

This past year I have had the opportunity to participate in and observe several national and citywide worship events.

Looking back, I've noticed that many of us who share in these amazing moments are greatly inspired by the nights of worship, concerts, and performances. We experience high times in the

intense spiritual hunger from the participants, and the skillful leadership of many of the presenters.

But when I go back to my local fellowship and inadvertently, try to impose a concert experience on my 8:30 am service, it falls flat. They look at me like "what are you doing?"

I can't tell you how many times I've come back from a conference pumped and instead of letting that encounter pace itself over time from the inside out, I end up trying to copy the experience. But, I've come to realize that the concert experience doesn't translate to most of our churches on a Sunday morning. Sunday mornings are more of an "un-concert".

Our role is to help others worship. Period. The people that attend my fellowship don't want or need a performance. They

need connection -- with God and with one another. So, our job is to facilitate that as best as we can. Let's break down the invisible barrier between "the people on stage" and "the audience". This is not "American Idol." This is God's people singing their prayers to their Father, their Savior, and to The Holy Spirit.

At the end of the day, God is not calling us to perform on Sunday mornings but rather calling us to be more authentic and more transparent in our times of worship.

There are many things that we can do to help us from being infected by our performance culture and as always we find timeless wisdom in the ancient text of scripture.

There is a priestly model described in 1 Chronicles...as "ministry to the Lord". The Levites didn't "lead people" in worship but instead were charged with the task of 'singing praise to God both day and night....in the temple. They sang to the Invisible God. An audience of One.

How often do we minister to God in private? Ideally, worship leading is publicly modeling what we have been doing privately.

"Practice" worship throughout the week by creating some alone time with God and by singing songs and prayers to Him. Often I will go into my church sanctuary by myself or with a few core members of my team and we'll read scripture out loud, especially psalms, which is the vocabulary of worship. We'll begin to play guitar or keyboard simply to create a worshipful atmosphere while speaking and singing out psalms and heart felt prayers. It may feel slightly forced at first, perhaps mechanical, but if you persist in "showing up" to bless the Lord in private, you will begin to sense more of His presence and authority in

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presence of God with believers from very diverse backgrounds and traditions, and a powerful sense of community occurs in such a short time because of several factors. God's presence,

Discography



[Open The Eyes Of My Heart \(2000\)](#)



[God Of Wonders \(2001\)](#)



[Offering Of Worship \(2003\)](#)



[A Greater Song \(2006\)](#)



[Our God Saves \(2008\)](#)



[The Writer's Collection \(2008\)](#)



[Glorious \(2009\)](#)

your outward, public ministry.

The other aspect of our ministry is Pastoral. Guitar players and singers are “a dime a dozen” as the saying goes. But those who will give their time and talents in service to God and His people are rare. Jesus asked Peter, “do you love me?” Peter replied, “Yes Lord”. Jesus’ reply back, “feed my sheep.”

Ask The Lord to give you HIS heart for the community that you serve. Before you dismiss your team from rehearsal, have them come to the front of the stage and look over the empty seats. Ask them to imagine the people who will be sitting there this coming week and encourage your team to pray for the individuals and families who will be showing up in those seats. This is a powerful exercise to help you and your team cultivate God’s heart and love for the people you serve.

I would encourage you to lean toward more of a conversational tone in your leading style as you begin your service. People don’t like being yelled at, manipulated, or artificially hyped up. Whether you lead fifty people, three



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hundred, or more than a thousand, aim for being as authentic and sincere as you can. We don’t have to be overly sanguine. People respond best when they sense someone being themselves. In fact I used to always pray something like this under my breathe before I walked on the platform. “Lord, at the risk of being boring, please give me the courage to be ‘who I am in You’– nothing more, nothing less.”

We all battle our insecurities in different ways but practicing our ministry to The Lord and praying for the people we serve will take us a long way in distinguishing between performance and effective ministry.

Let’s determine to finish well by helping facilitate a lifelong conversation and sense of community between God and the people He has called us to serve.

Paul Baloche is regarded as one of the preeminent worship writers of the contemporary Church, having written some of this generation’s most compelling worship songs, including “Open The Eyes of My Heart,” “Hosanna,” “Your Name,” “Above All,” “Offering,” “Our God Saves” and “Because of Your Love.” His songs are literally sung by millions of people each week in churches around the world. ■