

LifeGroup: Leading Worship In Small Groups

LifeGroup Leader Training

Leading Worship in Small Groups By Dan Smith and Steven Reames

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).

1. **Be Prepared.** Always, always play or sing through the songs in order you plan to sing them before the group meeting. This helps you discover which songs are too high or low to sing in that particular key. It also helps you include or exclude songs if you have no instrumentation. ("Celebrate Jesus Celebrate," for example, has long pauses between lines intended for musical fills. A lack of music and singing during this time can produce awkwardness, rightly or wrongly so.) Other questions to consider: Do you have the proper accompaniment (guitar, piano, CD, cassette, acapella)? Do you know the songs? Do you have song sheets for those who don't know the words? If you are the musician, do you need the music in front of you? Can you lead in the correct key without a musician?
2. **Be Confident.** Never apologize for leading. Speak and sing distinctly. If you make a mistake, make it loud and keep on moving. Always remember that everyone expects the worship leader to lead. If you lead, they will follow. Allowing times of silence without direction can cause people to second guess what is happening; sometimes strong-willed people will interpret this as a lack of leadership and inappropriately try to move things along if they think you are faltering.
3. **Be Sensitive.** Leading worship requires three sets of ears: physical ears to hear how the music is progressing, mental ears to gauge the atmosphere of the group, and spiritual ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying. Be especially sensitive for signals to move or to wait. Never rush worship or let it drag. When choosing songs, listen to the Holy Spirit; don't choose songs just because they're your favorites.
4. **Be Authentic.** Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Don't let the action of leading worship become a distraction from your own worship. People will sense your authenticity or lack thereof. Focus on the Lord as much as possible. This works best when you are prepared.
5. **Be Passionate.** Worship demands wholehearted participation. Become wholly engaged in the worship process as you lead. Choose to do it, think about it, feel it, and express it physically. Give those you are leading permission to do the same. Go with your instincts. Let people know that you care about what is happening. Always provide room for teaching people how to worship. Encourage and teach the physical expressions of worship and what they mean, both from Scripture and example.
6. **Use Scripture.** The book of Psalms is an excellent resource for worship. Start by having somebody read a psalm while the musician plays the first song in the background. Or, at a predesignated time (you'll have to work out a signal or a specific song), have somebody read a Scripture to meditate on between songs. If you are playing an instrument yourself, you can do this if you can play and speak simultaneously.

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7. **Be Positive**. Focus on the character of God (holiness, love, power, etc.). This is not the time to browbeat people into a more authentic faith. Let the Holy Spirit do His own convicting. Choose songs that bring people into close relationship with God. Avoid songs with obscure, distracting, or confusing tunes or lyrics.
8. **Be Brief**. The average attention span of an American is thirteen minutes. Keep worship in small groups short (ten minutes or about four songs). Don't feel obligated to talk between each song. Remember that when you are talking they are not worshiping. A worship leader is an usher in the throne room of God. Your job is to bring people into His presence and then get out of the way.
9. **Practice Continuity**. Worship should flow as seamlessly as possible with everything else that is happening. Try to not pause in between songs, but move right into the next one if possible. If it is necessary to provide a list to everybody before you start, go ahead and do that so you don't have to stop and shout out songs numbers. It is almost always best to ease out of worship rather than just abruptly ending it. If you are using an instrument, you should rarely just stop playing cold. Some ideas for segueing worship to the next portion of the meeting: Direct the group to take time to listen to what God is saying. You may use background instrumentation for this. Ask if anyone has had God already reveal something to them. Encourage any other gifts of the Holy Spirit. Have people pray words of exaltation and worship. PUT IT TO WORK: Begin incorporating these principles into your worship preparation this week. Give a copy of this sheet whenever a person is designated to lead worship for the first time.

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