

Worship Leaders Are Not Rock Stars

Instead of performing music, we should be leading worship.

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I am a child of the contemporary church movement. I even came to Christ in a contemporary church.

The contemporary church movement is what I've known in most of my life in ministry. I've planted six churches that were contemporary.

Yet, I never would have guessed, though, that worship music would have its own genre in the Christian music industry.

It seems increasingly evident that Christians and worship leaders have to guard against several temptations in our church worship. Let's briefly address the shifts in worship patterns among churches and warn of a potential danger that we should consider.

Worship leaders carry a huge responsibility because they direct evangelical liturgy.

Worship Leaders Must Be On The Guard

Worship music has become mainstream. Worship songs fill Christian radio stations. These are songs we sing in church, rather than simply songs we passively listen to. As such, this has really elevated the worship leader's role in the church.

Years ago, the worship leader was a minor part of the ministry. Today, the worship leader has as much face time with the congregation as the preaching pastor, and is often as influential in attracting and maintaining members. (I don't like to use those words, but statistically, they are accurate.)

Now, worship leaders record CDs and lead concerts—neither of which is bad. However, with the shifts we've seen of the last few years—which I generally support—one of the dangers is that we can turn church into a passive concert, not a worship service.

I don't say that as an old man shaking my fist, but as a loving observer of worship and worship leadership. As I said in a 3-part series, from a [letter to my worship leaders](#), I am deeply concerned that we don't "perform music," but that we must "lead worship."

So, worship leaders are not rock stars, and worship is not a rock concert.

Worship leaders carry a huge responsibility because they direct our gathered worship—not just make and lead the music.

The Purpose Of Worship Leaders

Our church in the Nashville area sings a few songs, we have a quick welcome in the middle, people shake hands, and then we have the sermon. In that way, our church looks a lot like the Bible church that I preached at in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the Assembly of God church I preached at in Missouri.

Actually, an evangelical liturgy of sorts has spread across the Western world. To quote one parody video, "[You can't stop it. It's coming to a town near you.](#)"

As the video explains, people now expect the worship music to be similar to what they hear on the radio in both style and quality. Put another way, they come on Sunday wanting to hear Chris Tomlin.

However, in some ways, this can be dangerous for the people and the worship leader.

I'm thankful that worship leaders are actively speaking up and warning each other to be careful of the expectation to perform. I'm thankful for our [Grace Church](#) worship leaders who, I think, model leadership without a lot of self-centeredness.

The natural tendency for a young worship leader is to seek to meet the concert-like demands and give the people a great show. Yet, the real role of a worship leader is to lead them to an encourager with a great savior.

Worship leaders are not rock stars. Nor are they the center of attention. Their role is to inspire others to make Jesus the center of attention and the only One who is worthy of our praise and adoration. No matter what style of music we choose, that is always the aim and intent.

[Stephen Miller](#) and I [discuss this very issue on The Exchange](#) and that conversation partly inspired this post. You can also read his [article](#) and [book](#) on the topic. Also, I wrote a similar article about [pastors as rock stars](#).