leaks', so we need to constantly remind each other why we're doing what we're doing. For instance, we want to encounter God in times of worship, through studying his word and through praying for one another. We want to be people who are passionately seeking a daily encounter with God. We also want to equip worshippers, encouraging not only ourselves as a team but also our congregations to be equipped practically to worship God. As we do this, we mustn't lose the end goal of seeing our church empowered to grow in their worship over the years ahead.

For lots of us musicians who lead worship there's a lesson to be learned about priority: who is our worship serving? Is it us or God? Of course it has to be God, but sometimes it can take a while to work through the desire to show off our gifts or just have a bit of a fun with our new 'hobby'. It has to be about, for, and because of God and God's people. It's as simple as that.

So to help us understand what is expected of one another, we have four key encouragements that we ask everyone on the team to commit to. These four encouragements spell the word T-E-A-M.

T // Turn Up

We value turning up on time. Let's be honest, we musicians are not famous for being the most punctual people, but to be part of an effective team we need to learn to place a high value on our shared time. That means if we've agreed to be somewhere to do something, we

need to do it. Bill Hybels writes, “Promptness is about character, and leaders are not beyond the rules that govern things like courtesy and character.”

Time is a precious commodity. While we will have plenty of time in eternity, we have a limited amount of it in this life. That’s why we are encouraged to “do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” (Romans 13:11) That Scripture should be engraved on the alarm clock of every worship team member, because we place a high value on turning up on time.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:37 “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’, ‘No’”. So we do everything we can to make the dates we’re committed to. That’s why it’s important to ask people a long way ahead, rather than at the last minute, we need to send out the dates well in advance. Once people have the dates in diaries, they can make them a priority. If people are unable to make a date, they can let us know so we’ll have plenty of time to reallocate people. Then if people have to cancel then they should do so with plenty of advance notice so that cover can be arranged.

We’d encourage you to have three key meetings which all members of the worship team are expected to be at. (Remember to edit these as are appropriate for your setting)

1 Team Nights

As a team we meet together on a weeknight [once a month] to hang out, eat together, worship, hear some teaching and pray for one another. This is the one time the whole team comes together and as a result it’s a key meeting for the health of the team. It allows us to bond away from the public platform of leading others in worship and is a great chance to

worship without the responsibility of leading the rest of the church. It is a safe place to take risks in worshipping and listening to God and a wonderful opportunity to look at our vision and values. Our hope is that these evenings create a strong sense of unity and commitment to the worship team.

2 Rehearsals

Rehearsing is key to being able to lead people in worship well. We have regular rehearsals, and schedule the different bands in to rehearse before they lead at the weekend services. Once we feel confident with the arrangements, songs and flow, we're able to relax into the worship and listen to the Spirit's leading. It's vital that everyone is on time for the rehearsal, as if you are late, you'll be keeping the rest of the team on standby. Lateness has consequences: if you keep six people waiting for ten minutes, that is an hour of wasted time. As well as being a waste of everyone's time, it will have a detrimental effect on not only the rehearsal, but the worship of the whole church.

We always encourage people to come prepared, bringing everything they'll need, having learnt the songs, and to come early if they need to set up additional equipment so that the rehearsal is as effective as it can be. So if you're a guitarist and like to have sixteen spare guitars, and enough pedals to fill the whole stage, you'll need to be there with plenty of time so that you're plugged in, tuned up and ready to go at the start of the rehearsal.

3 Services

Sunday is our big day: it's Match Day. Our services are the key events that we're involved in and there should be a sense of excitement as we gather to pray before hand. We're about to have the amazing privilege of leading the church in worship, and we want to bring God the

best we can. So even when we are not leading, we need to be at church, modeling passionate worship.

However enthusiastic we are about being a part of the worship team, if we're not turning up on time, then it is clearly not a priority. We make a big deal about turning up on time because we know that if we're to be effective, we need to be committed to each other.

That's the T for Turning Up. But what about E?

E // Excel in Everything

We use the letter to remind us of the importance of pursuing excellence in everything we do. We have a little saying: we 'aim for perfection and settle for excellence'. We want to excel because we believe God deserves our best: the Bible encourages us to, "Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy" (Psalm 33:3).

Practice makes Perfect

The great evangelist Billy Graham was asked late in his life what he would do if he had a further ten years of ministry: he replied that he would spend nine years preparing and one year preaching. It's really important for us to practice - and practice hard. If you haven't done it already have a think about your ratios: how much time do you spend practicing your instrument, learning the songs, investing yourself in this ministry, compared to how long you actually spend leading worship?

Skills are like muscles: they will only produce good results if exercised regularly. Our preparation will encourage and release people to grow and excel in their gifts and skills. Take

the example of the world's best athletes, who don't suddenly stop getting lessons when they start to succeed. Instead, they hire a better coach; they invest in their gifting. Likewise, whether you're a singer, worship leader, musician, technician, don't stop training yourself. Invest in good quality equipment, take lessons, get advice. Improve, sharpen, challenge, take risks and don't settle for mediocrity.

It's really worth encouraging everyone to know the songs by heart as much as possible. This saves us from spending most of the time with our faces buried in a music stand, but also enables us to relax more and worship. It's also really helpful to try and circulate a rough list of the songs you're thinking of using well ahead of time, so that the team can do their homework and arrive at rehearsal ready to go, with some ideas of their own.

Building the Team

As a team we also all need to be involved in drawing others in and helping them develop. Excellence attracts excellence, and if we want to be the best team we can be, we need to recruit the best musicians we can. The best people are always the busiest people, but don't take no for an answer.

We've found the best way to recruit new musicians is word of mouth. If you're not talking to, hanging out with and generally being a part of your church community, you're not serving them properly. Nothing about being on a worship team is made better when we hide away in our own little clique. Get out, meet people, talk to them, know what your church is about.

Not everyone who has a part to play in your worship team will come to you in perfect condition. There may be a few rough edges or some lessons that need to be unlearned, but if you can see that they have a worshipper's heart, along with a desire to develop their musical

skill you should make room in your team for them. After all, seeing people flourish in their gifting is always a good investment and a wonderful thing to watch.

Whatever the standard of musician, if we're going to be effective as a worship team, we can all get better - both in our God-given talents and in our pursuit of a deeper relationship with God. We need to learn to encourage a culture of excellence in both these areas, building each other up, helping to equip ourselves to be the best team we can be. That's what true excellence looks like - a commitment to enhancing the whole person by the whole team.

A // Attitude

As a worship team we value attitude above ability. The attitude we're looking for is a radical, counter cultural attitude that is happy to serve wherever, whenever, doing whatever. We want to foster an attitude that is not competitive and does not compare or judge others, but rather considers other to be better, in real humility. Rather than seeking the spotlight or fame, our attitude needs to point towards Jesus in everything we do, to place the spotlight onto him, to move from performance to praise.

Simon Dixon, who before becoming the organist at Holy Trinity Brompton was a professional concert organist, mentioned in passing that he used to practice so hard and for so long that his feet bled from the continual pressure of his feet against the organ pedals. Now that's devotion! Simon tells the story of how, when he came to faith in Jesus, his whole life and approach to music changed:

"In that very significant moment, of deciding to devote my life to follow Jesus, I felt God say to me very clearly, that 'you can only worship one God'. I knew what this meant. I had to let go of the idol that I had made in music, my organ, and my career. I had to dethrone music, and exalt God to his rightful place. For me, because of the hold that it had on my life, this

meant me saying, 'Lord I'm willing never to play again'. This sounds extreme, but in fact it felt so freeing, and even easy to say to the Lord, because I knew that nothing would compare with knowing, and walking with him; nothing. All I wanted was him, and if that meant never playing again, then so be it."

"But as I've come to know so well, God is such a gracious God. In that moment, he gave it all back to me. Now that sounds really strange, but I know that some sort of exchange took place in my heart. I laid down the idol of music as I gave my all to the Lord; I had to, to allow him all the room in my heart; in exchange God gave me himself, life, love, freedom and peace, and returned the gift of music. But he returned it to me in a new light, and with a fresh perspective. The best way that I can put it is that I feel I went from a place of 'performance', anxiety, where it was all about me, to 'praise', freedom, where it was all about him; I felt God say that you can love music and I can use the gifts that I have given you to glorify my name. For his glory, he gave me so much more than I ever had before."

If we're to be effective as a team, we have to learn not to be precious about position, but rather find our significance in service. There's a principle in the Kingdom of God: the best way to keep something is to give it away. If we want to stay really sharp at our instrument and improve, we need to learn to give ourselves away, to raise others up.

M // Membership of the Church

Bill Hybels writes, "The local church is the hope of the world." The local church is the body of Christ, and it has saved lives, shaped entire nations and brought hope to the darkest moments of human history. And we get to be a part of it. Even with our guitars, our drums, our little songs and big hearts: we get to play.

But, if we are to be effective, it is essential that we are rooted and committed to our local church. It's here that we will develop our spiritual life alongside our gifting. If we are not involved in the regular discipleship life of this church, then the chances are that our passion will grow a little less hot, our commitment to the vision will weaken and we may end up dropping off the edge. God has adopted us into a family, the family of the church, and so we need to commit to our family and be the church we long to see, even when it's tough.

It's essential that each member of the team is committed to a place where they can be accountable for how they're living, where they can love and be loved and where they can serve in obscurity. Everyone should be involved in the church's regular discipleship groups - the sort where people meet together regularly for food, to study the bible, to worship and pray together, and to do life together.

There's no substitute for getting stuck into the normal life of your church. Help out on the Alpha Course, volunteer with the poor, give yourselves to being part of the bigger picture. It's really important to avoid a situation where the worship team only hang out with one another, only ever come to church when they're playing and only ever volunteer on the worship team. The danger can be that they become detached from others in the church and begin to lose touch with what is happening in the lives of the people they're leading.

Of course, if you're dealing with these issues then sooner or later you're going to have to have a challenging and perhaps painful conversation with some people. Few people enjoy confrontation, but at times it is a necessary part of building and maintaining an effective team.

[Insert Illustration]

Tim tells the story of working with a drummer who lost his initial enthusiasm for worship and became cynical about church. Eventually he would only show up at church if he was playing drums. As a member of the worship team it was unhealthy to have such little commitment to the church and it began to create tension in the team. It was tricky, but a conversation needed to be had. Share something from your own experience of having to be honest and frank with someone on your worship team.

Another key area for us as a team is to work towards having a great relationship with the church leadership, serving their vision and supporting them. In many ways this is one of the most important relationships in the life of the local church, because if there isn't unity over the worship at the heart of the church, then it will impact the whole church. Likewise, it's important to spend a lot of time making sure we have a good relationship each other as a worship team. Here are three essential principles for keeping healthy relationships.

Loyalty

Firstly, we need to be loyal to our leaders. It says in Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as those who must give account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." It is a Biblical principle that we reap what we sow. If we sow disloyalty to those we serve under, then we will reap disloyalty from those we lead.

Likewise, if we go out of our way to honour and serve our leaders, we will reap a harvest of loyalty. We'll find that they will trust us, release us and believe in us and incredible things can happen in teams where there is a culture of loyalty.

Friendship

Secondly, we do everything we can to value friendship with our leaders. In many ways, friendship is the glue in healthy ministry. Jesus said in John 15:15 “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

It’s good to invest time in making sure that our leaders know we want first and foremost to be their friends, rather than appearing with a list of concerns or an agenda. Friends trust one another, they have fun together, they instinctively know what the other person is thinking and they are a pleasure to be around. But friendships take time, and if we’re going to be friends with our leaders, we have to learn to do life together.

Honesty

Then finally, the third essential to keeping a healthy relationship with our leaders is honesty. Loyalty and friendship create a safe environment where we can be honest with each other. We should regularly have honest discussions where we say what we really think, and thrash out complicated issues, but all of this is done in the context of friendship and loyalty.

Honesty is a two way street: it’s good to want to know what our leaders think of the direction we’re taking things, the songs we’re choosing and the worship life of the church. Even when there’s nothing to change, it’s key that our leaders know that we’re willing and responsive in serving them. A healthy relationship with our leadership is key to being an effective team and is always based on loyalty, friendship and honesty.

Vision into Action

Being an effective team requires not just vision, but the ability to turn vision into action over a sustained period of years without burning out or giving up. Most of us overestimate what can be changed in one year and underestimate what can be changed in three years. For many teams, it will take years of hard, faithful sowing, only for others to reap. But if we commit to turning up, excelling in everything we do, valuing attitude above ability and first and foremost staying members of our local church, then there is not limit to what we could see happen.

As Paul writes, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:1-3)

Prayer

Father, we pray you would help us to be an effective team. We ask that you would empower us to be one in purpose and spirit, and that we would see amazing things happen, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Next

Split into your groups, and dig into the questions for discussion. The questions appear on the Notes.