

The 3 P's – Keys to Effective Worship Leading

Since November is the month of Thanksgiving, I thought it would be appropriate to dedicate some time to edifying and encouraging those who regularly assist us in offering up our thanks and worship.

This month's "teaching" is specifically designed for Worship Leaders, Praise Team Members, Choir Members, and special/general Music Ministers. The word "teaching" is in quotes because this month's article is actually an expanded version of an outline that I use for a general class session in my Worship Arts Seminar Program.

While these principles are tailored specifically to those involved in church music, there are elements that can be applied to all other fields of ministry, both public and private.

I have highlighted the "expanded" information in **Yellow** to make it easy to locate and/or remove if you want to use the outline in a class of your own.

Please remember that this is only an outline and not the full teaching. The "expanded" portions are added only to help further clarify the points or to provide you and I with background and additional information to consider when delivering this teaching. This class is customized and tailored to each seminar it is given at.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Who are you & what do you do?

1. You are a **child of God**.

John 1:12 – "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the **sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name."

We are more than just servants and laborers in the Kingdom. We are actually members of a Royal Family and our Father is the King of the Universe. As such, we must take care to accurately and appropriately represent the family and keep our good name in tact in all of our endeavors and day-to-day lives. We must take care to never behave or speak in such a manner as to bring reproach upon our Father or the other members of our family. As with earthly Royals, we need to realize that, others are ALWAYS watching us. They look to us to set the standards for proper behavior. This doesn't only apply to our public lives but to our private lives as well.

2. You are a **witness** – someone who shares what they know to be truth or factual.

Acts 1:8 – "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be **witnesses** unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

This triggers two thoughts for me: 1) When we stand before others, we have a responsibility to share know to be true about God and His effect on our lives. 2) "You can't teach what you don't know." If we don't have our own experiential knowledge of God, who He is and what He does, we cannot enlighten others who are searching for His truth. We need to get to know God thoroughly for ourselves before we can help others in their search. Have you ever wondered why your Pastor doesn't turn over a Sunday school class to a new convert? This is why. They don't have the knowledge and experiences they need to draw from to help others. You can't answer a question correctly if you don't know the answer and you can't show someone how to do something you've never done yourself. If you don't know how to

worship, why we worship, or whom we worship, then how can you effectively help those you are ministering to?

3. You are a leader – one who guides, conducts; persuades; serves as a way; be, go, or play the first.
 - a. We lead by example. (Sort of like a “team Captain” or “floor supervisor.”) We labor in the fields along with those we are leading.

A wise leader knows that the most effective way to get someone to do something is to do it with him or her, instead of asking him or her to do it for you. The best way I can think to describe all forms of Christian leadership is to relate it to a sports team. Now, I am not much for sports myself, but I know enough about them to know that the Coach is the one who calls the shots. He's the one with the actual and total authority on the field. However, he doesn't actually play the game with the players. His “voice” or representative on the field is the team Captain. While the players sometimes vote on their Captain, the Coach always has the final approval and often does the picking on his own. The Captain holds a high responsibility. Not only does he have to relay the commands of the Coach, but also he actually has to carry them out along with the other players. Often, the Coach relays generic play info to the Captain and the Captain has to use his own skill and knowledge of the players, the plays, and the game in general to choose the who, when, and how of the play execution. The Captain should be the best-informed and prepared player on the field. He doesn't have to be the best, but he needs to know how to get the best result for the TEAM. His conduct and work ethic sets the tone for the rest of the team.

2 Timothy 2:1 - “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **2** And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. **3** Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. **4** No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. **5** And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strives lawfully. **6** The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. **7** Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. ”

- b. WE GO THERE AND TASTE THE FRUITS FIRST!!!!

People are often referred to as sheep in the scriptures. Shepherds will pick one sheep and tie a bell around its neck. The bell draws the attention of the other sheep. Sheep like to travel in a group. It makes them feel safe and less venerable. If the shepherd wants to lead the herd to a new area, he doesn't have to lead them all, just the one with the bell. The rest will follow wherever the lead sheep goes. We need to allow the Good Shepherd to tie a bell (our ministry) around our necks and follow every move He makes. Since the rest will follow wherever we go (because the Shepherd has given us the bell), it is imperative that we not head off into our own plan or preferences. When He wants to lead us

to greener pastures, we need to be right on His heels, be the first to get there, and the first to partake in the fruits of our journey.

II. THE 3 P's

A. Preparation

1. Two types

a. **Practical** - these are the things we do involving the natural or temporal realm.

- *Ex: practicing with our instrument/voice, keeping fit and well, getting enough sleep, maintenance, balanced diet, study, etc.*

- These things are "fundamentals"; they apply to everyone who wants to improve or maintain their natural skill level.

- It's biblically based. *Example:*

Psalm 33:3 - "Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise."

(*Patsach I paw-tsakh' - to cause to break or burst forth, break forth with, break out.*)

b. **Spiritual** - these are the things we do involving the supernatural or spiritual realm.

- *Ex: prayer, personal praise & worship, bible study, breaking sinful habits, conforming our lives to the Word, etc.*

- These things are also fundamentals; they apply to everyone who wants to maintain or improve their spiritual maturity level.

- It's biblically based. *Example:*

2 Timothy 2: 15 - "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

B. Presentation

Mark 1: 17 – "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become **fishers of men.**"

1. If your goanna catch fish, you need the right bait!

a. We must make what we want them to receive appealing and easily accessible.

b. It must be appropriate for the area and type of fish that area found there. (Don't use a bass lure and pole when fishing for shark.)

This is just one analogy I use to describe the concept of “finding the voice and purpose of your congregation/audience”. Basically, I believe that we should follow Christ’s example of reaching the people where they are and in ways they can accept and relate to. Instead of long-winded theological discourses, Christ spoke to His audience in parables or object lessons. These were designed to be easily understood and applied to the lives of everyday man. When He spoke to the religious leaders of the day, He spoke on an entirely different level and used a more confrontational, straight forward, and intellectual style. He used a whole other approach when speaking to His inner circle, the Apostles.

While we use music, the concept is still the same. We need to realize whom we are communicating to and seek out and implement methods and styles that are easily accepted and effective. I’ve seen too many gifted Worship Leaders fail and/or struggle needlessly because they did it “their way” and paid no attention to the needs and/or desires of their audience. This goes beyond just trying to be “contemporary” when you’re in an obviously “southern gospel” or “traditional” church. It includes such things as: waging “Spiritual Warfare” through song in a Church that is so socially backward they won’t even have testimony service, much less witness to the community; incorporating progressive elements such as dance & drama in a church that doesn’t even understand *why* we raise our hands; starting “special nights of worship” in a church that still considers Praise & Worship nothing more than the warm-up act for the speaker; and much, much more!

Sometimes, we need to help the congregation progress and move forward. God calls, appoints, and anoints us specifically for this according to His plans. In those instances, we need to be wise and start where they are and then lead them where GOD wants them to go. We must also be aware that, sometimes, God has kept or allowed a church to be the way they are for a purpose. (Maybe the people they reach can’t/won’t be reached by any other church?) God is not as concerned with styles, trends, popularity, and methodology as we humans are. He is more concerned about the human beings that are in the church and their relationship with Him.

2. Climbing the mountain of God – example (see transparencies)

- Important point** – We need to be willing to lay aside our personal preferences and desires and replace them with those of the congregation.

This is the other commonly used analogy. There are no pre-made transparencies. (Maybe someday soon!) I drew a (very) rough picture of a mountain and placed marks at various places going up. I liken Worship Leaders/Musicians to explorers who go up to each level before the rest of congregation. Their task is then to figure out how to get the rest up to where they are. For this example, I refer to those ways (methods/songs) as ladders. Ladders are made out of a variety of materials and styles (i.e. rope, chain, wood, steel, aluminum, fiberglass, etc.). Songs/methods are similarly different in style, make-up, and texture (or feel).

Some people feel comfortable using ladders made out anything that will hold them long enough to get where they are going. Others will use metal or wood ladders, but find rope and chain ladders unstable and scary. Others are “old fashioned” and they will only use wood. Others only use what their parents or grandparents used, regardless of how they feel about the other types. Some will use steel, but find aluminum and fiberglass to shaky and possibly dangerous. The comparisons can go on and on. You can even point out that different materials and types of ladders were created at different times throughout history. Sometimes people’s preference for one type or material is based on what has existed and been used for the majority of time they have been alive. I think you get the point by now.

The job of the Worship Leader/Musician is to choose the types and styles of ladders that their group feels most comfortable using and offer them to the group. Now, while you probably won't be able to provide something to suit everyone's "first choice" every time (or service), you should be able to find a common ground or choice that the majority is willing to live with. A good leader will want to also try to incorporate some of the choices of the minority 1) to make them feel just as important 2) to keep from having to leave people behind or loose them to another Leader that offers their preferred (and sometimes only) choice. You must realize that you can't always include or please every one (including yourself) and that sometimes the choices you make will result in some being left behind or leaving to find another route/way. Don't get caught up in the business concept of calling this "an acceptable loss." As Christians and spiritual family members of the people, we must strive to, as the military says, "Leave no man behind!" This is why it is important for us not to make these choices on our own, but rather, seek the leading of the Holy Spirit who will show us the will of the Father. If someone is to be left behind or to leave, it should be His decision, not ours. He is the leader of our expedition and He calls the shots. Besides that, He has already been where we are going. In fact, He is already there! By seeking Him for guidance and allowing Him to call the shots, we can ensure the safest, easiest, and most rewarding journey we can possibly have!

Practical Application example: You may be a traditionalist and only use old choir hymns and music (rope ladder), but your church may prefer southern/black gospel (wood ladder). Some may not even be capable of climbing using your rope ladder, while others may just simply refuse to use anything other than their old trusty wood ladders. Some will be open to using metal (inspirational/modern worship) or fiberglass (contemporary/progressive) or basically anything you offer, but these folks are either the "dedicated few" or the other leaders (including your staff). You have to decide how to "blend" these ladders into each service so everyone can get where they need to go (and where God wants them). You might tailor the majority of songs (ladders) to the wood crew and offer 1 rope and 1 metal chorus for the rest. Often, the best way to hit everyone's needs is to try to take songs from one style and re-arrange them to fit the prevalent style or "voice" of your congregation. This can be as simple as changing the beat to adding different instruments than those played originally. *For the "newbie", this is called "updating" or tailoring a song to fit.*

Practical Note for Worship Pastors: If you find yourself in a situation where you are constantly at odds with your congregation or audience, it may be time to step back and evaluate if you've missed the will of God. Many times people assume that, because God gifted them in a certain way, they must be called to be leaders. Not necessarily so my friend. Even if God called you, do you have the anointing necessary to do the task you have chosen? Did God appoint you to your current position of authority or did you choose it on your own? I believe that whenever God calls you, He anoints you and will, if we'll wait on His command, appoint you to the place(s) of service He has for you. By the way, just because God called you, it doesn't mean he called your personal preferences or musical tastes. You may have to keep those "personal" and not take them into your public ministry! What God uses to bless you personally may not be what He wants to use you in to bless others. Then again, maybe He does? It is vitally important that anyone in public ministry seeks out the will of the Father and does what He asks. In other words, "Do your job!" Servants do the work required of them by their Master. If you are your own Master, then you have no business in public ministry!

Please understand, I'm not saying that God won't let you do what you like. More often than not, He does just that. However, if doing what you like is not what the people need, don't blame God, the Pastor, or the people if you are ineffective at your job! Often times, people will jump on ANY opportunity that comes along and assume it MUST be from God. Then, when things go wrong, they shift the blame. If you've made a mistake, be man or woman enough to admit it, do what you can to help your

church find a replacement and make the transition, and then get out and find where God wants to appoint you!

If you simply don't like where God has placed you or the changes He or the church is requiring, don't bail. Remember that God may not have sent you to change that church. He may have sent you there for the church to change you! You may need to broaden your horizons, learn submission, or have your pride dealt with so you'll be ready to do the things you like and want latter on! Stay in touch with God and shut up and listen every once and a while after you ask Him something! You'll be surprised at how often He is actually answering but you are drowning Him out or talking over Him.

3. Your Spiritual image is extremely important. Seeing is believing!!

- What people see you do, or how you act, will determine who they believe you to be and whether or not they trust you!!!

This will preach on its own. Just take a minute to meditate or think on the scriptures below and apply this truth to your life and ministry.

Romans 14: 16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of: **17** for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Philippians 2: 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: **15** *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

Mark 12: 28-34 **28** And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? **29** And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: **30** *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.* **31** And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. **32** And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: **33** And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. **34** And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

C. Participation

- This should be a given. As we pray, study, and worship privately, it will naturally expand out to our public lives as well. It is a natural by-product of the other two steps.
- While participation is encouraged and totally appropriate, we should take care not to lose focus of our role as leaders.

Remember: “It’s NOT our time to get our thing from our God. It’s theirs!!”

The Lord taught me this principle almost 10 years ago. It literally revolutionized my ministry and its effectiveness overnight! If we have taken care to prepare ourselves for the journey and have gone there before to find the path and the reward, we won't need to worry about having to get “our blessing” each time we are in service. We will already have ours! This

puts us in a position similar to Pastors and other leaders. When we hit the stage, it should be all about the congregation/audience. That is our purpose for being in the positions or places we are – to help others! At the moment we hit the stage, we cease to be the “receivers” and become “servers”. We need to give of what God has given us. Just like any other ministry Gift, it is given to benefit the rest of the body as well. The word minister (in the verb sense) means to accommodate, attend, sever, cater to, or tend. Jesus said it best as, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:16,17) When we minister, it is the “sheep’s” turn to get fed. We should already be fed and ready to share what God has given to us!

Too many times I have seen very anointed and effective ministers loose that effectiveness when they get caught up in getting their own needs or desires met instead of the congregation’s.

Example: A friend of mine used to sing, with all her heart, until she began to feel the power of God herself. Suddenly, she would stop singing, pull her mic away and start worshiping or “get her blessing”. This was great for her, but, instead of enjoying the moment and continuing on with the song afterward, she would just stop altogether and go off in her own little world. This would usually happen right before, and sometimes during, the point or message in the song she was blessed by the most and actually wanted to convey to the people. Unfortunately, unless they already knew the song, the people never got that message. She kept her blessing for herself without even meaning to.

Until I talked to her, she hadn’t even given it a thought. I told her, something like, the next time she felt that power coming over her, she should - instead of closing her eyes, pulling the mic away and lifting her hands - look at the audience, pull the mic closer, and, if necessary, point or reach her hand out to the audience and let the power flow through her to them! Above all, keep singing. If she couldn’t (or more likely didn’t want to), go ahead, have her “moment” and as soon as she was able, keep singing. **People can’t receive a message they never hear!**

She kind of looked at me like I was nuts and obviously didn’t understand how things were done in our church. However, she agreed to think on it. The next time she sang the same song, she followed my suggestions and released the blessing onto the congregation. The result was immediate and powerful. Suddenly, instead of the people rejoicing with her while she got her blessing or mentally moving on to the next thing, she watched and rejoiced as they were blessed as well!! She still felt the power of God and was blessed herself, but she was even more blessed when she saw the people grab hold of that same truth that had blessed her! She became a true *music minister* at that moment and was hooked to this very day!

III. Closing

A. Why is this important to us now?

Most ministers, ministries, and churches will have to answer this for themselves. Many find themselves at a crossroad trying to decide which way to go to get to where God is leading them. For some, it may mean changing leadership, methods, or attitudes. For others, they need to “stay the course”, reinforce their methodology, and unite the congregation in purpose and plans. Still others have combinations of the above and other decisions to make that most of us could never understand.

I believe that if, as Worship leaders, we apply the principles of the 3 P’s and tune in to the will of the Father through His Word and Holy Spirit, we will be prepared to faces those decisions head on and be ready and able to fulfill any and all roles God gives us to play. If we put ourselves second to the needs of our congregations/audiences and seek the will of the Father, we will find that we will be more effective in our endeavors and come into an unity with the other leaders God associates us with.

If you have any questions or comments about this month's teaching, you may feel free to contact me via email (shannerowe@freshrainonline.com), by phone at (317) 462-3634, or by postal mail: Rev. Shane Rowe, 1555 E. Main Street, Greenfield, IN, 46140.

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