

Church Planting Institute
Creating A Spiritual Atmosphere



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Creating a Spiritual Atmosphere

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The author of this article, was for ten years the Director of Praise and Worship at the Christian Celebration during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, Israel. This annual event often attracts crowds in excess of 10,000 people who are both Christians and Jews.

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**“ True Worship creates
a spiritual atmosphere
in which
miracles can happen!”**



*What might happen if this definition of worship
was embraced by every church?*

*If the primary desire of a congregation was to
come into a place where the presence of God
would produce spiritual miracles,
how different would our church services be?*

What is true Worship?

A classic, biblical definition of worship is found in :-

Deut 6:5

5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (NIV)

It was reiterated and augmented by Jesus in :-

Matt 22:37-40

37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (NKJ)

The addition He made was, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". He reminds us that true worship has two dimensions, perpendicular and horizontal. The true worshipper is to love God with all his heart, soul and strength and love his neighbor as himself.

True worship is declaring and eulogizing the WORTH-SHIP of God. We should do this directly to Him with verbal and physical declarations of our love and esteem. We should also declare His worth to our fellow man by the manner in which we regard, esteem and treat him that he too may begin to glorify God.

Matt 5:16

16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJ)

One objective of Worship is to Glorify God by inviting, experiencing and celebrating His dynamic presence.

Such an experience of God's presence is:-

a. Discerned initially in one's spirit.

God is a spirit. His presence is a spiritual presence. It is recognized initially in one's own spirit, the deepest, most intimate part of one's being. In order to recognize and perceive God's presence we must be spiritually inclined and sensitized.

Jacob was a carnal man by nature. God was at times unable to get through his natural resistance. However, when Jacob fell asleep his natural mind was in neutral and God was able to speak to his spirit through a vivid and remarkable dream. On awakening Jacob realized that God had been in that place all the time but his natural mind had not discerned His presence, nor heard His voice.

Gen 28:16-17

16 *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."*

17 *He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." (NIV)*

b. Experienced in the release of positive emotions

Although experiencing God's presence is not primarily an emotional experience, the profound effect of it is usually conveyed to the emotions. So there is usually an emotional response to a spiritual experience of God's presence. That response may be one of tears, or it may be an emotional elation and joy. Whatever form it may take, it will eventually produce a positive, beneficial result.

Unfortunately many sincere Christians have an almost paranoid fear of emotional expression. As soon as they feel emotional expression arising within they suppress it. This hinders and stifles their ability to enter into and experience the atmosphere of God's presence. They must realize that the spirit and soul are linked almost inextricably together. So intricate is their mutual involvement they are frequently incapable of being untangled. The Bible confirms the close nature of this link

Heb 4:12

12 *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (NIV)*

It often requires the supernatural discernment of the living Word to discern between soul and spirit.

c. Frequently accompanied by physical response

The physical or bodily response may be one of trembling, prostration, falling down. It can be expressed with clapping, raising the hands, dancing, jumping. It is hard to conceive that a person could receive a visitation from God, experience a normal emotional response to it, yet have no physical reaction. Bible characters often had emotional and physical responses to a visitation from God. Such experiences will not be detrimental or harmful. On the contrary they will be therapeutic and beneficial. Whenever the physical response is truly Spirit engendered, it will cause an ultimate good.

Worship is not a formula, it is the continuing, patient development of a love relationship.

It is the keeping of a love tryst in which the chief aim is to further and deepen the mutual love and esteem each of the other. An opportunity to further investigate the charms and appeal of their lover. To exchange words of endearment and mutual appreciation. Worship is the furtherance of a romantic association between a redeemed child of God and his Redeemer. The words of a chorus express the intimacy of such a communion.

When I look into your holiness,
When I gaze into your loveliness,
When all things that surround
Become shadows in the light of you.
When I've found the joy of reaching your heart,
When my will becomes enthralled in your love,
When all things that surround
Become shadows in the light of you:
I worship you, I worship you,
The reason I live, is to worship you.
I worship you, I worship you,
The reason I live, is to worship you.

(Wayne and Cathy Perrin, Copyright, Integrity's Hosanna Music 1980)

Let's look into the Song of Solomon

This delightful story portrays a developing love relationship between a shepherdess and a King. It is a type of the believer and her King, Jesus. From the moment she first sees, she is smitten with love for him. Her love is whole heartedly reciprocated and begins to develop through a series of meetings that are typical of our worship of Christ.

This book gives the dialogue of a king, his wife, and her friends in the king's harem. The man and woman described their love for each other, while the friends praised the woman's beauty and her favored place before the king. The reader hears about the beauty of love from several directions. The particular setting was the harem of King Solomon.

What does this development require?

a. The initial attraction was physical

Initially, both parties extol each other's physical appearance and features. Their verbal interchanges relate almost solely to these.

This is typical of Outer Court Praise which stems largely from our physical beings. We use our natural senses and organs to initiate praise to God. We sing and shout. We raise our hands and clap. We wave to God. We jump and shout, expressing our admiration and love in very physical terms.

b. Overcoming initial sense of unworthiness

Song 1:6

6 Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, Because the sun hath scorched me. My mother's sons were incensed against me; They made me keeper of the vineyards; (But) mine own vineyard have I not kept. (ASV)

The young woman spoke about herself (1:5-6) to Solomon (1:7). Her complexion had been darkened ("dark," 1:5) from working in the hot sun (1:6). The "tents of Kedar" were made of black goat's hair. The family background of the Shulammitte is revealed in the fact that she had two older brothers who forced her to work in their vineyard. As a result, she was unable to care for her own vineyard, a figurative reference to her own physical being. Solomon may have been on a hunting trip when he first encountered the Shulammitte, who evidently mistook him for a shepherd (1:7).

c. The King's constant reassurance

Song 1:5

5 Dark am I, yet lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Kedar, like the tent curtains of Solomon. (NIV)

This verse constitutes an intimate conversation. She protests, "Please don't look too closely at me. I am badly darkened by the sun. My complexion is spoiled."

He responds, “yes, you are dark, but you are also truly lovely.” He did not only see what she was at that moment, he saw what she could become, with the proper treatment and in the right circumstances.

We often feel an initial unworthiness to worship God, but He lovingly reassures us with words of loving confirmation. As the relationship develops and deepens we are gradually able to receive His assurances and to see ourselves as he sees us. He sees us in Christ and to Him we are a thing of beauty.

d. His unashamed love

She initially felt unworthy of His presence and favor, but He was never ashamed of her nor embarrassed to be seen with her. She finally became convinced of this when He took her to a royal banquet and sat her beside Him at the top table, under His royal banner.

Song 2:4

4 *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*
(NKJ)

e. Her desire for privacy with Him

There is also an urgent desire to be alone with the object of one’s affections.

Song 1:4

4 *Take me away with you-- let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. How right they are to adore you!* (NIV)

f. A Sensitive and selfless approach.

The partners take nothing for granted, they woo each other continuously. Each meeting is a new love affair. The approach is gentle, considerate, and unselfish.

Song 1:2

2 *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is better than wine.*
A kiss is the first link in a new bonding relationship between the believer and Christ.

Ps 2:12

12 *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.* (NIV)

g. Meaningful reciprocity (mutual exchange)

Song 2:16

16 *My beloved is mine, and I am his:* (ASV)

Each partner contributes in an activity of reciprocity, each valuing the other more than themselves. It becomes a two way relationship, each giving and taking to and from the

other. With each rendezvous the relationship becomes more reciprocal as each convinces the other of their love with words and deeds.

h. The lover's response

The overtures of the shepherdess soon received a positive response from the object of her love.

Her Beloved declared;

Song 1:9-10

9 *I liken you, my darling, to a mare harnessed to one of the chariots of Pharaoh.*

10 *Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels.*

(NIV)

God guarantees,

Jer 29:13

13 *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

(NKJ)

As we seek for God through worship, He will respond to us. He will manifest His presence. Sometimes this will happen with a quiet drawing near that we sense in our inner man. At other times God will reveal His presence through some manifestation of His Spirit.

i. Mutual fulfillment

The quality of relationship is gauged by the degree of fulfillment that each partner experiences. Such a development increases the awareness of belonging each to the other. A mutual bonding transpires that accentuates each one's relationship to his partner.

Song 2:16-17

16 **My beloved is mine, and I am his:** *he feedeth among the lilies.*

17 *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.* (KJV)

j. Inspires extravagance.

Reciprocated love opens the heart to increased extravagance. The more their relationship develops, the more extravagant she becomes in her praise of her Beloved. The more she desires to give to Him of herself and her life.

Song 5:10-16

10 *My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.*

11 *His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven.*

12 *His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.*

13 *His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.*

14 *His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires.*

15 *His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.*

16 *His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (NIV)*

k. Strengthens relationship.

Each subsequent encounter further strengthens the bonding. The relationship grows by mutual trust and appreciation. The Shulamite and Shepherd pledge their love again as at the first. She pleads for a seal to be set upon their relationship so that not even death can separate them. She wants to love Him eternally.

Song 8:6-7

6 *Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.*

7 *Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. (NIV)*

(v. 6): Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.

Matthew Henry says;

“She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued and made more intimate

(1.) "let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love." This is that which all those desire above any thing that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ.

(2.) "let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communications of it, to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it."

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

*The presence of God
is experienced
when our spirit,
sensitized by the
Holy Spirit,
achieves a
compatibility with
God's Spirit.*

The stairway to heaven

In the realm of the spirit, there is a stairway that ascends into the very presence of God. It is like a ladder, the bottom of which is on earth, the top reaching into God's presence. There is a constant flow of traffic up and down this ladder. The ascending traffic is composed of worshipping saints, progressing step by step toward an encounter with the Lord. The descending traffic is the heavenly messengers sent to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. (Heb 1:14) Many Christians are oblivious of this access route, it is only the true worshippers who learn how to use it to gain entrance into God's glorious presence which is heaven on earth.

An incident in the life of Jacob gives us a glimpse into the usually unseen spiritual realms.

Gen 28:11-22

11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

At the close of a tiring day, as Jacob traveled between Beersheba and Haran, he found a good place to rest for the night. With a stone for his pillow, he slept, and dreamed of a giant stairway that reached from earth to heaven. Angels constantly ascended and descended and at the top of the stairway he saw the Lord.

This is a stairway that exists in the Spirit and we need to be "in the Spirit" to discern it and to climb it. Our natural man can neither see nor ascend it. In fact, the natural man needs to be "put to sleep" that our spiritual senses may take over and open up to us those realms of the Spirit that help us to rise into the very presence of God.

He had a fresh vision of God

13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

After plodding a long lonely road with little awareness of God's immediate presence, Jacob received a fresh, dynamic vision of God whilst he slept. Sometimes our natural senses are so resistant to spiritual realities, that God has to anaesthetize them in sleep and speak to our spirit in a dream.

In the dream God spoke clearly to Jacob and re-affirmed his promise of :-

a. His Person.

I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and of Isaac.

b. His Promise.

"I will give to you the land on which you are lying."

"Your descendants will be as the dust of the earth for number."

"All peoples on earth will be blessed through your descendants."

c. His Presence.

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go."

d. His Provision.

"I will bring you back to the land I have given to you."

Jacob's remarkable realization

16 *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."*

17 *He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; **this is the gate of heaven.**"*

On awakening, Jacob suddenly realized that God's presence had been in that place all the time but initially, he had neither perceived nor recognised it. He had no immediate awareness of the stairway to heaven, and the proximity of God's presence and voice. He suddenly realised that the place of revelation and the Gateway to heaven is much closer than we usually realise. All that it usually takes, to experience this, is a quieting of the natural senses and a fresh sensitizing of our spiritual man. These things can be realised in moments of true worship.

Jacob's memorial

18 *Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.*

19 *He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.*

20 *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear*

21 *so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God*

Jacob's vow

22 *and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." (NIV)*

Preparing the way of the Lord

We must never take for granted the presence of the Lord. We must esteem and value it. We also need to prepare the way for the manifestation of His presence among us.

Exod 19:10-11

10 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.*

11 *"And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. (NKJ)*

Build a highway for the Lord

Ps 50:23

23 *He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way (BUILDS A HIGHWAY) so that I may show him the salvation of God." (NIV)*

David says, "Whoever offers true praise to God, glorifies the Lord and builds a highway by which God can come among us and reveal the fullness of His gracious provisions." (Paraphrase)

Isaiah also speaks of "preparing a highway for the Lord." It is a highway in the wilderness.

God dearly wants to come amongst, and visit his people. But He insists that we prove our desire for Him by preparing a highway for Him in our desert.

Isa 40:3-5

3 *A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.*

What are the materials from which the highway is built?

a. Repentance

The first imperative factor is usually repentance. That repentance may initially be from overt sins of the flesh. If these are a reality among us, they must certainly be repented of, renounced and put away. We must also vigorously repent of any previous involvement with strange spirits through association with the occult in any form.

However, the key aspect of repentance is from "dead works", (Heb 6:1) This includes repentance from the fact that we have substituted religious programs for the true worship of God. Many church services consist of religious programs instituted by man. The liturgy is followed to the letter but little attempt is made to truly touch God's presence with heartfelt praise and Spirit engendered worship. Man has made

himself the Lord of the service, relegating the Holy Spirit to a lowly, often non-existent role.

b. Removal of obstacles

In the East, in Bible times, it was the custom to send a party of men, before a king or prince, to prepare the way for him. They cleared the way of thorns, brambles, rocks, and other potential impediments. They smoothed out the road, found fording places through rivers, and generally prepared a highway through the wilderness.

In the life of a church, many obstacles may accrue that hinder the moving and freedom of the Spirit. These obstacles may be religious traditions, wrong attitudes, resistance against the Spirit, lack of unity, and many other obstacles. All these impediments must be removed from the pathway, through repentance and renunciation.

c. Deep Desire

God only responds to deep, earnest desire. He says, "I will be found of those who seek me earnestly and diligently."

David crystallized His desire for God:-

Ps 27:4

4 **One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.** (NKJ)

Ps 27:8

8 *My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.* (NIV)

God will rarely ever visit a people in blessing who are not seeking His face and expressing to Him the longing of their heart.

d. Faith

We need more than desire when we seek God's face, we must also see Him in faith. Don't seek Him unless you truly believe that He will respond. Seek Him diligently, in active faith, fully expecting Him to answer.

e. Submission to the Spirit

Once the Holy begins to respond to your prayers and faith, submit immediately to His prompting. Let Him assume leadership and authority over the gathering.

In the words of Mary, "Whatever He says to you, do it." The Holy Spirit will **TURN OUR WATER INTO WINE!** (John 2:1-11)

He will turn our mourning into dancing. Ps 30:11-12

11 *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,*

12 *To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.* (NKJ)

When the Holy Spirit is truly made Lord of our gathering, He will begin to transform us.

2 Cor 3:17-18

17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (NIV)*

f. God's glory will be revealed

4 *Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.*

5 **And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it.**

g. God will speak to us powerfully

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (NIV)

Our wilderness will become a fruitful garden

Isa 35:1-8

1 *The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;*

2 *It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God.*

The wilderness, which is a wasteland, (barren and unfruitful) will become a scene of rejoicing, gladness and fruitfulness. Even the desert will blossom like a rose. Only those who have seen the Judean wilderness, after the Spring rains will fully understand this.

Prior to the rains, the desert is barren, there is no growth of any kind. Not a blade of grass, nor a wild flower to be seen. It is a dry, sandy, rocky wilderness. But once the rain comes, it is immediately transformed. Suddenly wild flowers of every hue, transform the desert into a carpet of color. The transformation is astounding. One could not have believed that the wilderness was capable of producing such a riot of color and beauty.

Likewise, when the rain of God's Spirit falls on the barrenness of our lives, they are transformed beyond recognition. The transformation is accomplished by the introduction of gladness and rejoicing.

People are strengthened by the Joy of the Lord

3 **Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.**

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When even weak hands are raised to God in worship, they become strong. Feeble knees stop knocking together and are made firm. The Joy of the Lord banishes weakness and fills the recipients with Divine strength.

Neh 8:10-12

10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. **Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"

11 The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve."

12 Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. (NIV)

Fearful hearts receive confidence

4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you."

Blind eyes and deaf ears receive revelation

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Let us understand this promise spiritually in the first place. Spiritual eyes that have never seen God's glory will "see the glory of the Lord."

Spiritually deaf ears that have never heard the voice of God, will hear its sweet tones.

The lame will leap like deer

6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

People who have always been staid and conservative, who would never dream of jumping or shouting, will literally leap for joy when God's presence overflows their hearts. The Joy of the Lord is greater than any earthly joy. It can cause a response that no other pleasure can cause. When this kind of joy begins to flow, don't quench it. Respond positively. Enter into it. Enjoy it. This joy will transform you.

Parched ground will become pools of water

7 The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Parched ground can never become fruitful. Though it may be potentially fertile, rich in trace elements and growth potential, until it receives water, it will never bear fruit. But when the rain of God's Spirit comes, even the desert will bear fruit.

God's Highway will be established

8 *A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. (NKJ)*

Once God's Highway is established, He will be able to visit us again and again. The territory need never again revert to desert and wilderness. While the highway remains open, God will delight to use it. He will come like refreshing rain.

What is Atmosphere?

Atmosphere is the pervading mood or feeling in a given place. It is created by the spiritual emanations (atmospherics) present. Our ability to discern and feel these, are inherent in our spiritual being and emotions. Spiritual atmosphere occurs when our spirit encounters the Spirit of God.

Atmosphere is intangible

Atmosphere cannot be perceived by sight or touch. It is ethereal or spiritual in nature. It is spiritually discerned (sensed) through our spiritual antennas. The felt presence of God is conveyed in a spiritual atmosphere. Most often you can neither see nor touch it, but you can feel and sense it. To do so you must have the right attitude and spiritual sensitivity.

Atmosphere is inevitable

Atmosphere is present everywhere. In some places it is more evident than in others. Some places have little atmosphere. Others have a powerful atmosphere. Some atmospheres are extremely negative. Others are dynamically positive. Every place gives off some kind of impression through it's character. Atmosphere is created largely by the furnishings, items and people assembled in a given place.

Atmosphere is legitimate

Many Christians are nervous of the idea of having an atmosphere. They mistakenly believe that it is pure emotion, of the flesh, and something to be heartily discouraged. The presence of an important person inevitably creates an atmosphere of reverence and awe. How much more ought God's presence to create a distinctive and awesome atmosphere.

There was obviously an awesome atmosphere at the dedication of Solomon's temple when God's manifest presence invaded that place.

2 Chr 7:1-3

1 *When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory (presence) of the LORD filled the temple.*

2 *The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory (presence) of the LORD filled it.*

3 *When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."*

(NIV)

Every person projects an atmosphere

Every person has a unique aura that flows from their inner attitude. This creates an atmosphere which they project wherever they go. Depending on their personality and

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character, plus their spiritual development and maturity, (or lack thereof) they may exude any one of a number of kinds of atmospheres. E.g.

Positive	Negative
Optimistic	Pessimistic
Inspirational	Discouraging
Radiating light	Dispensing darkness
Happy	Gloomy

Personal atmosphere

a. Begins in our thought life

“For, as a man thinks in his heart, so he becomes.” Prov 23:7.

You become what you think you are.

You become what you think about.

b. Accentuated through our words

“For out of the abundance (fullness) of his heart, a man speaks.”

Whatever fills your mind and thought life, that is what you will talk about.

Whatever you talk about you will project. It will create an atmosphere within and around you.

Negative thoughts and words will create a negative atmosphere.

Positive thoughts and words will create a positive atmosphere.

Critical thoughts and words will create a critical atmosphere. Etc.

Your words will convince you. You will be what you say.

c. Inner attitudes create outer atmosphere

Whatever people carry within them they inevitably discharge into the atmosphere around them. Their inner attitudes create an aura that infiltrates their surroundings. Other people are made aware of it. They sense and feel it. If a number of people get together and begin to express their attitudes through speech or emotional emanation, they create solid mutual atmosphere which can be extremely powerful. If it happens to be a church in which they gather, they create a wrong atmosphere there. Which is why the Psalmist said, “*Enter His gates with thanksgiving. Come into his presence with singing.*” This is the correct attitude to exude when we come before God.

Your home has an atmosphere

Every home has an atmosphere of its own. It is often evident from the moment one enters it. The manner in which a house is furnished creates an atmosphere. Whether the place is tidy or untidy helps to determine the atmosphere. The people (family?) in that home, powerfully affect it’s atmosphere. If they are warm, relaxed and friendly,

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Creating A Spiritual Atmosphere

visitors may feel immediately at home. If their welcome is not so evident, visitors can hardly wait to get out again.

Many years ago, in Brisbane, Australia, I was asked to visit a family who were experiencing great trials and difficulties. This family consisted of the mother and five children all of whom were in a constant state of ill health. The children's performance at school was inexplicably poor and there seemed to be a financial curse on their family.

As I sat and conversed with the mother, a conviction deepened inside me that there was something badly wrong with the atmosphere of their house. After a brief prayer I asked if anything dramatic and sad had ever happened in their house. It transpired that the deceased father and his brother had actually built the house. They were not registered builders yet evidently knew enough about building to erect this place in their spare time from items they had purchased cheaply from various sources.

The task had been an onerous and demanding one. Arguments and rows had punctuated the building process. Great stress was on everyone involved, including financial indebtedness to the Bank. Ultimately the stress was too great for the father who hung himself in the attic, casting a shadow of grief and despair on the whole family.

I explained to the mother that the fighting, distress and ultimate suicide had been aggravated by familiar spirits that had plagued her husband's family for some years. I strongly urged she and the children to make a sincere commitment to Christ and place themselves under His protection. I further encouraged them to trust Jesus Christ to cleanse their house of every negative, destructive spirit that resided there.

We subsequently marched through the house from room to room, singing and praying and commanding every evil spirit to leave. By the time we concluded our march every family member could sense the difference in the atmosphere. Even the rooms seemed brighter, the atmosphere was lighter, the heaviness of depression was gone. Within a few weeks their fortunes had obviously changed. The children's health and schooling improved remarkably. The atmosphere in the home and in the family members was dramatically transformed. Everyone who visited that home was immediately aware of it. The bad atmosphere had gone and a much healthier, happier one filled the place.

Your church building has an atmosphere

Every church building has a unique atmosphere that can usually be discerned and recognized as soon as one enters. Often the age and architecture of the building greatly affects the feeling one discerns. The style and condition of the building influences the ambience some degree. The manner in which the place is decorated and furnished also has some effect. But the most powerful influence is the attitude of the pastor and people who gather there.

Some congregations deliberately strive for a solemn and somber atmosphere, believing this to be appropriately "sacred". They also encourage conservative and restrained behavior in what they imagine is "The house of God". What they actually produce is an old fashioned image of religious legalism and self righteousness that has

little or no appeal to non-Christians. Nor does it encourage the Christians to enjoy and express any degree of freedom or joy.

I mentioned previously that when people come together they sub-consciously create a predominant atmosphere. If it is a wrong attitude and atmosphere, it is highly unlikely that the participants will experience God's presence.

Begin with the right attitude

I remember many years ago, preaching in a church in Britain. It was a bitterly cold winter's evening and the heating system in the building was not working. About three hundred people had gathered and their predominant thought was not on worship, but on how cold it was.

The service began with a hymn that ought to have been a rousing and inspiring one. Unfortunately the congregation's attitude was a disgruntled one rather than a triumphant one. This was reflected in their singing, which was like a funeral dirge. Suddenly, the Pastor who was attempting to lead their worship, cried "Stop". He then began to rebuke the people for their lack of enthusiasm and to tell them they had come before God with the wrong attitude and spirit. He reminded them that the Bible says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and come into His courts with praise."

To my surprise, he ordered the people to leave the building and re-enter with the right spirit. Initially they thought he was not serious, but it soon became clear that he was! With a good deal of grumbling the congregation filed out into the night air which was even colder than the atmosphere inside the building. They stood, like a herd of sheep, on the side walk while the Pastor exhorted them to come back inside with the right attitude. He stationed he and myself on either side of the entrance with instructions to only allow in those who were expressing thanks and praise to God. Slowly they began to file back in. This time they were speaking out words of thanksgiving. To the credit of that congregation, every member eventually came back in. What a meeting we had! The praise and worship erupted into a glorious awareness of God's presence and ultimately all kinds of wonders and miracles took place.

His method was probably rather drastic, but his intention was good and the result proved that it was also right.

**The atmosphere of religious restraint
in many churches
kills the true spirit of Christianity
that Jesus defined as
"Abundant Life and Fullness of
Joy".**

(John 10:10; 15:11)

What creates a spiritual atmosphere?

Atmospherics are the elements that create an atmosphere. The spiritual atmosphere occurs when our spirit touches the Spirit of God. The emanations that are generated form the atmosphere of spiritual climate. There are certain spiritual atmospherics such as;

The presence of the Holy Spirit

This is undoubtedly the first, and indispensable factor. Without the Holy Spirit, there will not be any legitimate spiritual atmosphere. It is uniquely His presence that creates the atmosphere in which the presence of God may be experienced.

Recognizing and Honoring the Holy Spirit

However, it is not sufficient to believe that He is present, we must also discern and honor His presence.

The good news is that He is always present wherever believers are gathered in Jesus' name.

The sad news is that those believers are often too absorbed in their own program and activities that they virtually ignore His presence.

To experience an atmosphere conducive to a miracle, we must recognize and honor the presence of the Spirit amongst us. We do this by being sensitive and obedient to His voice.

Come with the right attitude

Ps 100:4

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: (tehillah; a hymn of praise) Give thanks unto him, and bless his name. (ASV)

- a. Enter His gates with thanksgiving.
- b. Come into His courts with songs of praise
- c. Bless (honor, exalt, uplift, magnify) God's Holy Name through worship.

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart
I will enter his courts with praise.
I will say this is the day that the Lord has made
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad, He has made me glad
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

True reverence is responding obediently to God's Spirit

Too many churches believe that reverence of God's presence requires solemnity, silence, gravity quietness and formality. They ignore the plain words of Scripture 2 Cor 3:17-18

17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (NKJ)*

Positive response

The right atmosphere begins to develop when we respond positively to the presence of the Spirit among us. Paul says (above) that the Spirit is the rightful Lord of our gatherings and that His presence releases spiritual liberty. When we honor Him as Lord of our gathering He invests the event with His liberating spirit.

Our attitude must be firstly to genuinely invoke and invite the Holy Spirit to be the Lord of our gathering. Having done this we should then sensitively discern what He wishes to do among us. We need to humbly make contact with the Holy Spirit, recognizing from the outset that He is the true Lord of our worship service. Having recognized and contacted His presence we then need to discern and follow the flow of His leading.

Prayerful intercession

Public prayer is too often a formality, a prescribed part of the liturgy, rather than a genuine cry to God. The Holy Spirit will only respond to a genuine invitation that springs from the heart and includes a willingness to honor His presence and obey His voice.

Music

When we truly offer praise to God, we honor Him and prepare a way (build a highway in the spirit) by which He may enter our presence and reveal His saving grace.

Ps 50:23

23 *He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God." (NIV)*

What is the real objective of our musical expression? What are we truly endeavoring to achieve through our music? Are we merely following a traditionally prescribed routine, or are we genuinely seeking to provide a grand entrance for the Lord the Spirit?

Spiritual Worship

Genuine spiritual worship must be offered *“in the spirit”* and according to God’s truth.

John 4:23-24

23 *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.*

24 *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”* (NIV)

Much of our corporate worship is presented to God through the medium of music, but it must be more than the mere performance of music. Worship is a path we may walk into the presence of God. The music to which we march, is a means to that end and not the end in itself.

The high praises of God

Ps 149:6

6 *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,* (NKJ)

The high praises of God are the praises that surround the throne of God in heaven. Various glorious living creatures encompass God’s throne, continuously singing and speaking anthems of praise to God and His glory. They create a dynamic atmosphere of joyful and triumphant worship in which God dwells.

Ps 22:3

3 *But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.* (NKJ)

As the Holy spirit refines and enhances our worship, it becomes compatible with the heavenly praises on high. When this happens we begin to feel the aura of God’s presence among us.

Sing to the well

Num 21:16-17

16 *From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”*

17 *Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it--”* (NKJ)

Israel were travelling through a wilderness, but God, in His mercy brought them to a place where arterial water was available. At Moses’ command, Israel’s leaders dug the well, while the whole congregation of Israel “sang unto the well”.

Our spiritual life may become like a wilderness at times, dry and barren. But God has His wells of refreshing. We must sing to those wells until they begin to burst forth with the living water of God’s presence. Like Israel, we must do it in unison. God instructed Moses, “Gather the people *together* and have them all sing to the well”.

There is a well in the midst of every congregation but the leaders must dig and the congregation must sing together to release its streams of living water. It is a well of life, a well of rejoicing, a well of refreshing and a well that will water the land and produce fruitfulness.

Despising worship produces barrenness

David's wife Michal is a clear example of this.

2 Sam 6:20-23

20 *Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"*

21 *So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the LORD.*

22 *"And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor."*

23 *Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.*

Her overt criticism of David's enthusiastic worship, left him unmoved. He refused to conform his worship style to the perceptions of a carnal, conservative woman who was embarrassed to be associated with uninhibited worship. David insisted that his purpose was to please God, not man and that if uninhibited worship appeared unseemly to a carnal mind, he would continue to do it nevertheless. As for Michal, her attitude ensured that she remained barren until the end of her days.

What are the miracles?

Encountering God's presence in a personal and intimate manner

The miracle of our ability to experience the personal presence of Christ amongst us. Once this happens, any number of wonderful miracles may transpire. The mystical miracle power of Christ releases a potential for all manner of wonders.

Miracles of revelation, encouragement, healing, and restoration

The miracle of conversion and transformation can happen. The breaking of bondages and a release of one's spirit from imprisonment.

The miracle of experiencing God's love

Many people find it difficult to fully accept the fact of God's love for them. They often feel unworthy of such love and cannot believe that God really loves THEM so much.

In the Song of Solomon, the shepherdess is initially self conscious, shy and inhibited. She protests her unworthiness of his attention.

Song 1:6

6 *Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me.*
(NKJ)

As their relationship develops and deepens, He constantly assures her of His love and admiration for her, speaking of the beauty He sees in her. Basking in the attention of His love for her, she begins to see herself as He sees her. She is encouraged to lose those inhibitions.

The miracle of receiving His pardon

We really need to experience the wonder of God's loving presence in order to truly know His pardon in an experiential manner. The more we experience His presence, the more we sub-consciously know that we are truly forgiven pardoned, freely accepted and restored.

The Prodigal Son, could not believe that His father could ever restore him to the favor and privilege of sonship. He rehearsed all manner of possible scenarios, the best of which was that he might become a hired servant of his father's. But the loving father brushed aside all his protestations and generously poured the full quota of his love upon him. He fully and completely restored him to his original position of privilege. He generously killed the fatted calf, threw a huge party, put shoes on his feet and placed a ring on his finger.

The miracle of seeing His power and glory

Ps 63:2

2 *I have seen you in the sanctuary (the place of worship) and beheld your power and your glory. (NIV)*

It is also in the place of worship that we are able to behold and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

Ps 27:4

4 *One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (NKJ)*

The miracle of experiencing the Joy of the Lord

Ps 21:6

6 *Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence. (NIV)*

Ps 27:6

at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD. (NIV)

Ps 16:11

11 *You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (NKJ)*

Neh 8:10

This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (NIV)

The Bible is filled with references that link joy to the presence of the Lord. During the feast of Tabernacles God commanded His people to “Rejoice for seven days before the Lord”. God loves to witness our supreme joy in His presence. In fact, He has promised to augment it.

Zeph 3:17

17 *The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." (NIV)*

Elisha's experience

II Ki 3:15-16

15 *But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha.*

16 *And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. (KJV)*

Confronted with the need to bring a prophetic word from God, Elisha immediately called for a musician. Whilst the harpist played, the hand (Spirit) of the Lord came upon Elisha and he was inspired with a word from God. Obviously the atmosphere fostered by the music helped to create the right atmosphere to release a genuine prophetic word from God. The anointed atmosphere helped to produce a spiritual miracle.

Paul's experience

Acts 14:7-10

7 *And they were preaching the gospel there.*

8 *And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.*

9 *This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,*

10 *said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.*

It seems apparent, from the context of this incident, that the presentation of the Gospel by this group of missionaries, created an exciting and stimulating atmosphere. Whole cities were both stirred and divided by this phenomena. In Lystra the gathering produced an atmosphere of exciting faith conducive to the performance of miracles. The preaching of Paul created a spirit of faith and expectancy among his listeners. As Paul observed one particular man in the crowd, he could clearly see that the spirit of faith had gripped him. This encouraged Paul to shout with a loud voice "*Stand up on your feet*". The man immediately leapt to his feet and walked. Imagine the great excitement that accompanied this mighty miracle!

The power of music

Music has always played an important role in the worship of God. Way back, in the very dawn of creation, "...the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).

This scripture refers to a pre-history occasion. It alludes to an earliest era of the dateless past when God first created the universe. It is the oldest historic reference to music and singing. Several things emerge from it.

Music was conceived in the heart of God

- Music existed before the foundation of the universe.
- It was used by the "sons of God."
- It was employed in the praise of God.
- It was expressed with joyful enthusiasm.

In its simplest forms music may be defined as an art form consisting of sequences of sound, organized methodically, harmoniously, and rhythmically. Such sounds are usually produced by musical instruments, human voices, or both, separately or together.

- Music is a gift of God to mankind.
- It is an expression of God's essential being.
- It is the language of the soul, expressing its highest aspirations.
- It facilitates a more intense feeling than spoken words.
- It has uplifting and healing powers.
- Good music directs one's thoughts to God.

The earliest Hebraic music was predominantly vocal. There were very few instruments in the earliest days of their history. The human voice was the most accessible and popular instrument with which to make music. However, biblical references to later periods include mention of many forms of musical instruments.

Music creates an atmosphere

All music creates its own atmosphere. Marketing strategists have understood this. Service industries have too. Restaurants play music conducive to relaxing and eating. Congregational attitudes are influenced by the type and tempo of music and by the lyrics.

"Spirituals" were birthed by slaves in the cotton fields of the southern states of the USA. They sang to alleviate their indignities and suffering. They sang to create an atmosphere of hopeful anticipation in the midst of their trials, to bring God's encouragement to their hearts.

God's people used it to create certain atmospheres

Worship in song is mentioned in Exodus 15:1. Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord; V2, Miriam and all the women, with tambourines and dances, responded to the song of Moses. Moses and Miriam created an atmosphere of victory and triumph to minister encouragement to the bewildered Israelites.

1 *Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.*

2 *The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. (NIV)*

The digging of the well at Beer was celebrated with singing

Num 21:17-18

17 *Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:*

18 *The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah: (KJV)*

Deborah and Barak celebrated their victory in song (Judges 5:1-31).

The women of Israel celebrated David's victory over Goliath in song.

(1 Sam 18:6,7).

4,000 Levites praised the Lord with instruments (1 Chron 23:5), when Solomon was made king over Israel.

"The children of Israel.....kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord" (1 Chron 30:21).

"And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, Psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chron 15:16).

Imagine the high drama and joyful release of witnessing 4,000 singers and musicians playing loudly and singing enthusiastically to God. What a glorious occasion that was!

Music inspires prophetic utterance.

1 Sam 10:5

5 *"After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.*

It is clear that music and singing are vitally integral to the praise and worship of God. This is portrayed all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Music is also associated frequently with the release of spiritual gifts such as prophecy. The group

of prophets employed a wide variety of musical instruments as they prophesied. Both music and prophecy create a sense of God's presence.

A great variety of instruments were used

The scriptures reveal that a great variety of musical instruments were used in Davidic praise. Psalm 150 lists all the basic families of instruments found in the modern orchestra.

Ps 150:1-6

- 1 *Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.*
- 2 *Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.*
- 3 *Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, (brass) praise him with the harp and lyre, (strings)*
- 4 *praise him with tambourine (percussion) and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, (woodwind)*
- 5 *praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.*
- 6 *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. (NIV)*

It seems obvious, from such references, that music offered to God in the Old Testament, was neither sterile nor conservative. There is very obvious spontaneity, passion, life, color and movement that identifies biblical music. Biblical worship often attracted the criticism of conservative minds that were more concerned with maintaining outward dignity, than with expressing enthusiasm.

The idea taught in many churches, that the organ is the only instrument suitable for accompaniment of worship, is certainly not a biblical concept. The modern organ is often too limited and restrained to express the varied dynamics of spiritual communication. It does not afford the measure of freedom and spontaneity that the Spirit needs to adequately express His praise to God.

Worship in the bible was frequently accompanied by a great variety and a large number of musical instruments. Percussion instruments, including drums, tambourines, cymbals and various kinds of shakers are the oldest and were frequently used to accompany songs and dances of praise.

Wind instruments included trumpets, and the shofar (rams horn)

Amongst the variety of stringed instruments were the harp and lyre. Several lyres were often used together in a string ensemble to accompany the singing of a choir. People who object to the employment of guitars in worship should realize that the harp and lyre which were inevitably used to accompany biblical worship, are the ancient equivalent of the modern guitar.

Musical accompaniment in the bible, employing a wide and colorful variety of instruments, must have been very dramatic and exciting.

Church Planting Institute
Creating A Spiritual Atmosphere

2 Chr 5:12-14

12 All the Levites who were musicians-- Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives-- stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets.

13 The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud,

14 and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God. (NIV)

Numerous and varied styles of music were used too which should encourage us to realize that God does not share the narrow views of many Christians as to which instruments may be unsuitable for worship.

Many national churches have been robbed of authentic cultural expression in music and worship by a narrow view, frequently espoused by Western missionaries and church leaders, about the suitability or otherwise of historic, ethnic instruments.

Congregational Worship

The impact and effectiveness of good praise and worship, in a congregational setting, can scarcely be exaggerated. This is a fact I have noticed so many times. Most successful churches I have observed, have had the help of a good worship program. Most churches that have experienced dynamic growth, have also featured good congregational worship. There are factors involved in effective praise and worship that are powerfully conducive to the atmosphere that wins the day.

What is the objective of a worship service?

If the average Christian were asked this question, what might their response be?

- A worship service is where the members gather together to worship God.
- A worship service is a gathering of the members to hear the Word of God.
- A worship service is where Christians gather to sing hymns and songs.

Responses like these would be partially correct, but not wholly so. These concepts fall short of the ideal result of a church worship service.

Congregational worship.

True congregational praise and worship occurs when a gathered group of God's people join harmoniously to exalt God corporately in music and song. Such worship originates in heaven.

Job 38:4-7

4 *"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.*

5 *Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?*

6 *On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone--*

7 **while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?**

(NIV)

It was an integral feature of the New Testament church that even a prison sentence could not stifle. God shouted a responsive Hallelujah so loudly that the prison walls fell down!

Acts 16:25-26

25 *About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.*

26 *Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.*

It will also feature strongly in heaven throughout eternity. Rev 19:6-7

6 *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

7 *Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (NIV)*

True Corporate worship unites a congregation

Ps 133:1-3

1 *How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!*

2 *It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.*

3 *It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. (NIV)*

Dwelling, living, flowing in unity attracts the anointing of God in a powerful way. True corporate worship is one of the ways in which the Spirit of God *tunes* a congregation and brings it into the unity of the Spirit. As a congregation yield themselves to attaining united expressions of worship, God blends their spirits together in harmonious unity.

Music attracts the presence of God

II Ki 3:14-18

14 *Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you.*

15 ***But now bring me a harpist." While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha***

16 ***and he said, "This is what the LORD says: Make this valley full of ditches.***

17 *For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink.*

18 *This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you. (NIV)*

When Elisha the prophet urgently needed a word from God, he summoned a musician. Even while the harpist played, the Spirit of God came upon Elisha and he prophesied what Israel must do. Music produces an atmosphere conducive to spiritual manifestations that indicate the presence of God. Spiritual music can invite God's presence in a tangible, discernible manner. A dynamic spiritual atmosphere is often created by a congregation harmonizing with each other and with God's Spirit.

A group of Spirit filled musicians, with instruments and voices lifted in praise can be a dynamic and powerful attraction in a church. Every church leader should give high priority to forming such a team.

It is exciting to realize that God loves music. Whenever His people delight themselves in music, song and dance, God loves to join in with them.

Music inspires and stimulates people

There is a rousing and stimulating element in stirring music that unites and activates any body of people. Who has never been aroused by a military band? The army of the Lord marches best to the strains of triumphant music that stirs the inner passions of a redeemed heart. The music of the church, marching triumphantly towards the future manifestation of God's kingdom reign, should be the finest in the world.

Unfortunately the church at large has frequently allowed itself to believe that sacred (holy) music must be staid, conservative and old fashioned. This is not true. Kingdom music, inspired in heaven, should be the most dynamic and appealing ever heard. It should be so unique and inspirational that people would travel miles to hear and participate in it.

Triumphant music lifts morale.

Morale is mutual, and united confidence. Its is "esprit de corps", the united, optimistic, triumphant spirit of a body of people amalgamated by the same aims and objectives. It is the high degree of optimism and confidence that fills the heart of a united and committed company of people.

Stirring music is a main contributor to high morale. It inspires people and brings out the best in them. It unites them as one person. Which is why John says:

Rev 19:6-7

6 *And I heard, as it were, the voice (singular) of a great multitude, (plural) as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*

7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." (NKJ)*

The army that was led by a choir.

2 Chr 20:20-22

Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

21 *And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever."*

22 *Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. (NKJ)*

Israel's army was outnumbered and facing possible defeat, except that God had promised them victory. 2 Chr 20:17

17 *You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be*

afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you."
(NIV)

God did not encourage them to rely on their numbers, or weapons, but on His Word, to which the Levites responded with great shouts of praise.

2 Chr 20:19

19 Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice. (NIV)

God sent them into battle with a choir before them, exalting the Lord in their praises and magnifying His grace. As they sang God set ambushments against their enemies completely conquering their adversaries.

The Lone Piper

One of my friends of some years ago, won the Victoria Cross Medal for outstanding bravery under enemy attack. The incident occurred in World War II, when he was a piper in a Scottish regiment. His platoon was under heavy attack and suffering massive casualties. Communications were poor, his unit was in disarray, making a disorderly retreat under withering enemy fire.

Bill soon realized that their confused retreat was making he and his mates an easier target for the enemy and that if something were not done quickly they would soon be decimated. Being a earnest Christian, he immediately committed the situation to God in prayer. Throwing down his rifle, he grabbed his bag pipes and began to play a stirring Scottish tune. Immediately his associates slowed down their retreat.

Encouraged by his own music, Bill began to march towards the enemy. His comrades, witnessing his bravery, began to sing and shout loudly and joined him as he walked resolutely towards the enemy troops. Fresh morale surged through his unit as a sense of patriotism and bravery inspired them all. Though Bill was wounded, he continued to advance and the whole unit took fresh courage, surging past him, into the teeth of their foe with guns blazing. The tide was soon turned under their counter attack, and before long the enemy were in retreat and the Scottish troops had won the day.

In subsequent dispatches, his bravery under fire despite sustaining two bullet wounds, was recognized as the factor that changed the fate of his unit. His associates spoke of the surge of morale that swept their ranks as the skirl of the bag pipes sounded forth. Without considering their own safety they joined their brave comrade, routing the opposition and winning a strategic victory that ultimately saved their lives. The whole regiment was later honored when Bill was invested with the V.C. by his king.

That incident frequently reminds me of spiritual warfare. Often, when the enemy appears to be gaining the upper hand, voices lifted in praise to God have turned the tide from imminent defeat to resounding victory. In a similar manner, dynamic music expressing praise to God, has frequently inspired God's army to march forward to victory.

The power of music's attraction

Rousing music has a universal appeal. It stirs something within every human spirit. It awakens dormant faith and positively inspires the inner man. Other people love to join an enthusiastic congregation. There is a special sense of belonging amongst people who lift their voices together in jubilant song. Good, spirited, triumphant music and song is an extremely positive and attracting force. It makes people want to be part of that crowd.

What kind of instruments?

The question often arises, "What is the best type of instrument to use for praise and worship?"

Obviously there are numerous factors involved in answering this question. Some of those factors might be :-

1. The ethnic origin of the church.
2. The size of the congregation and venue.
3. The kind of instruments available.
4. The style of worship desired.

However, there are several issues that need to be considered in making this important decision.

Accompaniment

This is the most important aspect, the need to provide basic accompaniment for the congregants. The obvious instruments for this are simple accompaniment instruments such as a piano, electronic keyboard, or guitar, all of which are suitable to provide the simple basics of music, i.e. melody, harmony and rhythm. In a very real sense these are the lead instruments and one should try to ensure that the players are competent and capable.

An electronic keyboard is very desirable because it is capable of producing such a wide variety of musical effects and is extremely versatile.

Rhythm section.

This usually consists of drums, and other forms of percussion instruments, plus bass instrument. The skill and maturity of the rhythm musicians is extremely important. They frequently dictate the tempo of the worship. Drums are a particularly powerful music medium with a very strong influence and should be carefully utilized. They can almost "make or break" the quality of worship.

An ideal small music group

In a relatively small situation a piano, or electronic keyboard, guitar, bass and drums will constitute a very adequate music group. Modern electric key boards, particularly a MIDI board may be ideal because they can simulate a whole orchestra if necessary.

Augmentation.

In a larger setting it is often desirable to augment the basic instruments with other suitable ones. Violins, flutes, or other single note instruments can add great to the effectiveness and beauty of worship, setting very powerful moods. Almost any instruments, properly and appropriately used, can enhance a worship service.

Suitable music team members.

A worship team must be prayerfully and carefully put together. Adding the wrong persons can spell disaster. Each member should be carefully examined using the following criteria.

1. Spiritual maturity.

This qualification covers a wide spectrum and is by far the most important factor. Spiritual sensitivity and discernment, with an eagerness to flow with God's Spirit, is even more important than technical skills.

2. Musical ability and skill.

Obviously this is also very important. Yet this is an area in which people can frequently achieve a greater degree of competence. In other words, if you have someone who meets all the other criteria, they can usually improve and enhance their musical skills.

3. Commitment.

Every team member must be willing to commit themselves to every requirement that will ensure the effectiveness of the team. This obviously includes attending all rehearsals, keeping in practice, and being present for every event to which the team is committed.

4. Loyalty.

The harmony and unity of the worship team must have the highest priority and to achieve this every member must exercise and maintain loyalty to the pastor, leader, and every fellow member of the team.

5. Compatibility.

Musicians are often uniquely individualistic, artistic, creative and sometimes temperamental. It is essential that they are also compatible, willing and able to fit into and flow together with the team. There must be no petty jealousy or competition among them. Every individual talent must be brought into subjection to God and to the spirit of the team. Team spirit is essential.

6. Unity of the Spirit.

Eph 4:2-3

2 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

3 *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

(NIV)

The musicians and singers must be in spiritual unity, with the Holy Spirit and with one another. It takes regular prayer, spiritual adjustments, and corporate worship together to achieve and maintain this.

7. Corporate anointing and flow.

The music team must enjoy and move in a mutual anointing. They must learn to listen to the gentle voice of the Spirit and be aware of how the Spirit is moving on other members of the team. They must learn to flow together in the anointing of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can also use music for the glory of God and edification of people. Notice the powerful therapeutic effect that anointed music had on Saul. (1 Sam 16:23). David had been anointed by God (V 13). He was a skillful musician, a gifted composer and a sweet singer. When he played and sang under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the evil spirit departed from Saul. He was refreshed. He was well.

Music expresses the joy of liberty

It was only when Israel was in captivity in Babylon that they ceased to sing and play. Their anointed music ceased and they hung their harps on the willow trees (Psalm 137).

When their Babylon captors goaded them to sing, they replied, "*How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*"

When their captivity ceased, after 70 years, they returned home with joyful singing and laughter. There was praise on their lips (Psa 126:1,2). It is only when the Church is in spiritual captivity that her anointed music ceases. When that captivity is broken and the people come into liberty once more, music, singing, praise, dancing and laughter are all restored unto her.

Music and song in the New Testament

Many critics of lively worship maintain that a scriptural foundation for it is purely Old Testament. They infer that the New Testament church has no such mandate, yet the New Testament also contains numerous references to music and singing in worship.

1. **The disciples sang hymns together.** (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).
2. **Paul and Silas sang praises to God in prison.** (Acts 16:25).
3. **The Apostle Paul instructs the church in anointed singing.** (Eph 5:19)
4. **The book of Revelation is interspersed with mass choirs singing mighty anthems of praise.**

Christians are exhorted (Ephesians 5:19; Col 3:16) to sing:-

- a. **PSALMS.** The biblical psalms set to music.
- b. **HYMNS.** Anthems of praise to God.

c. **SPIRITUAL SONGS.** Spontaneous songs given by the Spirit. The songs of the primitive church were praises to the Lord. Their primary objective in singing was to praise and magnify God. They did not sing for effect, or to entertain. Their singing was not man-centred. It was directed to God for His pleasure alone.

Music can be used to teach God's Word

Col 3:16-17

16 *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.*

17 *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)*

Worship promotes unity in a congregation

Worshipping together in music and song encourages and promotes a certain measure of spiritual unity. This is especially true when a congregation is truly *worshipping in the Spirit*. Unity with God (perpendicular) and with each other, (horizontal) is greatly strengthened by playing and singing in harmony together. The Holy Spirit is able to tune our hearts as one when we recognize Him as our heavenly choir director and follow His leading. Congregational “singing in the Spirit” can be particularly effective, when the Holy Spirit wants to tune the hearts of the people.

Bondage and depression can be banished by music

1 Sam 16:23

23 *Whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.*

This type of anointed singing and music, directed to God in praise and worship, is very rare in the church today. But God is restoring this ministry to His people. Here are some suggestions to help you bring your community into a ministry of anointed music in praise to God.

Leading a Worship Service

Congregational worship is an extremely important element of the New Testament Church. A primary calling of New Testament Christians is the worship of God.

1 Pet 2:9

9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (NIV)*

We are a “Kingdom of Priests” to offer continual praise to God. Our ministry has already commenced and it will continue throughout God’s eternal reign over this universe.

It is obvious from the Psalms that choir leaders or music directors held an important and respected place within the worshipping community. His designation as choir director suggests that he leads the congregation as one would direct a choir, encouraging and bringing out subtle harmonies and sounds that express the unity and oneness of the people.

Many of the psalms were addressed to “The chief musician. A Psalm of David”, suggesting that the lyrics that King David composed were passed on to the chief musician for his assessment and assistance with regard to the music and its treatment.

The Hebrew word for choir director suggests several ideas including a “master of ceremonies”. The role of a master of ceremonies is to arrange, organize and direct a particular event, at which task he is a “master”. Surely this should be the aim of a worship director or leader, to make our occasions of praise a triumphant success to the glory of God.

Three dimensional worship

The number 3, has considerable significance in respect of worship. God required the Israelites to appear before Him in festivals of worship, three times each year.

Exod 34:23-24

23 *"Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel.*

24 *"For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. (NKJ)*

The three occasions were at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

Church Planting Institute
Creating A Spiritual Atmosphere

The number three also suggests numerous others important matters concerning Praise and Worship in the biblical context. viz :-

Pesach	Shavouth	Succoth
Passover	Pentecost	Tabernacles
Body	Soul	Spirit
Outer Court	Inner Court	Holy of Holies
Praise	Worship	Adoration
Courtship	Marriage	Married Intimacy

This pattern, as clearly portrayed in the plan of Moses' Tabernacle with its three distinct areas, obviously prescribes a certain progression of worship.

This progression marks the route of the worshipper as he sets his face towards the worship of his creator and redeemer God.

- 1: Outer Court. The body. **Praise.**
- 2: Inner Court. The soul. **Worship.**
- 3: Holy of Holies. The spirit. **Adoration.**

1: The Outer Court.

Represents the body, the physical aspect of our being.

This area of praise frequently involves the use of our physical being to praise and exulting in God. Such praise includes singing, shouting, clapping, waving our hands, raising our hands, jumping, dancing, marching.

2: The Inner Court.

Represents the human soul and the employment of its faculties to praise God. This dimension includes the human faculties of emotion, expressing such through singing, weeping, laughter and the expression of emotion through physical activities as mentioned previously.

3: The Holy of Holies.

Represents the redeemed spirit of man engaged in the intimacies of the true worship and adoration of God. This dimension is very sacred, personal, intimate and fulfilling. This is the ultimate object of our exercises of praise and worship. To come before God in His intimate presence and meet with Him face to face, in an attitude of reverential awe.

It is to this place also, that the worship leader endeavors to lead the congregation of worshippers. It is this kind of spiritual worshiper for whom the “Father is seeking.” John 4:23. Every church should be a worshipping community.

In the development of such corporate worship, much depends on the leader of the service.

The primary purpose of worship, whether expressed individually or corporately, is to uplift, eulogize and exalt the WORTH-SHIP of God. To exalt His greatness!

Therefore the ultimate purpose of a “worship leader” is not to merely conduct community singing but to lead a congregation into a posture and spirit of true worship of God. His function is to guide and lead the congregants spiritually, from the Outer Court, through the Inner Court, and into the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies. He will usually achieve this by example and exhortation. He should not use the opportunity to preach at the people, but to simply exhort and encourage them by word and example, to enter into an attitude of heart that is conducive to worshipping God.

Qualities in good worship leaders

1. Worship Leading is a special ministry

Not everyone has this ability. Often the pastor does not have this particular gift, in which case, he should find someone in the congregation who does possess such a gift and be willing for that person to take the lead in this particular area, under his guidance and spiritual covering. It is essential to have the right person(s) to lead congregational worship.

2. The Leader must be a worshipper

It is essential that one who is called to lead others into worship should be skilled and adept in the worship of God. It is impossible to lead others into something unless the leader has already learned the requirements and skills of worship. This person should be free in his own spirit and able to freely praise and worship God in his personal life.

3. Spiritual Maturity

The worship leader should be a person with experience and maturity in the things of the Spirit. His spiritual development should be equal to (and preferably superior to) the congregation that he is seeking to lead. Such maturity gives the leader a confidence and results in a sense of security in the congregation.

He should be able to control his own spirit so that his personal thoughts, feelings and emotions do not intrude into the meeting. He must also be a man of faith, not only able to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit, but with faith to implement what the Spirit may be saying to the assembled saints. He should be an exhorter who can motivate and encourage the believers.

4. *Spiritual Sensitivity*

The ideal leader has developed a sensitive ear for the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself will lead the service if the leader will actively move into those promptings which the Spirit will give. Worship services should be led by the Holy Spirit. However, He will always use human channels, so there must be a deep spiritual awareness in the leader. This will be conveyed to the congregation as well. They will begin to develop the ability to hear the promptings of the Spirit and quietly and confidently move into them.

5. *Genuine humility*

A good leader will always seek to "hide behind Christ." Nothing ruins the spiritual atmosphere of a service more quickly than an egotistical leader who constantly projects himself into the meeting. The Holy Spirit loves to glorify Christ, and is totally unwilling to turn His spotlight on any human being. No flesh should glory in the sight of God. Rather than drawing the congregation's attention to himself, the leader must always seek to focus the attention of the people on Christ.

6. *Prayerful preparation*

Prior to the service, the leader should always spend some time privately in prayer. The theme of a meeting can be discerned beforehand in this way. The spirit of the leader can be tuned to the Spirit of God and in this way the meeting can move right into God's purposes from the very commencement. There should be no such things as "preliminaries" in a worship service. The whole service, from the very first moment, is dedicated to the praise and glory of God. Too many preachers regard everything prior to their sermon as a preliminary - necessary, but unimportant. The truth is that what precedes the sermon is usually much more important, for the sermon is addressed to the people, but our worship is addressed to God Himself!

7. *Allow sufficient time for worship*

The manner in which many "worship services" are hurried through is an insult to the majesty of God. We need to recognize the importance of corporate worship and give ample time to it. Worship time should not be wasted by needless chatter on the part of the leader. His real task is to get the congregation in tune with the Spirit of God just as quickly and sweetly as he can. Unnecessary talk and comment can detract from this purpose. When people have come to worship God and want to give themselves to Him in praise, worship and adoration, it is a sad thing when they are delayed and hindered by the very one who is ordained to lead them into such worship.

8. *Be open to the Holy Spirit*

It takes real faith to lead a service into worship because such worship cannot be prescribed or programmed beforehand. Many leaders feel they must have a prescribed program. They want to know exactly what is going to happen in a given service and just when it is going to take place. Spiritual worship demands more flexibility than this.

Once the service has commenced, try to keep quietly aware of the way the Spirit is leading. Be prepared to follow His leading step by step. He will instruct you as to just when the worship should take place. Not every service will be the same. God is a God of variety. He does not have to do the same thing every time. He has a special purpose for every gathering.

The leader must learn to discern what the purpose is and to flow along with it, as the Spirit unfolds it step by step. God can even change the order and direction of the service while it is proceeding. A good leader will be able to discern the very songs that should be sung; how many times they should be sung; and with what kind of emphasis!

Sometimes a service will be bright and full of rejoicing. Other times the Spirit may lead in a much quieter way and even into periods of silence which may be extremely profound and meaningful.

9. Be aware of all that is transpiring

The leader should avoid closing his eyes and being "lost in worship." It is wonderfully possible to be fully involved in worship and still be aware of and sensitive to the people. The leader should have a sensitivity to the Spirit and at the same time, be exercising a gentle but definite influence over the service.

Simple guidelines for leading worship

1. Begin where the people are

Seek to establish immediate contact with the congregation, right where they are. Quietly demonstrate your leadership with them. Help them to recognize that God has ordained you to lead this service and that if they will cooperate and follow along with you, they will be led right into the Holy of Holies and have a glorious experience of worship.

2. Song leading is not necessarily worship leading

There are many good song leaders who do not have the ability to lead people into worship. However, the worship leader must be able to lead singing and then to lead further on into worship. Most often a worship service will commence with singing. The singing of appropriate songs which eulogize God and speak of His greatness, might and splendor, will help to get the people's minds off themselves and their problems and on to the Lord. Songs of praise and thanksgiving are often appropriate and suitable. Community singing is also a good way to bring the people into unity. As their voices blend, so will their minds and spirits. Once that unity has been achieved, the people may be led on into realms of worship. We begin with praise and then move on into worship.

3. Allow the Holy Spirit to give direction

This may come in any one of a number of ways. It may spring out of the first song that is sung. This may set the theme for the entire service. Often the Spirit will lead from one song to another, all on the same or relevant themes. If there are those

present with charismatic endowments, the Spirit may use these to indicate the course the service should take. This may be communicated through a prophecy or some revelation. Sometimes the mind of the Spirit is imposed on the service in a very quiet and undramatic fashion. It is only after the gathering, when looking back, that one sees so clearly how beautifully the Spirit led, and what unity and harmony was woven into the fabric of the service.

4. Avoid intrusions and cross-currents

This is where the spiritual maturity of the leader is so necessary. He must be able to discern a new emphasis which might be introduced, which is not of the Spirit. He must be spiritually alert to recognize such a trend. A meeting can be very subtly redirected if one is not careful and watchful. Once the Spirit has set the course and direction, be sensitive to any intrusion which may change the emphasis. The intrusion may seem quite harmless. It may come in the form of a lovely chorus which is quite scriptural in content and yet it changes completely the direction in which God is seeking to lead the people. The leader must be loving and yet firm in keeping the worship on target.

There are many ways in which he can bring the meeting back on course again. He may say directly, "Now friends, let us keep pursuing this direction which the Spirit is indicating, and let us not turn aside." He may commence another chorus which reinforces the original theme of the Spirit. There may come a further word of prophecy, directing the attention once more to the original theme.

It requires faith and boldness on the part of the leader. He must exercise discretion and tact, but he must not compromise the purpose of God for that occasion. This often demands great wisdom and grace. The Holy Spirit will supply these if we trust Him implicitly.

5. Recognize transition and change

The Spirit may direct a service along any line He wishes. This frequently means that there may be a change of emphasis during the course of the service. In fact, this may happen several times. These transition periods are very important. The leader must be ahead of the people anticipating what the Spirit is wanting to do. He must give clear and firm leadership during these transitional periods, so the meeting does not begin to wander aimlessly. If a time of indecision is allowed to develop, someone may be tempted to try to give direction and a wrong note may be introduced. The leader must always remember that God has anointed and appointed him to lead the people and he is therefore responsible for doing just that. Do not rule the meeting with a heavy hand. Do not try to impose your will on the people. Keep a firm but gentle grip on the direction and progress of the worship.

6. Keep the purpose in mind

Never lose sight of the objective and purpose of the gathering. It is first to praise and glorify the Lord. Second, to edify and bless the people. Never allow the gathering to degenerate to anything less than these basic objectives.

7. "Create a Symphony."

One of the many fine choruses we often sing says, "Lord, make us a symphony, a symphony of worship." The Greek word "symphoneo" from which we derive symphony, means to "agree together." Jesus said, "*If any two of you shall agree together.*" He used this word, 'symphoneo,' to "produce a symphony of sound." A worship service should be like a symphony. Everything should blend harmoniously together. The voices should all blend, the instruments should blend, the various parts of the service should all blend together. This is one of the basic purposes God seeks to achieve through our corporate worship, to blend us all together in a glorious harmony. In doing so, He introduces and encourages unity at the deepest levels of our being. A famous priest said, "The family that prays together, stays together." And we might say, "The congregation which truly learns to worship together, will stay together."

8. Encourage active participation

Too often today, the congregation becomes mere spectators instead of participators. Frequently we find the minister doing everything and the congregation merely watching and listening. The New Testament encourages the participation of every member. However, good solid teaching on this subject needs to be given first. God's people should be taught that He wants to hear their voices raised in worship. They must be taught how to participate, and having been taught, given opportunity to do so. Verbally encourage the people to enter in. Exhort them to lift their voices in praise. Make opportunities for them to express their praise.

9. Let everything be done decently and in order

Many churches use this scripture (1 Cor 14:4) as an excuse for not allowing any congregational participation. They are so intent on maintaining "decency and order" that they allow nothing to be done. This is not what the Bible says. It does NOT say, "Let nothing be done, decently and in order." It says "Let EVERYTHING be done."

Let there be participation. Let there be prophecies, revelations, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. But let them be done in such a manner that there is no confusion, for God is not the author of confusion. (1 Cor 14:40).

10. Aim to Excel

Our goal, as we learn to praise and worship God, should be to ultimately excel in these things. We should aim for progress and development in these vital areas. Such excellence will not be human excellence. It will not be the advanced development of human talent and ability. It will not be the employment of professionals, with correctness and precision. It will be the deepening of spiritual life. It will be the sharpening of spiritual sensitivity, the growth of spiritual awareness and the ability to make a spiritual response to the prompting of the Spirit of God.

**The ultimate objective of our worship
is to exalt and glorify God.
The more effectively we can do this,
the more acceptable is our praise.**

Practical thoughts about the Worship Service

1. Commence with meaningful prayer.

Encourage all members of the worship team, instrumentalists, singers, dancers, amplified sound technicians etc. to come together before each service for prayer and interaction. This helps to promote greater unity and harmony among them. Should there ever be any indications of disunity or wrong attitudes between any members, these should be prayerfully resolved at such a pre-service gathering. Don't allow this time to degenerate into a formality. It must remain a meaningful time of spiritual interaction with God the Spirit and with one another. It is an opportunity to tune the spirits of music group members to the same pitch of the Spirit.

2. Begin each service with thanksgiving and praise in song.

(Psa 100:4). *"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise, give thanks to him, praise his name."*

Thanksgiving and Praise is the first step into the presence of God. It is a spiritual key that may be thrust by faith, into the door that leads into God's presence. Don't be content to merely sing about thanksgiving, heartily encourage the congregation to genuinely give thanks to God. Motivate them to lift up their hearts and spirits to God in real acts of thanksgiving and praise.

3. Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit for the right song or hymn.

God has a theme and a message for every service. Often the right song will set the tone for that theme. Do not simply choose some songs at random. Try to discern in your inner spirit what song(s) the Holy Spirit would like to use. Sometimes He will so powerfully minister through an appropriate song that the theme of the whole service will be powerfully indicated.

4. Do not be afraid to sing the song more than once

Some times a particular portion of a song may be especially anointed and blessed. Feel free to repeat that portion until its message truly penetrates the spirits of the people. Variations of tempo and volume can also affect the atmosphere. Rousing songs or hymns can stir up the people and to exercise the "High praises of God". On

other occasions, slower, more worshipful songs may set a more serious mood in which to meditate on the grace and goodness of God.

5. Exhort and encourage the people

Some worship leaders have a gift to motivate the people to really "sing unto the Lord." Hymns are often sung because it is our tradition and custom to sing. We have a much worthier purpose than this. It is to sing unto the Lord - to direct our focus heavenward in song. Our spirits can make meaningful contact with the Spirit of God through worship in song.

6. Commence with songs of praise and thanksgiving

Allow the people to genuinely express their praises through them. Songs are not praises in themselves. They are merely vehicles through which we may express our praise. It is highly possible to sing many hymns and songs without expressing any true praise.

7. Songs of praise will inspire the people to worship.

We often begin with praise and then the people move progressively through various levels of praise until they move right into worship, which is the highest level of praise. However, they usually need to be led into these expressions. The worship leader is like a shepherd, going before the sheep, through the meadows of Praise and into the sanctuary of worship. Don't settle for simply praising God. Worship is a higher level of praise and we want to pursue God to the greatest degree possible.

8. Do not "rush through" the song service.

Many ministers look on this part of the service as the "preliminaries," before the main event, i.e. preaching. Worship is frequently regarded as an irksome, but traditional, necessity. Many times it deteriorates into a religious ritual simply because insufficient time is given for its proper development.

Take time to sing, praise and worship. This is a very important function of our gathering. Don't allow the clock to become more important than experiencing the presence of God.

9. Allow opportunity for congregational participation.

Encourage spontaneous expression. Someone may lead in prayer, which may set the tone for the meeting. Another may prophesy, and the exhortation may supply the theme for the rest of the service. One of the important features of congregational worship is to stir and motivate the people to reach out to God. They need to be brought out of their shells of reticence and indifference and opened up to fully participate in the congregation's expressions to God.

10. The manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-11)

Manifestations of the Spirit should find expression in believers' worship services. Paul exhorts us, "Do not quench the Holy Spirit". (1 Thess 5:19). If we quench the Holy Spirit, we kill the true life of the service. Encourage participation and expression through these spiritual expressions. However, the appointed and anointed leader should retain spiritual authority over the service at all times.

11. All things should be done to mutual edification.

Every scriptural manifestation is legitimate and proper, but let everything that is done, and the manner in which it is done, be to the edifying of the whole gathering.

(1 Cor 14:26). The overall result of an anointed service should be that every member is edified, encouraged, strengthened and blessed. Obviously there may be some exceptions with people who are not spiritually oriented and do not appreciate the liberty of the Spirit.

The order and quality of a service should not be determined by such people. Paul insists that we must rather please God than men.

Gal 1:10

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.
(NIV)

12. Avoid contributions that cause confusion.

"God is not the author of confusion..." (1 Cor 14:33). If the service begins to move into confusion, take charge and lead it back out of confusion. If necessary, pause and explain to the people what is happening, thus clarifying the situation. Use such times to teach the right and wrong way to do things.

13. Let everything be done as unto the Lord, and to the glory of God.

Remember the aim of every gathering is to glorify God and edify the believers. Because our worship, as with everything else we do, should be done "as unto God" we must always do it whole heartedly. We must strive for excellence in our worship. Not necessarily the excellence of technical perfection, but that excellence we achieve when we do something from the heart to the very best of our ability.

14. Make the words available to all

Having the words available, in one form or another, will greatly encourage participation. It is embarrassing, especially for new comers, if everyone is singing except them. We must make it easy for all present to join in the worship. Overhead projectors are very useful because the congregation are much freer to worship without books in their hands.

Do not be afraid however, at a certain point, to put down the song book or words and just worship from the heart.

15. Obviously there are certain principles involved.

In the leading of a song service or a worship service, you must carefully avoid becoming mechanical or too formal. Let there be an underlying freedom. Be flexible. Don't insist on keeping meticulously to the program. Be constantly sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit and be willing to follow them. Good song leading entails much more than waving the arms, even if this is done correctly. The liberty of the Spirit and spontaneity are more important than technical correctness.

16. Hide behind Jesus

that the people may "...see no man, but Jesus only." (Matt 17:8). I remember a church of which I was the minister for many years in Brisbane, Australia. The first time I stepped up to the pulpit, I saw some words carved into the pulpit. They confronted every person who stepped up to that pulpit to speak or minister. The words said, "*Sir, we would see Jesus*" (John 12:21). We ought always to bear this in mind. The people have not come to see you or hear you. They have come to see and hear Jesus. Our task, with the help of the Spirit, is to draw aside the veil, that every eye may see the Lord and worship before Him. This should be the ultimate aim of every servant of Christ who leads a worship service.

**“Sir, We would see
Jesus!”**

(John 12:21)

