

# THE AUTHENTIC LEADER

## Welcome

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

In this seventh 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.

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## Introduction

Welcome to the final session of the Worship Central Course. Over the past six sessions we've looked at why worship is central, and examined key values to keep our worship Christ-centered. We've explored how to lead worship and how to release creativity, how to be a team and how to play together.

Now in this final session, we're going to look at how we can take all of this and put it into practice for the rest of our lives as people passionate about the praises of God. Let's begin with some words of Jesus from the Message translation of Matthew. Jesus says:

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how to do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." (Matthew 11:28-31)

When we look at the world around us, leadership seems to be in crisis. So often we hear tragic stories of leaders falling from grace; depressing tales of weakness, deception, greed and hypocrisy. There are many consequences to these failings, one being that we can become afraid of stepping up to lead, for fear of getting it wrong. Yet if you're involved in the creative worship life of your community, you already are a leader. Whether you realize it or not, your worship is already inspiring others. So, as we get used to that thought, the vital question has to be asked and answered: How can we learn to be the kind of leaders that can be trusted? How can we be the kind of leaders that keep going without messing up or burning out? How can we be the kind of leaders that are authentic and fit to serve these amazing communities we find ourselves in?

We might start in the local bookstore. There are whole sections on leadership, from theories on what makes a great leader through to books that describe how to turn a business around. There are biographies of military commanders or sporting heroes to give us inside tips, and it's the same on the internet – there are courses, DVDs and any number of different life coaches and leadership masterclasses all competing for our attention. However, there is one leader who has had more impact on the world than any other: Jesus. It is to Jesus that we must turn if we are to understand the true meaning of authentic leadership.

Jesus' life is totally unique and towers over history after two thousand years. His leadership is utterly radical, revolutionary and counter-cultural. Napoleon Bonaparte once wrote, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires, but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force! Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for him." What can we learn from the most remarkable leader the world has ever seen?

As we draw this Course to a close we are going to explore six leadership principles from the life of Jesus that will help keep us in tune as leaders. Just as a guitarist will spend time ensuring that each of their six strings is properly tuned, we need to make sure we are constantly checking that the key components of our lives are right where they need to be.

So using the six strings of a guitar to make up our six leadership principles, the first string is the E string. E is for Examine your heart.

## E String // Examine your Heart

Jesus says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30)

The human heart is an amazing thing. An individual’s heart is typically the same size as their fist, yet even when we’re resting, it exerts twice the relative strength as the leg muscles do when sprinting. In an average day, the heart beats one hundred thousand times. That’s an awesome two and a half billion times in a typical lifetime.

God uses the physical picture of the heart to talk about the importance of our inner spiritual motivation. The common understanding in both the Old and New Testaments was that the ‘heart’ was the control centre of a person’s being: all our ideas, thoughts, motives and decisions flowed from here. It is with our hearts that we:

Look for God (Deut 4:29)

Love God (Deut 6:5)

Serve God (Joshua 22:5)

Meditate on him (Psalm 19:14)

Hold onto his word (Psalm 119:11)

Trust in him (Proverb 3:5)

Do the will of God (Ephesians 6:6)

Love others (1 Peter 1:22)

Pour out our worship to God (Psalm 62:8)

To God, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. Running throughout this course has been the simple truth that worship is a heart condition. If we are to learn to lead worship

authentically, we must start with asking God to teach us to worship with our hearts, that is, with all of ourselves, from the very centre of our beings.

In Christ, our hearts become our main instrument for worshipping God: we're to sing and make music in our hearts to the Lord. When we're worshipping together it's almost as if Jesus walks among us, listening, not to the sound and melodies coming from our lips, but rather to each of our hearts. What's more, Jesus doesn't turn away and stop listening when the worship finishes on a Sunday. He's listening to the sound of our heart at work on Tuesday morning; or when we're out with our friends on a Friday night.

Authenticity works from the inside out. It can't be a show because - among other reasons - eventually people see through the mask and the performance. Jesus was brutal with the Pharisees who focused on the outward expression of worship, "Woe to you, " he said to them, "...you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean." (Matt 23:27)

To respond to the greatest commandment, that we would love the Lord with all our hearts, we need to learn what it means to examine our hearts: to prayerfully look within asking those deep and private questions. In allowing God to search our hearts and test our anxious thoughts we begin to journey towards holiness. We gradually become the people God has created and called us to be.

One great habit that can be helpful is to carve out a little time in the week to sit down, alone, with a journal, and reflect prayerfully on the following questions:

1. What were the highlights of the past week?
2. What were the low points of the past week?
3. What lessons did I learn?
4. What practical actions do I need to take?

By dedicating time each week to remind ourselves of the highs and lows, we find space to get in touch with our emotions. Rather than running away from all that we find deep inside us, we create an opportunity to engage with it and make sensible decisions to move forward. This way we are much less likely to damage other people by constantly operating out of brokenness and pain. By working practically through each question we can identify areas in our lives that need to be worked on and situations that need to be addressed. We can be deliberate and decisive in the way we live and lead instead of letting life run away from us.

We can ask the big questions that govern whether we are leading effectively: Is my calling sure? Is my passion hot? Is my pride subdued? Am I growing in patience and self-control? Is my pace sustainable or are personal issues hindering my call as a leader? Only then should we feel properly equipped to move forward and lead in a way that is healthy and manageable for the long run.

The Christian author Dr. Leighton Ford writes, “God loves us the way we are, but too much to leave us that way.” It’s as we learn to examine our hearts before God that this process of change begins.

So that’s the E string, for Examine the heart. Next, the A string. A is for Advance humbly.

## A String // Advance Humbly

Jesus says, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)

Jesus didn’t spend a huge amount of time speaking about leadership. Instead, he spent a lot of time talking about service. To Jesus, real leadership equals humble service. The authentic leader is by definition someone who dedicates themselves to serving others, instead of choosing to push themselves forward, they advance humbly.

Jesus sets the ultimate example, choosing to leave the kingly comfort of heaven to come to earth to serve and save. Jesus washes his disciples’ feet, saying “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). True service is rooted and worked out in ordinary, unglamorous humility.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, we are encouraged to walk humbly. Peter challenges us all, “clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Peter 5:5). Sometimes we have to learn these things the hard way.

[Insert Story]

*This is a good point to insert a story about you being humbled as a worship leader. Perhaps you were asking for it, or maybe it was one of those lessons that simply come along without seeming to prompt it: either way, be honest with people as you retell the events.*

We are not called to a celebrity culture, but a humility culture. Humility does not come easy. Andrew Murray wrote that ‘humility is not a thing that will come on its own. It must be made the object of special desire, prayer, faith and practice.’ So, where do we begin? Here are three practical steps that can help to encourage humility:

## Consider

Firstly, Consider. We’d do well to follow the advice Job received to ‘stop and consider God’s wonders’ (Job 37:14). Creation surrounds us, full of splendour and wonder, revealing the greatness of its maker. Look around at the epic majesty of God’s design. Marvel at the awesome beauty of the night sky. Human empires rise and fall, yet the star-studded heavens continue to shine, majestic and glorious. Think about the vast mysteries of the ocean’s deeps. We’ve explored more of space than we have the furthest reaches of our own oceans. When we stop to consider the glory and magnitude of God displayed in creation, we inevitably find ourselves facedown in awe and wonder, humbly worshipping this great King.

As Wayne Grudem writes, “the difference between God’s being and ours is more than the difference between the sun and a candle, more than the difference between the ocean and a raindrop, more than the difference between the arctic ice cap and a snow flake, more than the difference between the universe and the room we are sitting in: God’s being is qualitatively different. No limitation or imperfection in creation should be projected on to our thought of God. He is the creator; all else is creaturely. All else can pass away in an instant; he necessarily exists forever.”

We need to embrace the truth of how small we are compared to the might and size of who he is. A true revelation of the transcendence and otherness of God cannot fail to help cultivate a humble heart within us.

## Contribute

Secondly, contribute. God is looking for servants, not stars. To lead others in worship is by definition to choose to serve others, to contribute in ways that no one sees and we don't get credit for.

There's a story of a now well-known worship leader in the USA who as a young man felt called to lead worship. He approached his pastor to tell him of his availability to lead at the church. His pastor graciously informed him that there was no position available at the moment for a worship leader, but that they were looking for a janitor to help look after the building. Thinking this would be a short-term post before stepping up to become the worship leader, he took on the job. For weeks and then months, this man spent his days stacking chairs, cleaning toilets and locking up last thing at night. As time went on he became more and more bitter and frustrated. Why was he wasting his time on menial tasks that anyone could do? One morning, whilst mopping the floor, he had a revelation that what he was doing, was worship. Every chair stacked, every light bulb repaired, every contribution made to help others - if done to the glory of God – was a precious offering of worship. It was here that he learnt that humility is the heart of worship.

Jesus said, "Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It's not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant." (Luke 22:25-26, The Message) What does this mean for us as worship leaders? For some it may mean helping the band to pack away at the end of a service when you're exhausted, for others it may mean choosing to lead worship in such a way that draws the attention to Jesus and not ourselves. Whatever it means for you, none of us are too big to contribute in the smallest, most humble of ways.

## Celebrate

Thirdly, we must celebrate the successes of others. We need to enjoy and encourage the gifts of those around us. Ronald Reagan, the 40th President of the United States, had a sign on his desk in the Oval Office that said, 'There is no limit to how far a person can go as long as he doesn't care who gets the credit.' When we come across this kind of attitude rooted in deep humility, we always find incredible signs of life and creativity.

In the eighteenth century, the two great evangelists, George Whitfield and John Wesley, were well documented for having strong and differing theological opinions. One day someone asked Whitfield the brave question, 'Will you see John Wesley in heaven?' To this Whitfield responded, 'I fear not.' As the crowd gasped in shock, he continued, 'He will be so near the throne and me at such a distance that I shall hardly get a sight of him.' That's what humility looks like, choosing to think of others more highly than ourselves.

We can get so preoccupied by thoughts of who gets praised and credited for these earthly successes that we start to develop an unhealthy competitive streak. We need to let go of this desire for personal gain, choosing to celebrate the gifts of those we work and live with. Can you begin to imagine the impact of a creative community united in such a way, choosing to honour and support one another?

So that's the A string, Advance humbly. Next, the D string: D stands for Deny Yourself

## D String // Deny Yourself

Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.” (Matthew 16:24)

We live in the middle of a culture obsessed with self-promotion, self-indulgence and self-sufficiency - and against it the message of Jesus is nothing less than utterly radical. To deny ourselves goes against everything the world would have us believe. In the film, ‘The Matrix’ the character ‘Mouse’ says, “To deny our impulses is to deny that which makes us human.” What a lie that is. The truth is that freedom isn’t being able to have everything we desire and crave; true freedom comes when we stop being a prisoner to these desires.

Jesus always lived in the opposite spirit to the world. He chose to deny himself; he went without and ultimately laid down his life for us. We are called to do the same. The authentic leader is living for something greater than financial success and personal fulfillment. As Jesus said, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matt 16:26) It begs the fundamental question, who are we living for? Is our greatest desire to be celebrated and adored by man, or are we willing to pay any cost to see the name of Jesus glorified?

In the film ‘Amadeus’, the life story of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is told through the eyes of fellow composer Antonio Salieri. As court composer to Emperor Joseph II, Salieri was also a highly gifted composer. During the film there is a telling scene, in which a young Salieri, alone in church, prays to God:

“Lord, make me a great composer. Let me celebrate your glory through music and be celebrated myself. Make me famous through the world dear God. Make me immortal.”

It's hard for our motives and ambitions not to get confused at times. We want to see God worshipped throughout the earth, but if we're honest, we'd love to see ourselves succeed as well. This process of 'denying ourselves' is not a one-off prayer. Everyday we need to learn to take up our cross. This involves seeking Christ above all others and it's put into practice by our putting others first. And it should affect our choices, it should change the way we spend our money and the decisions we make.

It's not always easy to put God first. John Piper writes, “God seldom calls us to an easier life, but always calls us to know more of him and drink more deeply of his sustaining grace.” In denying ourselves we are drawn closer to God. In losing our lives, we find more of God.

The danger when talking about denying ourselves is that we can develop a theology of masochism. We begin to expect that God will always call us to the very thing we'd least like to do. But God's ambition is not to make our lives miserable. On the contrary we have been given so much. In following God and responding to his call we find ourselves most alive, excited and amazed by all that we see God do.

Jim Elliot, the America missionary who was martyred serving God in remote areas of Ecuador said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” At the core of the authentic leader is an eternal perspective. This life is momentary, but God is everlasting. In denying ourselves on earth, we gain a treasure that can never be taken away from us – intimacy with God.

So, that's D for Deny Yourself. Next, G is for Grow in grace.

## G String // Grow in Grace

Jesus calls us to a life of growing in God's grace. He says, "Walk with me and work with me - watch how to do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." (Matthew 11:28, The Message)

Matt Redman describes a time when he suffered from an acute form of tendinitis that resulted in his whole arm swelling up, leaving him in agony. After visiting many doctors he eventually saw a top hand specialist who told Matt that he needed complete rest for at least seven weeks.

"For the next seven weeks," Matt writes, "I could hardly do anything, and most frustratingly of all, I couldn't play my guitar. I sat at home with loads of questions buzzing round in my head. Why was this happening? Would my arm ever fully recover? Was it the devil or was it God? I didn't really have any theological answers; but I soon realized that whatever the answers to those questions, God was at work in the situation."

"He started to speak to me: As a servant I was dispensable – servants come and go, and God can choose any of us to do any job in his kingdom. As a worship leader I was replaceable – God could have used anyone for the events that we'd been privileged to be a part of. But as a child of God, I was indispensable. There could never be another me – a child is irreplaceable."

God's love for us is not performance-related. It is a radically liberating love: your Father in heaven is pleased with you, regardless of your successes or failures. You may feel like life has left you shipwrecked, that you are a sinner and a fraud, but when the Father looks at you, he sees Jesus, and he says, 'You are my child, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.'

This is what it means to grow in the unforced rhythms of grace: to know more and more of the love that the Father has for his children. The more it happens, so we become filled to

overflowing with love for those around us. The more we know we are loved, the more that love impacts those around us.

So, G is for Grow in Grace. Next, the B string; Be obedient.

## B String // Be Obedient

Jesus said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” (Luke 11:28)

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “One act of obedience is better than one hundred sermons.” Or one hundred songs! There is a high calling on leaders to live out what they both preach and sing. A trail of destruction is always left behind any leader who fails to live a life of obedience; obedient to God’s word and direction.

God is concerned with how we live our daily lives. What we do with money, power, sex and ambition will tell us how sincere we are in our worship. Paul writes: ‘Therefore I urge you, Brothers and Sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is true worship’ (Romans 12:1, TNIV).

This is a sobering challenge: how can we possibly stay holy in a culture where anything goes? The first thing to say is that no one is perfect. None of us are in a position to judge anyone else; “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The extraordinary thing about God’s love for us is that he has made it possible to change. There is unlimited grace available to us through the cross of Jesus, and incredible power to set us free from the habits and addictions that ruin our relationship with God.

So often the power of sin is in its secrecy. That's why it's really helpful to have a few friends in our lives that can ask us the tough questions and challenge us. Together, we can pursue purity, personal holiness and integrity. With the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, it is possible. And if we fall flat on our faces we are there to help each other up, and cheer each other on. Remember - faith is a journey best travelled with company: it was never meant to be a solo discipline any more than it was meant to be a spectator sport. We are called to do this with others.

Finally, the E string; is for Enjoy the adventure.

## E String // Enjoy the Adventure

If all of this seems like an overwhelming challenge, then you'll be pleased to hear you're not alone. Those closest to Jesus on earth felt just like you and I do when we hear these words.

Matthew 19 records;

'The disciples were staggered. "Then who has any chance at all?" Jesus looked hard at them and said, "No chance at all if you think you can pull it off yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it.' (Matthew 19:25-26 The Message)

If you are passionate about the worship life of your local church you have on your heart one of the highest and most incredible callings there is. It's not easy, but as Martin Luther King Jr once said, 'The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of convenience, but where they stand in moments of challenge, moments of crisis and controversy.' God has called you to this privileged position because he knows you are up to the job. Don't be half-hearted about it; if you are going to be a leader, then be prepared to lead. Enjoy the adventure.

Over- intensity is not a fruit of the Spirit. We must not take ourselves too seriously, and lose the ability to laugh at ourselves and have fun. A lack of enjoyment and humour in ministry is always a worrying sign. If there is little joy then something is not right. Like the fuel gauge on a car, when it hits the warning sign, you know you need to refuel.

Leading worship at times is exhausting, stressful and involves huge sacrifice. Mixed in with the long hours, the disappointments, the hurt and tears, should be great joy, great friends and huge adventure.

So Jesus challenges us to examine our hearts, advance humbly, deny ourselves, grow in grace, be obedient and enjoy the adventure. When all those six strings are in tune our lives will make the most beautiful and amazing music that will resonate the glory of God to all around us.

Looking back over the last seven sessions we've explored what it means to encounter God in worship, we've looked at key practicalities that have helped equip us as worshippers, and we've begun a conversation about how we can empower our church to grow in their worship life. And this is just the beginning.

Now as we look forward, let's pray for a new season in our life as a worship team. As we draw all these things together, our prayer is that God will use us to bring the sound of heaven here on the earth.

We pray that our worship would be Christ-centered, and that God the Father would pour out his Spirit on us like never before. Now is the time for us to give it all and to live our lives as authentic worshippers, to run with the vision God has given us and to press into everything

that God has planned for us in the years ahead. And every step of the way, we'll run in God's glorious strength.

As Paul prays for us in Colossians, "We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul – not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy." (Colossians 1:11 The Message).

## Pray

Father, we thank you for this vision you have given us as a community to make the worship of Jesus central in our generation. We pray now that you would come by your Spirit and in your power and give us the strength we need to keep going, and as we go, that would fill us with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Next

*As with the previous sessions, we'd encourage a good time of ministry. There may be a sense of commissioning and confirming what God has been doing with your Course over the past seven sessions. After prayer, break into Groups and see the Notes for the questions for this session.*

*If appropriate, you may want to gather together at the end for a final time of worship as a way of drawing together everything that you've been looking at on the Course in worship. Keep in touch, we'd love to hear how you got on. You can email us at [info@worshipcentral.org](mailto:info@worshipcentral.org)*