

THE EFFECTIVE TEAM

Welcome

Thanks for downloading the Speakers' Notes for the Worship Central Course.

In this fifth session, we've outlined the structure and key points for the talk, and left space for you to add your own examples. Feel free to personalise 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 experience 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 the Worship Central Course. 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? In this session we are going to look at how to develop an effective team.

Insert Story

Al tells a story about leading worship with the HTB team in Europe. It was, in short, a bit of a disaster. 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. They went out as a group of musicians, but came back as a team.

Tell your own story here that helps get that same point across. If you don't have an example, retell Al's story.

Example story

Al: 'A few years ago, in the days before we were involved in Worship Central, an opportunity came up for us to lead worship at a large interdenominational youth festival in Europe. We took one of our regular Sunday bands on the trip: the musicians booked time off work and paid their own flights. As we headed out on the plane there was a real sense of excitement: we felt so privileged that we could play our part in serving another area of the church. We'd been rehearsing like crazy for

days, praying for God to move in a powerful way.

The trip was quite different to how we'd imagined it would be. The details of our accommodation had been a little sketchy. It turned out that rather than staying at a hotel, we were in fact going to be sleeping on the concrete floor of a local school classroom. None of the team had brought sleeping bags, and we literally slept in our clothes, using our instrument cases as pillows. It was freezing cold and the kids at the school obviously had a nasty spitting habit, because the floor was coated in a thin but sticky layer of saliva.

Then, while the venue had a capacity of thousands, only a few dozen people turned up for the event, and we're sure quite a few of them were lost and had got the wrong address. To make things worse, the power kept cutting out during the worship time, and one of the venue staff took a serious dislike to our electric guitarist, shouting from the back of the hall that he was a 'musical terrorist'.

It was an unforgettable trip. While on one level it was a total disaster, we had a huge amount of fun, and still laugh about it today. It was also very significant for us. We went out there as a group of musicians, but came back as a team. We realised that, through successes and failures, we had a common vision of seeing people set on fire with a passion for worshipping God. We'd do whatever we could to play our part in seeing this happen. Years later, all of those musicians are still at the heart of our worship team and of Worship Central.'

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

What Makes An Effective Team?

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' (AMP).

No worship team can form or grow without an effective, God-given vision. If we lack a clear vision – that every one of us on the team knows, understands and values – then we can easily end up going round in circles. A vision is a 'redemptive revelation' – something that God chooses to show us that causes us to be changed.

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.

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

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.'

So we do everything we can to make the dates we're committed to. That's why it's important to ask people to commit a long way ahead, rather than at the last minute. Once people have the dates in their diaries, they can make them a priority. Jesus says in Matthew 5:37, 'Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes", and your "No", "No" '. If people have to cancel then they can do so with plenty of advance notice so that cover can be arranged.

We'd also encourage you to have three key meetings that all members of the worship team are expected to be at.

i. Team nights

As a team we meet together once a month on a weeknight 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 that 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.

ii. Rehearsals

Rehearsing together is key to being able to lead people in worship well. We have regular rehearsals, and schedule the different bands 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.

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 can begin on time.

iii. 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, modelling passionate worship.

E // Excel

We have a little saying: we 'aim for perfection and settle for excellence'. We want to excel because we believe God deserves our best. Paul encourages the church in Corinth to 'Aim for perfection' (2 Corinthians 13:11). The Psalms encourage us as musicians to 'Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy.' (Psalm 33:3).

How can we attain this kind of excellence?

First, practise your instrument:

i. Practice makes perfect

The great evangelist Billy Graham was asked 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. If you haven't done it already have a think about your ratios: how much time do you spend practising your instrument, learning the songs, investing yourself in this ministry, compared to how long you actually spend leading worship?

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, practise regularly, take lessons, get advice, improve, sharpen, challenge, take risks and don't settle for mediocrity. We also need 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.

ii. Build 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. We've found the best way to recruit new musicians is by 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. We need to get out and get to know people.

Not everyone who has a part to play in the worship team will come to us in perfect condition. There may be a few rough edges or some lessons that need to be learned or unlearned, but if we can see that they have a worshipper's heart, along with a desire to develop their musical skill, we should make room in the team for them. After all, seeing people flourish in their gifting is always a good investment.

Whatever the standard of musician, if we're going to be effective as a worship team, we can all get better – both in our musical talents and in our pursuit of a deeper relationship with God. We need to learn to encourage a culture of excellence in both of these areas, building each other up, and helping to equip ourselves to be the best team we can be.

So T//Turn up, E//Excel.

A // Attitude

Excellence is important, but as a worship team we value attitude above ability.

The American motor-company Ford have a sign in their main headquarters that simply states, 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast.' We can develop the best plans and initiatives, but what will really make an impact is the culture of a team. The attitude and culture we're looking for is one 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 others 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, the former organist at HTB, spent years working as a professional concert organist. He used to practise 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. This is his story in his words:

'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 you 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.

Finally,

M // Membership

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. 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 a local church, then the chances are that our passion will fade, our commitment to the vision will weaken and we may end up dropping out.

God has adopted us into a family, the family of the church, so we need to commit to our family and be the church we long to see, even when it's tough. This means that everyone should be involved in the church's regular discipleship groups – the sort where people meet together 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 our church. It's really important to avoid a situation where the worship team only hang out with one another and only ever come to church when they're playing. The danger can be that we become detached from others in the church and begin to lose touch with what is happening in the lives of the people we're leading.

Another key area for us as a team is to work towards having a great relationship with the church leadership, serving 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 with each other as a worship team.

Here are three essential principles for keeping healthy relationships:

i. 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 an 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.

ii. 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 servants do not know their 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.

iii. 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.

Conclusion

Being an effective team requires not just a big vision, but the ability to turn that dream into reality over a sustained period of years without 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.

Ultimately, God will honour us when we turn up, excel in everything we do, value attitude above ability and stay rooted as members of a local church.

In Philippians 2 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).

If we do this, prayerfully and humbly, then there is no limit to what we could see God do through ordinary teams, in local churches, all around the world.

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.

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