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## DEFINING THE VISION

Worship... our wholehearted, captivated response, whatever outward form it takes, to God's infinite perfections. Countless saints have offered their definitions of this manifold concept down the ages. At once complex and simple, here are a few inspiring thoughts on worship:

*worship*, what we give our worth, time, songs and heart to (to ascribe worth)  
 Προσκυνεω (Greek verb "proskuneo" meaning "worship"), to draw near and kiss the hand of

"True worship is to be so personally and hopelessly in love with God, that the idea of a transfer of affection never even remotely exists." (*A.W.Tozer, Whatever Happened to Worship?*)

"Worship is the total response of each individual to the call of God." (*A.C.Lovelace, Music and Worship in the Church*)

"There is a sense in which we may think of the whole life of the universe, seen and unseen, conscious and unconscious, as an act of worship, glorifying its Origin, Sustainer, and End." (*E.Underhill, Worship*)

"Authentic worship begins with exalting God, but is not complete until it issues into the action of reaching people." (*G.Hardin & M.Thielen, Authentic Worship*)

"Worship is the dramatic celebration of God in his supreme worth in such a manner that his 'worthiness' becomes the norm and inspiration of human living." (*R.Martin, The Worship of God*)

There are also countless passages and verses in scripture that speak of, or *are*, worship...

**Luke 7:37-47**... Worship is extravagant because it arises from a knowledge or remembrance of just how great the debts Jesus cancelled for us are, and his costly generosity in so doing. What can we bring that is costly?

**John 4:23-24**... True worship isn't about the music or the band. Music is a wonderful expression of worship, but not its essence. "Worshipping in the spirit is the opposite of worshipping in merely external ways... Worshipping in truth is the opposite of worship based on an inadequate view of God. Worship must have heart and head. Worship must engage emotions and thought." (*Piper, Desiring God*)

**Colossians 3:16**... worship is Christ-centred as it reflects thoroughly on God's Word

**1 Chronicles 16:28-29**... he *is* worthy! Verse 29 also shows worship as a corporate act.

**Luke 10:38-42**... this picture of Mary and Martha challenges us to choose the "better thing" (sitting at the feet of our Lord in attentive adoration) above all else.

**Gen. 8:20-22; 22:2, 11-12 and Romans 12:1-2**... these speak of worship involving sacrifice

**Acts 16:25**... worship isn't just for the "good times" in life, but also a means of drawing comfort and strength for the hard times and battles we face. Who knows how God can use it in the lives of those who happen to overhear?

**Ps. 100**... an actual expression of worship, as well as being descriptive of and an invitation to it.

Different outward expressions of worship: feasting (**Ps. 22:29**), joyful songs (**Ps. 100:2**), sacrifices and offerings (**Is. 19:21**), walking and jumping and dancing (**2 Sam. 6:16**... also from this, note that worship may not be culturally acceptable).

Do contemplate and study these... and go in search of more – get hungry to learn about worship!

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## LEADING SUNG WORSHIP

Defining worship is perhaps one of the most attempted tasks by many writers for many years, and yet, a definitive definition remains somewhat elusive! It seems that the more recent concern is that, in our culture, 'worship' is beginning to be tied down and understood to mean 'the singing of praise songs' which is, of course, a narrow and unhelpful perception to entertain. So, the emphasis in Christian circles at the minute is upon the idea of worship being expressed in service and lifestyle; a much more holistic view of the concept. This is all very well, and most definitely worth further consideration and study, but giving a broader picture of what worship really is does not negate the fact that using music and song to express praise is still very much a valid medium for worship. So, how does that impact those of us who are involved in leading *sung* worship...?!

Firstly, and in light of what we have just said about current trends, it is essential that in leading sung worship in CU (or wherever for that matter), we are aware that our 'time slot' is part of the much, much bigger picture of our worship of God. By keeping that in perspective, we not only encourage humility in our own hearts, but we also model a more helpful example of a lifestyle that is characterised by devotion to God.

While it is important to learn from others and be familiar with their general definitions of what worship is, leaders of sung worship also need to seek better understanding of how they can responsibly use their gifts and their music to encourage people to engage with the wider perspective of what it is to worship God.

Bearing this in mind...

### What is 'sung worship' not?

Music is a powerful, emotive medium – something which advertisers have long ago caught on to (how often do the jingles like those for Sheila's Wheels or CocoPops get annoyingly lodged in your brain...?!) – and can often become the focus of a main meeting. Sometimes we even measure the success of an evening's programme by how well the music 'worked' or how good the songs made us feel. However, music, or the feeling we get when we sing, is not an indication that we have entered into the presence of God. In *True Worship*, Vaughan Roberts says: "if that were possible, God would have sent a musician, not a Saviour"! **It is not through singing that we enter the presence of God, but through the once for all sacrifice of our great high priest, Christ.** Through the redemptive work of Jesus, God, in his grace, is always present with his children by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." Heb 10 v 19-22a

"For through [Jesus] we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access in one Spirit to the Father... In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."  
(Eph 2:18-22)

# BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF SINGING AS WORSHIP

## Old Testament

1 In the Tabernacle, there were leaders actually set apart to play and sing in worship to God:

1Chronicles 9v33: *"Those who were musicians, heads of the Levite families, stayed in the rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties because they were responsible for the work day and night."*

2 There are also countless Psalms which call us to sing in praise to God. Many of these include musical directions.

## New Testament

The New Testament does not include directions for how to structure worship services, but there are examples of people singing their worship to God.

3 Jesus and His disciples sang together:

Matt 26v30 (after the Last Supper) *"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."*

4 Paul encourages it:

Eph 5 v 19 *"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord..."*

5 The book of Revelation indicates that all of heaven sings their praise to God.

## WHY did they sing?

-1- Remembrance – Aural tradition, no written scriptures, teaching was passed down through generations.

-2- Reflection - ie teaching and warning – Moses given a song to teach the Israelites before they enter the promised land:

Deut 31v19 *"Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and make them sing it that it might be a witness for me against them..."*

-2- Response - General outburst of praise and thanksgiving e.g. after crossing the Red Sea (Ex15 1-18),

## What do we gain?

Looking at 1Chron 16 v 7-36...

### -3- We can remember who God is and what He has done

- o God is WORTHY: v 25-29: *"For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise... Splendour and majesty are before Him... ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name..."*
- o REMEMBER: v12: *"Remember the wonders He has done..."*

### -4- We can reflect on our own unworthiness compared to God's holiness

- o If our songs are always 'me-centric', we can miss out on an accurate picture of God, therefore leaving space for us to hide from the sinfulness in our own hearts.

### -5- We can respond with an offering of praise which stirs us to conform our lives to His standard.

- o THANKS: v8: *"Give thanks to the Lord..."*

- o RESPONSE: v29: *"...Bring an offering and come before Him..."*

- o TESTIFY: v8: *"...make known among the nations what He has done."*

- o ASK: v35: *"Cry out, 'Save us O God our Saviour; gather and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to Your holy name, that we may glory in Your praise."*

## WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

### **How do we move from singing 'a wee song' to the place where we 'worship in spirit and truth'?**

True worship always comes in response to a revelation from God:

- o Gen 8 v 20 – Noah's response to God's deliverance from the flood
- o Exo 4 v 29-31 – Israelite response to God's promise of help.
- o Dan 3 v 28 – Nebuchadnezzar's response to God's intervention for Daniel's friends in the furnace.
- o Isa 6 v 3 – seraphim who behold God's glory cry 'Holy, holy, holy...'
- o Matt 9 v 6-8 – in response to seeing Jesus heal the paralytic.
- o Matt 14 v 33 – when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water they began to worship him.
- o Heb 12 v 18ff – seeing God's holiness the proper response is to worship with reverence and awe.

It is therefore essential that we as leaders spend time asking God to give us fresh vision and realisation of who he is and what he has done. We recognise that the work here is firmly on God's initiative; however, God graciously chooses to use us in his work and therefore we need to be well-prepared.

## **The role of community in worship**

There is often a sense of frustration expressed when people are distracted from what they're singing by what others around them are doing. Whilst this is an important concern in terms of the need to engage the mind in the truths of God (and not the fact that the person next to you is chatting on their mobile phone!), it is, perhaps, more important to remember that our personal relationship with God is always played out in the context of community. To seek to block out those around us in worship somehow diminishes the corporate in corporate worship...!

The Bible is the account of God's dealings with his people throughout history and much of the New Testament speaks about the importance of unity among believers. It should follow then that one of the things we should be seeking when we meet together is a sense of that bigger picture of unity as the Body of Christ.

- 1 In what practical ways can a CU meeting help people understand and make the most of being a community of believers?**
- 2 How can leaders of sung worship in particular facilitate this?**

Leading sung worship provides the opportunity to teach people about God and about worship by the way in which you direct people's thoughts and in the way you help to weave the different parts of the main meeting together. It can't all be done at once, it takes patience and wisdom. It isn't always best accomplished by stating explicitly your every thought and opinion about the songs you've chosen and why, but above all, seek to love and serve people by helping them engage with God and his character and the Holy Spirit will do his part.

The role of a praise co-ordinator or worship team will of course look slightly different in each CU community due to differing sizes, structures etc. But here's one way you might consider viewing your role:

### **A worship leader is uniquely placed to teach people...**

#### **...about worship**

How do you think the majority of your CU understand worship? Sadly many people still think that worship is just singing songs. The words don't mean anything to them, they don't let it connect with their lives, and don't even think about *why* we worship, what motivates us to express such delight, awe and wonder. You could say they've lost sight of the object of our worship, the person it's about. So worship leaders are key in reminding people what worship is, why we do it, who it's about, teaching them about *true* worship. Try...

- 1 Using Bible passages or quotations to explore and explain worship.*  
You could do this from the front during a main meeting, via small groups/prayer meetings, or even by handing out little slips of paper with a quotation on as people come in. If you're going to give any explanation from the front, keep it short and bite-sized (not boring and long-winded)!
- 2 Lobby the committee to include teaching on worship in small groups/main meetings.*

3 *Give input gradually and patiently.*

Drip feed the CU teaching on worship, don't try to tell them everything all at once – you'd be there forever! Also bear in mind that it may take a little while for people to grasp the concepts you're trying to put across.

**...through worship**

Which part of a CU meeting do you remember most readily: the talk or the songs? Because songs are more easily remembered than talks worship leaders are amongst the most influential theologians in a Christian fellowship. The songs we sing teach people about God and about living for him; worship times can be used both to prepare people for the talk and to help them respond to what they've heard (perhaps by choosing songs with lyrics linking into the theme of the talk). So...

- 1 *Choose the songs wisely.*
- 2 *Use the songs to help the CU prepare for the Word.*
- 3 *Use the songs to help the CU respond to the Word.*

**...to worship**

How did *you* learn to worship? This is about showing others the way and giving them the best opportunity you can...

*Lead the way.*

It's all too easy for musicians to get caught up in the musical side of things, but whilst doing our best in this way we need to make sure we are also throwing ourselves into worship.

## CREATIVITY IN CONTEXT

### *Take others with you.*

As well as worshipping personally, we need to be aware of how the rest of our group are getting on so that we're not leaving them behind but can guide them forward sensitively and appropriately. A model you might find helpful is: *invitation, engagement, exaltation, adoration, intimacy, close*. This is a way of structuring a longer worship time (even a whole meeting – not all the parts have to be sung) that is sensitive to the way people function. It's hard to come in after a long and busy day and be expected to meaningfully get straight into a love song to Jesus that should be sung with deep intimacy. Likewise if we're going through tougher times we may not immediately feel like exalting or adoring all God's wonders. By starting with an "invitation" phase, we accept people where they are and call them to worship – this helps people to focus. The "engagement" part is where people begin to draw near to God and address him in their worship; moving into "exaltation" is about declaring God's greatness powerfully. This naturally leads into a more reflective and unhurried "adoration" of all that you've just been exalting, which finally takes you into the most personal stage of all, "intimacy". The last part, "close", is to help people adjust to whatever they go on to next – the rest of the meeting, or out of the meeting to the rest of their day. So that's about being sensitive to and respecting the way human beings function on a psychological level. You may also (especially given the interdenominational nature of CUs) need to consider how to be sensitive to and respectful of where people are coming from stylistically. It's a sad truth that people do get hung up on style issues in musical worship so do think about how you can incorporate different styles or how you can explain different ways of doing worship to help those who are less familiar or comfortable with it to participate.

### *Aim for technical excellence.*

PA problems, faltering musicians and an unclear leader all discourage and disrupt the people's worship. So: give clear direction (tell people whether to sit or stand; musically ensure that the CU's vocal line is prominent and easy to follow), do a sound check every time, practice the music (make sure songs are a good pitch/speed, bridges are smooth, and be musically interesting/creative).

God's people have always been called to love him with all heart, soul, mind and strength. By consciously leading in a way which declares truth about God and what he has done, we cultivate an engagement of the MIND in worship. Being sensitive to the people present and seeking to lead in a way which promotes grace and freedom cultivates a 'safe place' which engages EMOTION in worship.

1Cor 14v15: "...I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind"

Ephesians 3 v 10 explains that God's desire is that: "through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." In Greek, the word translated here as 'manifold', contains the idea of 'much varied' and was often used in talking about a picture or a tapestry which contained many different colours. God's wisdom is 'much varied' and is thus displayed in the vast variety of people he has created; a variety of people that is present within every Christian gathering. It follows, then that we should seek to be creative in the ways in which we seek to lead and engage people in worship.

Creativity is not just expressed in music and visual art, and is not characterised only by the weird and wacky; rather it is the ability to use the imagination to develop new and original ideas. Be resourceful by using the different gifts of individuals in CU: perhaps drama, digital imaging or video editing. Be inventive by writing songs, poems or corporate prayers which reflect what your CU is studying or experiencing together. Be ingenious by making the most of the physical space where your meetings take place. Be inspired by things you're learning in class...! Keep a notebook handy where you can jot down thoughts and ideas which have inspired you and may be adaptable to share in corporate worship.

Be careful to be wise though: a whole evening packed with all of the above may cause severe creativity overload – for you in preparation and for those in CU having to take it all in! Remember: **the aim is to engage, not to entertain!** Being well-prepared and well-practiced (in what we say and do as much as in what we play) encourages an atmosphere which is free from distraction, allowing people to engage fully with what is going on in the meeting as a whole.

Always make choices about how you lead with the context firmly in mind, carefully considering: the purpose of the CU, the character of *your* CU and the particular CU meeting you are leading.

In summary: seek to serve **God** in your *praise* – it's all about him, not us (no matter how much we're up front) or the music... and to serve **people** in the *practicalities* – you're there to help them learn to worship, so put their needs above your own interests.

# CREATIVITY IN CONTEXT

Having recognised that our time slot is part of the bigger picture of worship as a whole, it is important to remember that the engagement and response to revelation which we have been considering is more than a twenty minute process. Therefore it is good to have an understanding of the part sung worship plays within our own unique context.

## 1 The purpose of the CU and its main meetings

The CU exists primarily as a missional community: students seeking to live lives that reflect Jesus to their fellow students. As one of the more 'visible' leaders in a CU main meeting, you may want to think about how the way you lead worship can model that purpose.

Some interesting reading...

- o <http://www.christpresnewhaven.org/documents/evangelisticworship.pdf>
- o [http://www.theresurgence.com/tim\\_smith\\_2004\\_missional\\_worship](http://www.theresurgence.com/tim_smith_2004_missional_worship)

## 2 Your CU

The character of each CU is unique; how does the way you lead worship reflect the character of the group you are leading? Things you may want to consider...

- Students – what do they study? Mainly arts? Science? Technology? The way people think and engage is closely linked with their choice of subject.
- Numbers – 5? 25? 105? The number of people in your group will change the way people engage; people may feel too exposed to sing in smaller groups, larger groups may lack the intimacy for group prayer.
- Time & location – lunchtime, teatime, evening meetings? Are people tired, hungry...? Tiered lecture theatre, chaplaincy room, conference room? Is the atmosphere comfortable, formal? Is the room cold, hot, cramped, empty?
- Other demographics – People from Catholic background, Presbyterian background, charismatic background? Non-Christians, new Christians? Country/small town or city CU?

Knowing your own context well will help you to lead worship in a way that is tailored to your own group and what 'works' for them. Leading is not an exercise in people-pleasing; worship is **all about God** but your role is to serve people in the practicalities, to help them learn to worship, so put their needs above your own interests!

## 3 "This" CU meeting

The more frequent task is to think about the context of the particular meeting you will be participating in. The more coherence there is throughout the whole of a CU meeting, the more people will be able to engage with, respond to and learn from what goes on. For your consideration...

- Topic of teaching – choosing songs which compliment the topic is a really great way to encourage people to engage with God's truth. Speak to whoever prepares the briefs for the speakers (usually the secretary) and request a copy of what was sent to the speaker. Or better still, get in touch with the speaker – they may have songs in mind.
- What is happening? – Its helpful to be aware of what's going on not only in the CU calendar, but also having an awareness of local, national and international events. It is a good way to encourage CU members to en-

# PRACTICALITIES OF LEADING

- Who is here? - Have the CU just run a missions week? Will there be visitors to CU who maybe aren't Christians?
- Time of year – Start of a new semester, mid-semester deadlines, exams looming... Christmas, Lent, special occasions eg Fair Trade Fortnight, World AIDS day etc

## Practicalities of leading

### Band/musicians

- 1 **Practice!** The more you play together, the easier it becomes.
- 2 **Don't feel you have to 'give everyone a go'** – people will have other opportunities to try. If you are letting someone new have a go at playing or leading, invite them to a few practices first to see how they do. Make sure to resource them well by putting them with someone who has more experience. This always requires much discernment, sensitivity and wisdom.
- 3 **Practice!** Even if its just for a couple of hours every other week.
- 4 **Talk to your musicians** – share your heart for worship and your vision for the CU meetings, whether its about the big picture, or just about the meeting you are about to take part in.
- 5 **Practice!** Be relaxed but firm – it is fun to play together and it is a good way to enjoy fellowship and get to know each other, but never let banter get in the way of productivity. Be clear about what you have to practice and what time you aim to finish by. Equally, if you are not leading the practice, be sensitive and respectful of the one leading: don't strum/drum/tinkle the keys whilst they are trying to explain the plan for the song – repeating instructions twice for every band member present is frustrating and time consuming. Love each other well.
- 6 **Pray** – acknowledging that any gifts come from God and depend on him.

### Picking songs

- 1 **Keep it legal** – invest in a Copyright License (ask your SU if you are covered by their's), God will honour your integrity.
- 2 **Keep a file of music** with several copies of each song – this will save a lot of time spent frantically photocopying every week.
- 3 **Build up a good selection of power point files for song words**, or for smaller CU's consider investing in song books. A5 ring binders are a good way to be able to add the words of new songs to your repertoire.
- 4 **Keep it fresh!** Try not to over-use songs (or very similar songs) – don't fall into the trap of thinking that only brand new songs or very old hymns are any good – there were many great songs written in 80s and 90s too.
- 5 **Key** – a lot of popular recent songs are written in very high keys. This often makes them difficult to sing for people with lower registers or those who lack confidence in their singing voice. An awareness of this is crucial if you want to serve people well. In general the highest note most people will make is D above high C or an E at a push and the lowest an A below middle C. It is best if these notes only occur once or twice per line rather than the majority of the song being based around these notes. Don't go too far and stick slavishly to songs that never go above high C or

## PRACTICALITIES OF LEADING

- 6 **Content** – This is, of course, a major way in which to help people engage with truth and with the context of the CU meeting. It may be helpful to create your own list of songs according to subject matter, Bible reference or 'type' of song (eg revelatory/reflective/responsive). Be aware of creating a good balance between 'wordy' songs eg 'In Christ Alone' and more reflective/responsive ones eg 'We bow down'.
- 7 **Repetition** of verses, choruses or lines can be a helpful part of sung worship. However, where possible make the decisions before the meeting and include them on the powerpoint/song sheet. We cannot limit the movement of the Spirit in things like this, but we must employ wisdom and sensitivity in order to help rather than distract: it is easy to make bad decisions about how and when to repeat things when we're enjoying the music.

### Using other resources

- 1 **Scripture** – what better way to help people engage with God than reading some verses from his word? Don't read it out like a boring article, be expressive! Let people read the passage in pairs and discuss it; put it on the screen while you play through a verse of a song; get different people standing in different parts of the room to read it out... Be creative!
- 2 **Liturgy** – a helpful way to encourage people to focus their thoughts on God. It also provides a physical response which helps people ready themselves to encounter God. Invest in a book of Celtic prayer, use Scripture, use liturgical books from churches (eg Church of Ireland), write your own... Be creative!
- 3 **Prayer** – corporate, personal, group prayer... ask God to make his presence tangible. Remember that if you are leading others in prayer it may be helpful to think carefully about what you will pray, but again we cannot and should not limit the Spirit in this area.
- 4 **Pictures/Video** – tap into our 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture: use images to help people concentrate on the characteristics of God, the work of Christ, the call to worship... ([www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu) has some incredible digital images – you need an account but it is free of charge)
- 5 **Solo/Instrumental** – giving people time and space to think and pray is important and music can help to concentrate the thoughts.

## Heart Issues

There is a lot to think about in leading worship and we need much wisdom and grace to do it well. The desire to serve well is fraught with lots of issues arising from our sinful nature, but we are always secure in the knowledge that it is God who is at work in us and through us by his grace.

### **Excellence v self**

#### **Excellence**

*'Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play **skilfully**, and shout for joy.'* Psalm 33v1-3

The psalmist tells us that we are to be skilful in our service to God. All through the OT we see worship through music that is extravagant in every manner (see 2 Samuel 6 and 2 Chronicles 5 in particular).

God deserves our very best because of who He is, and 'to give God anything but our best would be demeaning...we are to offer Him our finest, at whatever stage our finest is'. When we come to worship our Almighty God through music and song, let us remember who we come to worship, and so bring excellence, and also with that bring reverence.

In striving to bring excellence for the glory of God's name, it seems that often we find ourselves battling against our sinful 'self'. Those problems of pride ('look at me, how great am I, I'm so talented' kind of attitude), selfish ambition and self seeking, and at times we can be at the other end of the scale battling with feelings of uselessness and our inability to bring anything of worth to God and to the body of the church.

#### **Pride and selfish ambition**

In our leading of sung worship there is a huge temptation for everyone to care so much more about the 'fame' of our gift rather than the fame of our awesome God. Worship is about bringing praise and glory to God alone- who alone is worthy, and it's about 'building the Kingdom of God not our personal ambitions'. That means dying to self everyday and having humility. Unfortunately humility is something which does not come naturally to us. It comes through knowing more and more our Lord Jesus Christ and as we grow closer to Him and see who He is more and more, we can only be but humbled and say with the psalmist, *'Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.'* Psalm 115v1

In Philippians 2v 5-11 we see the supreme example of humility. Jesus, God the Son 'made himself nothing' for our sake and became a servant - that is humility. Jesus Christ did not come to seek the praise of men or to be served, which was what He deserved and rightfully could have demanded. Jesus came to serve and to give his life so that our relationship with the Father could be restored, and to do that he made himself nothing...nothing. True humility is saying 'let me serve you, let me use my gift to show you, not how great I am, but to show you how loved you are by Christ.' We are building the Kingdom of God, not a fan club for ourselves! Jesus the Lord of the universe did not care about popularity, he cared about people coming home to the Father and finding rest, hope and salvation in him.

Humility, if we are asking God for it, will also mean discipline, which will be hard and will hurt our 'egos'. Remember God does it for our benefit, so his glory can be revealed and so

## Heart Issues

### Feeling unable and inadequate

For those who feel they have been called to something they feel totally unable and not good enough for, look at 1 Corinthians 1v26-31. In it we learn that God uses the weak, it's a testimony of his amazing grace.

Whatever we do sincerely in the name of Jesus for His sake, though it doesn't seem great in the eyes of others, it brings honour to God and God will bless it. (see Mark 9v41, 10v29&30 for examples) God uses those whose hearts are for Him. All the disciples had to offer Jesus were five loaves and two fish, not much in human eyes, but Jesus blessed it and gave thanks for it and fed five thousand people. God does great things with the smallest offering we give him from a sincere heart.

It is also important to remember that how God uses us also does not depend on anyone else's opinion of our abilities. God uses the weak, those who do not seem 'that great' by human standards- that's God's grace. A clay pot with many holes and many cracks seems useless and unbeautiful in the eyes of men, but when light shines through it from inside it becomes strangely beautiful and attracts much attention, but only because there are so many cracks and holes, only because it is so imperfect does the light shine all the more clearly and so brightly. So it is with us when God shines within us, our weaknesses allow God's beauty and glory to be seen all the more clearly.

### Preparing your heart before God

**Repent-** of pride and self, seeking God's forgiveness for any wrong attitudes and asking for help to do it all for Him and to not do it for self, asking him to make you humble before him.

**Remember-** who you are and who God is; He is holy, loving, faithful, gracious, good, Lord and King, worthy alone of all praise. He has chosen to use you in his grace and because of that alone. Remember it's all about Jesus, we are here for his glory alone (Romans 11v36). Remembering who God is and praising him for it will lead to humility and will lead to strength to bring him glory, wherever your talent is at. Remember whether it's pride or whether it's feelings of being unable, *'we are not competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.'* 2 Corinthians 3v5

**Rest-** in God's grace. God's grace enables him to forgive, and to work despite our weaknesses, our inadequacies and our shortcomings. His grace helps us to deal with being humbled and when our pride gets hurt and we are so worried about what people think about us- God's grace helps us to stand and remember that despite our failings or what people might think about us, God chooses to use us and work through us. He forgives us when we are so full of self and when we 'muck up'. His grace covers all our weaknesses. God wants to use us even though he doesn't have to, and he will accomplish his purposes through us no matter what people may or may not think about us, that's grace. His grace loves us just as we are, nothing can make him love us less or more, it helps us as we are, and where we are. It restores us and lifts us. We don't deserve anything but because of his grace we come.

# Resources

## BOOKS

There are hundreds of books on this topic! Here are a few to scratch the surface with...

*True Worship* Vaughan Roberts; Authentic Media, 2002

*And now let's move into a time of nonsense: Why Worship Songs are Failing The Church* Nick Page; Authentic Media, 2004.

*Sing a New Song: Choosing and leading praise in today's church* David Montgomery; Rutherford House, 2000.

*The New Worship (Expanded Edition)*, Barry Liesch (Baker Books, 2001)

*Extravagant Worship*, Darlene Zschech (Bethany House, 2002)

## ONLINE

Ditto on the websites... Articles, resources and forums galore! Blogs are also an interesting place to discover different threads of thought about praise and worship. Why not even start a discussion on the forum on the IFES Ireland website? ([www.ifesireland.org](http://www.ifesireland.org))

<http://www.ifesireland.org/documents/27>

[www.worshiptogether.com](http://www.worshiptogether.com)

[http://www.hotworship.com/#free\\_mp3](http://www.hotworship.com/#free_mp3) a million and one links to different worship music related websites including free mp3 downloads.

[www.pwarchive.com](http://www.pwarchive.com) Searchable database of over 2800 songs. Key change option. Sometimes the lyrics aren't included for copyright reasons and there are no audio files, but otherwise seems really useful!

[www.ichthus.org.uk/worship/](http://www.ichthus.org.uk/worship/)

[www.grahamkendrick.co.uk](http://www.grahamkendrick.co.uk)

[www.familyworship.org.uk](http://www.familyworship.org.uk)

**Finally, one invaluable resource: your Staff and/or Relay workers will of course be more than happy to help whenever they can!**







