

## Worship Team Training - Archives

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### March ARCHIVED ARTICLES

3.31.08

#### Leadership by the Spirit

Are you too busy? Do you feel like sometimes ministry is often complicated to achieve in the sea of daily business? Though we mean well, often our priorities can slip through our focus due to the plethora of minor details. When the real matters of ministry present themselves, we may find ourselves depleted and spent. In a weird way, it can seem as if we are running in circles and away from our true ministry calling of the day.

Take the Old Testament story of Jonah. He was a man who was called by God to mission to an untouchable city of people. Jonah so much despised these people that he rejected God's call and ran away from Him. However, God had another approach to get Jonah's attention. After swimming in whale gall and stomach acids, Jonah got the message. Jonah rendered himself to God for His using, despite his personal agendas. Definitely, the phrase: you can run but you can't hide, has a more appreciated ring to it! No, it does not mean that God will send a fish to swallow us when we fail to listen. The reality is that we do a pretty good job of consequenting ourselves! Such as, when we run in our haste making desperate and inconsistent decisions, we have the capacity of creating our own havoc. As a result we are not capable to fully give clear attention to the major priorities.

God does not call us to chaos but what Paul encouraged to Timothy, "a sound mind," (1Tim. 1:7) There will be troubled waters like what the disciples faced in the stormy lake with Jesus. Leadership is full of crests and rises; it does take a tough stomach to ride the boat. What enables us to ride with consistency and endurance is Jesus as our Captain with the Holy Spirit's hand on the wheel. He knows how much throttle to give in our times of need and directs our sails whenever we ask (Jas. 1:5). He does not desire for us to be tossed to and fro on the waves of doubt (v.6). Just as Jesus calmed the waters for the disciples, so has He given us the capability to restore and maintain a calm ship. But we must throw overboard all the unnecessary weight and cast off every selfish ambition (Heb. 12:1). Self is the ultimate weight of discourse. It weighs more and is the most inconspicuous stowaway. In order to lay aside this weight it involves rendering our titles, credentials, talents, pride, fear, contentions, isolations, sorrows and neglect. Once these weights are removed, spaces become available. See, we can fill ourselves with much

weight of despair that it slows the momentum of what God really wants to do within us. The blocks can be built so high, that we no longer see God in front of us. All that remains is a wall of self-ambition, and downcasted is the person to topple our wall. This comes down to the epitome of pride. God sends the Spirit to break-down our walls and fill us with his peace and guidance. Jesus tells us to cast out fear: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (Jn. 14.26). The Holy Spirit is the One who comes besides us who is both our Counselor and Comfort.

God has empowered us for leadership by the Holy Spirit. In our circles of responsibilities and daily life, He has given us the ability to seek his Word and presence to assist us daily. True leadership is experienced by the leading and following of God's spirit. Let's be reminded, God will take care of all of the other consequences as we follow Him first. All of our work will still be waiting for us tomorrow – minor details and all. Let's take more time listening and responding to the Spirit's call and to move upon His impulses and not our own. As we walk in His peace, we find just the right amount of time to accomplish the needed priorities – which saves our health, souls and the ministries we lead.

3.27.08

Does Style Matter?

"Contemporary" and "Traditional" are two of the largest popular styles in church worship specifically geared to edify and meet worshipers through relevant community identifications. They both are similar as they define an age group and identity of 40+. Emergent or Post Modern (while recognizing vintage-faith, ancient-future, and other polar-spectrums of worship venues) may identify younger generations of post 9-11's, twenty and thirty somethings (depending on the local community demographic). It is also interesting to note that not all 20-30's attend emergent an/or ancient-future faith services. The young at heart in older generations find it easy to connect with these services as they personify truth, grace, acceptance and relativity.

All worship styles: Contemporary, Traditional, Emergent/Vintage/Post Modern are preferential tools, styles and vehicles for worship; at the same time they are conducive for evangelistic contexts. It is essential that the Church creatively relates and connects with all generations for the purpose of sharing the Gospel (1Cor. 9.19-23). However, there is a critical balance in our efforts of constructing worship services. Historically, there have been attempts where members of the Church have drifted from the centrality of Christ for the fashion of modeling the world by worship trends, service ideologies and/or popular mega church brandings. As a result, the pure nature of the Gospel is altered and reduced to a social status-quo (Jas. 4.4) or reduced to a mere venue trend. Emergent or today's generation are seeking for authentic relationships and the truth and relativity of God. As Christ noted: The Father is seeking the true worshippers of God (Jn. 4:23).

There is no one stylistic way to worship – communicate to God; just as there are many human languages to communicate among people there are multiple expressions in worship to praise God. Communicating Biblically and effectively to both to our world

and Almighty God becomes paramount. Paul, in 1Cor. 9:19-23, addressed the severity in communicating to all people through relevancy in order to win people to Christ. His address serves as a appropriate model for shaping our churches and worship ministries to connect people to the Life-giving Savior.

Today, God still calls people to: "seek me and live," (Am 5:4). To seek God is eternal where one finds life and life abundantly (Jn. 10:10b). He is calling us like the Israelites and Judeans to return to His covenant faithfulness. Seeking the Lord is central to our being and corporate worship. As Emerging generations rise, it is imperative that we meet them where they are and not where we were 5-10-20 years ago.

3.26.08

Boundaries: God as the Guide and Gate.

Good morning fellow worshipers. I pray that your Easter Sunday was a joyous one. I know for us we had a marvelous time in celebrating the Lord.

Now that all the Easter preparation is over we can finally have a chance to step back and take a breath! This is a great time to take inventory over all the things and busyness that has invaded the past 1-2 weeks (or months you may say!).

It seems that our calendars keep filling up and our to-do-lists get heavier and longer. People are everywhere in demands of our time, attention and energy. I'm going to ask a few ridiculous questions. Hang with me; I say ridiculous because these questions may sound far too easy and elementary, but the answers may reveal underlying truths that can unlock a few insights. Your answers may be a reflection of your Easter Sunday, catching up from last week or somewhere in between.

When is the last time you found yourself doing too much? How many hours do you wish, you can cram into a day? How often do you feel that everything depends on you? How often do you see other people depending on you? How often do you feel that you can't let something go? How much do you give yourself permission to say the word "no"? Do you feel that you will let other people down or let yourself down by not giving into certain demands? Would you feel rejected by others, yourself or God?

If I'm able to address these questions, it is only because I live in this world like you. So what is the underlying topic for these questions? It is the topic of boundaries. Boundaries can represent many different things that are both visible and invisible. Physical boundaries can be walls, fences and lines. Invisible boundaries can be words, thoughts and actions. Boundaries are defined by points that indicate where something ends and something else begins. Boundaries are property lines that can be understood by you and others, they clarify ownership. It is a way to say this is my area and this is yours. Boundaries help us identify our responsibilities, priorities and the choices we make. We see many opportunities in our life-experiences that call for the need of boundaries: family, relationships and vocation. We also see them in the deciding factors of where we go, what we do and what we say.

Proverbs 4:23 says, “above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Boundaries help us determine what is good for us and what is bad for us. Keep the good in and the bad out. The authors of the book, “Boundaries,” by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend suggest helpful perspectives and tools to maintain, protect and nurture our personal development by keeping healthy boundaries. The authors talk about emotional and physical fences as a form of boundaries. They also say that fences need gates in order to let the bad out and the good in. We are managers of our own gates; by opening or closing we analyze, value, determine what goes in our out of our personal fences. Sometimes we are fooled or find it difficult to decide by appearance or thought what is healthy and unhealthy.

Jesus uses the illustration of sheep in John chapter 10 and elsewhere in the New Testament. As you may know, sheep are used as an analogy to describe people. Sheep do not have the best eyesight and cannot think and make decisions for themselves. Often sheep are guided by the voice of their master as we find in John 10:4. We too find it difficult to determine exactly what is good for us and exactly what is bad. Having God's guidance and watch over our gates and fences can help us make all the difference. Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Our need is to have God's help in defining our boundaries as well as the need for Jesus to be our mental, emotional and physical gate.

Think about your ministry and personal areas. What do your fences look like, are they tattered, worn or disarray with broken or missing pieces? Think about which boards are in need of repair or in need to be established. Think about what perpetrates your home-life, relational-life and ministry-life. Is your personal gate rusted shut or loosely opened? My friend, the Good Shepherd, who knows your name, calls to you and I to follow. He calls us to his guidance as He knows what is best for us. As Jesus said, He is the Gate, by entering through him we will find salvation, pasture and the abundance of life. He protects us from the thief and the wolves that prowl outside our fences. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. He is the voice that leads, protects and heals us. Are we listening to Him? Are we allowing Him to be the Gate and Guide of our boundaries? “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters...” Ps. 23:2

Check out this old faithful chorus that speaks of our need for the Shepherd: “I Look to The Shepherd,” by Walt Harrah.

3.23.08

Easter Sunday - He is Alive!

Hallelujah! The stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty and Jesus has risen from the grave – just as He said!

Father, thank you for the Victory over death, the Access of Your fellowship and the wonderful Gift of everlasting life. We celebrate your truth, promise kept and unending love. You are alive! You are the Victory over death and now we will go, tell and shout on the mountain tops of your great love and peace given to all mankind!

Friends, may this day bring you all inspiring joy and excitement as you worship with your families on this Resurrection day - praise Almighty God for his extraordinary Gift!

3.21.08

Good Friday

We stand in awe and in silence of what you've done for us.

3.20.08

Maundy Thursday – A Prayer of Remembrance and Worship.

On the night in which He was betrayed: He took up the bread and cup.

Father, thank you for this very time in which You have shared with us your body and blood. It is through this covenant relationship that You have kept your promise since the days of Abraham as You will fulfill your Kingdom on earth – again shall you drink from the vine when all is complete. It is amazing to comprehend that You are the Bread of Life that came from Heaven to give us food and life. As You have broken and shared with the disciples, we thank You, as you have shared your body with us today – eternal life – to be one with You in the Father, Son and Spirit. May we partake in giving thanks as we eat and drink in remembrance of You, as an act of worship and with a penitent heart we turn to You. Thank you for giving us the cup, which is the new covenant in Your blood. You are the Vine who supplies life to us, your people whom you've called to enter and to abide in You and abide in Your love. Apart from You, we are nothing. Your blood: grace and mercy washes us clean.

Forgive us in how we have not stayed awake with You in the final hour. We are weak and desperate without you. When we are not by your side, we fall away. Clothe us in your robe that shelters us from sin. Wash our hearts clean in your mercy and forgiveness. Burn with in us the flame of Your Holy Spirit that will light our path, comfort and guide. The peace You give is not what the world gives, but only what you give that comes from the Father of lights, where every good and perfect gift comes forth. In you, there is no shadow of turning, for great is your faithfulness and great is your love. We remember and worship you on this day and evening, before the time you were arrested, beaten and raised on a cross. Thank you for drinking the cup of agony to bring us from death to life.

Jn. 6:35, Lk. 22:16-20, Jn. 15:1-4, 1Cor. 6:11, Jn. 14:25-27, Js. 1:17, 2Ch. 19:7, Lk. 22:39-44.

3.18.08

### Classical Pianists in a Worship Band - Part 3!!

Happy Tuesday Everyone! Yes, yes, I know, it's not even the middle of the week and you want to celebrate?! Well, I figured today's article will bring a smile to your face. Check it out. Last Friday this page had over 300 hits alone for the Classical Pianists in a Worship Band - Part 1 & 2 articles! Many of you had a great response. Therefore, I've included another episode (Part 3) of Classical Pianists. You can find the music goodies below - a full PDF chart of 3 pages + an audio file that corresponds with the DEMO on pg.3. Have fun and keep growing in your craft!

Piano\_Keyboard\_Studies\_Pt3 - PDF

Part\_3\_Demo - mp3

Visit: [praisecharts.com](http://praisecharts.com) to purchase the full chart of: Here I Am To Worship.

3.15.08

### A Palm Sunday Devotional

Follow this Scripture journey and prayer in clearing the way for Christ our King. Blessings on your Palm Sunday worship my friend. - bd

Isaiah 40: 1-2

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 57:15

For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Mark 11: 7-11

When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Psalm 51:15-17

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Prayer:

Father, may I live according to Your Word, for you will guide me always. You will satisfy all of my needs and will make me strong. Your provision for me is a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. So I worship and trust trust in You with all my heart, soul, mind and strength.

I acknowledge you Lord and everything you do, for you will make my journey easier. You will guide me along the way of wisdom and lead me along straight paths. When I walk, my steps will not be hampered. When I run, I will not stumble nor grow weary. For you or my rock and my fortress, because you are my God, you will lead me and guide me.

I will listen. You will instruct me and teach me the way that I should go, for you are my counsel and watch over me. You are my God for ever and ever and your promises will be my guide even to the end of time.

When I cannot see the way, You will lead me through unfamiliar territory; you turn the darkness into light and you will make the rough places smooth. These things, you will do. You will not forsake me, for you are the great I AM the Lord my God. You know, what is best for me as you direct me in the way I should go, for I am not alone.

Clear the road and remove the obstacles for Jesus our King has come! Remove O' Lord every barrier from my heart and wall within my mind. Lead me Christ my Redeemer!

In whose Majestic Name we pray, Jesus, our Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

3.14.08

How Are We Serving Culture? Part II

A few years ago, we visited Mosaic, in the downtown area of West L.A. This congregation has two meeting places, one in a nearby school and another in a bar – which is rented out on Sunday nights. We visited the rented out bar location. The meeting place acquired an intimate coffeehouse setting. Dim lighting by the use of multiple candles filled the shadowy bar. The church-art deco was simple and portable. There were a few art paintings on display to exhibit the work of local artist. People were very genuine and friendly in welcoming us to their place of worship. As the time drew near to worship, a mass crowd filled the club's dance floor now transformed into a worship center. Guests and members were very enthusiastic and happy in gathering together. A circle formation of chairs outlined the worship area, facing people across the way from another. The worship leaders greeted the people and invited them to join in worship. The music was very raw and edgy, similar to a garage band sound – not polished but very captivating

and casual. The style is who they are, for the purposes of relating and reaching a postmodern ocean of people. The combined elements of light, art and music personified a unique worship experience. The congregation passionately worshiped without reservation. In bringing the experience to a tapered intimate level, poetry was expressed through media art and simple instrumental music. After a couple more songs, the pastor, Erwin McManus, seated himself on a stool in the middle of the sea. His presentation was very dramatic, captivating and progressive, like waves of storm. His use of story, sent out sonar waves to probe the realities of underwater culture. His delivery mirrored the preceding worship elements and imagery. The people were held captive by his unquenchable sermon style. Personally, I was greatly moved by waves of intensity, which fueled my undistracted focus. The connection of the entire service defied tradition and was strangely sacred. Biblical truths were moved from obscurity into clarity. Worship was real and unprecedented.

My experience and familiarity of Sunday church was polar opposite from Mosaic. I began to question and challenge my own views: the how's and why's of what do on Sunday mornings. Is the American white church the only system to proclaim the Gospel? Do we really have evangelism figured out? It seemed to me (and still does) that in the Church, we spend far too much time catering to sub-culture needs rather than making ourselves more available and more tangible to the world. We live in a time of constant change. We are witnessing a dramatic influx of culture, trends and customs as well as the political and economic impact in the U.S. The movement is unstoppable. Moreover, there is also a compassionate and unstoppable force to connect people to the love of Christ. "An Unstoppable Force," by Erwin McManus declares the inceptive need for reaching people in this culture of change, He writes:

"Everything begins to change when the world becomes your friend, when the nations become your neighbors. For many American churchgoers, pluralism ended an age of certainty. It became arrogant to think that we were right and everyone else was wrong. It was presumptive to believe that our American convictions could also be imposed on a Chinese colleague or especially on someone who had never heard...If a spiritual expression wants to be considered as legitimate in the emerging culture, it must be able to cross the barrier of racism and isolation." (McManus, pg.53)

For ministry to grow it begins with God and ends with people. In connecting to people we need understand culture. We need to be creative and receptive in forming the DNA in our local churches in order to meet the needs of our society. In decoding heart molecular structures: authenticity, accountability, unconditionally, partiality, spectatorship, passiveness, inactiveness and dryness are in need of reform and revitalization. A Second Reformation is already in progress. The solid faith we live and conceptualize is slipping through generational cracks. This chasm exists on the basis that we are not in touch with our surrounding world-culture. McManus wrote, "A strange freedom comes when you have clearly defined a reason for existing. Once you're settled on what the church is about, you'll be able to innovate and create without fear," (McManus, pg. 196).

The work of God needs to be returned to the people, not to our own affiliations. In the first Reformation, the word of God was returned to his people. The implications of universal priesthood for Christians, have yet to be experienced globally. The latent effectiveness of church outreach resides in the truth of God's Word. The power of holistic community worship dwells in the life of God's spirit working through the hearts of people like you and me. From our homes, work places and churches, we have a guest list set before our dinner table. We have food already prepared for those in need. We already know how to invite people to our churches, the better question is how are we serving them?

Two Great Book Resources (as well as more books on this store site).

Unstoppable Force

A Heretic's Guide To Eternity

Sign up for E-News to receive your monthly newsletter filled with great stuff for your team!

3.13.08

How Are We Serving Culture? Part I

In today's changing times, defining the identity of culture rapidly transforms its profile from generation to generation. The influx of nationalities, religions, ideologies, politics, social economies and cultural trends, melded together over time. In the past, describing change in the world was accomplished by observing global events outside of our local spheres. To observe change from a distance is to stand apart from reality, by residing alone and out of touch with people. Glocal, is a new term that is defined as global and local societies, which have melded together to form a unity of local diversity. The boundless sea of society is a rage of crisis, uncertainty, differences, openness, multiplicity, and change which describes our current reality. The world and culture of today is no longer separated and compartmentalized by continent, nation, language, trend or currency. In this new millennium, society revolves around the changes of the people and their culture. No longer do people adapt to society, but society has to adapt to the changes of people. In other words, the tail wags the dog in today's world-view. The concern of reaching people today exists in the way the church adapts to people.

The church is no different than society's endeavor to understand its people. However, a dichotomy exists between churches that do make an effort to meet society's people and those who do not, but exist for their own sphere of concerns. The truth is that the world is changing around us whether if the church cares or not. The need for reaching people in connecting them to Christ stands in front of our doorstep. The reality is that the world is no longer at the church's doorstep, waiting on Christians to take care of them as seen in the early 18th and 19th centuries. What happened in the 20th century? The church declared that people must come to church to find God. Today, the world no longer embraces a "come-and-get-it" evangelism. People of today are self sufficient and independent. They would like to step into the church, but are hesitant or unwilling because of past negative experiences. People are in a real need of God and the authentic

care-acceptance of God's people. There is a high interest in spirituality along with the bewilderment of what to believe and who to trust. Mark Mittelberg, in his book, "Building a Contagious Church," addresses a relevant question to these current issues. He says, "...are we prepared to help them? Are we becoming the kind of people...that will be able to assist them in embarking on spiritual journeys that will eventually bring them to Christ" (Mittelberg, pg. 20).

Many churches understand the need of relativity in their community - connecting people to Christ. This need is important because of the immediate circumstance of "culture chasms." In most Evangelism 101 Sunday school classes, they teach the diagram involving a gap placed between God and man. The picture poses a question of how can one cross this gap over to God – the answer is the bridge of Christ. This illustration is a great explanation but is not relevant in today's times, as it was 20 years ago. Because culture and time have progressed so rapidly over years, people face more complicated challenges in this modern era. Secularization has influenced people to walk away from Christian values and beliefs. When we introduce the secular world to God, the question is "which God, and why is He the only way." People respond differently to both the Bible and the world-view. They perceive both ideologies as unrelated. The problem here is the disposition to relate their secular reality with the reality of the Gospel. The church has been far behind the curve in correcting this view. Mittleberg has uncovered this unknown to the church sphere in his description of "culture chasm." He says:

"The culture chasm consists of the barriers that keep a secular person from hearing and understanding our message. These include things like language, dress, musical tastes, personal motivators, cultural norms, habits, beliefs, degrees of spiritual interests, styles of learning, and traditions (both secular and religious) – and the list can go on. These things are all apart of the larger sin chasm...I'm talking about the more generic, spiritually neutral aspects of living in any society. While these may be in some sense neutral, they certainly are important and have a huge effect on what people think and understand as well as on how they hear the Gospel." (Mittleberg, pg. 49)

Because times are changing so rapidly, it is necessary for the church to adapt to the current culture needs. In order for the church to exist as a resource for people, relevancy is a key ingredient. Church has more to offer than evangelism and Sunday school programs. The body of Christ is designed to provide nourishment and resources for all of its members and to share that same love to those in need of Christ. George Barna, in his book "The Second Coming of the Church," clarifies the need for relevancy in the church. He says, "The world around us is changing at an unprecedented pace. What worked ten years ago is already obsolete; cultural analysts estimate that our culture essentially reinvents itself every three to five years"(Barna, pg. 2). Barna also points out how vast our diversity has become in modern America, leaving whites in the minority. "Today, Caucasians in the United States are at zero population growth: they are bearing enough children to "replace" those who die but not enough to expand the size of the Caucasian population," (Barna, pg. 52). The population and diversity of people is expanding faster than what the earlier trends predicted. Today, even in a given two mile radius of any town in America, culture and needs are as diverse as a 20 mile radius city. How do we adapt outreach and ministry to such a changing culture?

Worship and evangelism are effective tools in reaching people. However, when it is packaged, perfect and formal, its authenticity is diluted by the overload of performance and the loss of genuineness. In the senses of the seeker, they are searching for love with action. Mike Slaughter said it best in reaching today's people. He said that people need demonstration not information. That was the life of Jesus, he demonstrated love rather than talking about it. How can we demonstrate the truth, love, authenticity and the unconditional acceptance of God in our worship services? The answer is found in removing personal barriers and meeting people where they are at relationally. There are many venues God gave the church to demonstrate his characteristics. Powerful forces of worship, art and sermon-story telling are utilized in conveying the person hood of God. By conveying the person hood of God in worship is through examining His characters. The book, "Spiritual Entrepreneurs," by M. Slaughter communicates how pertinent and authentic worship services are essential in reaching the unchurched. Slaughter give this insight on relevancy in worship: "Why do we cling to worship forms that are so formal, when our everyday lives are so informal? Sometimes we try to force on others what doesn't even work for ourselves" (Slaughter, pg. 62).

3.12.08

Classical Pianists in a Worship Band - Part 2.

Good morning all! I'm glad that you are enjoying this 2 part series on our study of the worship band pianist. Instead of talking here, I've placed links below to demonstrate our music study in actual sheet music along with a recorded demo example. I can hear the cheers now from pianists all over the earth!

There are 6 examples to our study found in the PDF chart as well as the Demo File. The Demo File is one whole recording with pauses per numbered example. Have fun and enjoy! Drop me a line and let me know how this works for you!

Piano Keyboard Texture Studies - PDF  
Piano Demo File - mp3

Share your thoughts and findings to: [branon@forhismusic.com](mailto:branon@forhismusic.com)

3.11.08 Tech-Tuesday Article

Classical Pianists in a Worship Band - Part 1.

Okay all you pianist and keyboardist out there in worship bands – this article is for you and your worship leader! I get this question all the time and I have found that answers are rarely addressed. We are talking about what to do with the classically trained pianist or any keyboard/piano player in working with a worship band.

I have heard the many concerns from piano players of what to do in their worship band. In addition, I've heard from other worshiper leaders of what to do with their piano players. It seems that there are two polarities on this topic. On one side of the earth, you

have piano players, who are the most talented individuals, yet they are without band experience. On the other side of the world, you have talented leaders and other musicians, but they are without piano playing experience. So here we have two worlds colliding; I hear frustrations on both ends. The funny thing is that each person thinks that the other has a personal problem or misunderstanding. Well, let's agree that both sets of people come from different background areas. This doesn't mean that one is right over the other. In the bigger picture, there are two larger issues at hand: the relational and the technical.

#### The Relational:

The relational issue is simple. Seek to better understand the person as you work together. Like the above paragraph, just because a person comes from a different set of background experiences makes them no less or greater than you or the group. Each one of us possesses a unique and different set of skills, talents and insights. The benefit in this relationship is when we learn from one another, we draw upon both weaknesses and strengths.

Romans 12:3 says: For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

As you are a band, make it an opportunity to learn and work together. Keep in mind, not everyone shares your same strengths and weaknesses. The best opportunity is to learn from those who can help you progress in your weaknesses, as you help others improve by your strengths. Moreover, when you take time to understand people, it shows how much you care. In creating an environment of care and acceptance, you facilitate a positive learning experience, stemmed from a teachable spirit.

When instrumentalist or singers have a difficult time to adjust musically, it is because they may be learning a new set of musical rules and are competing with old habits. By fact, they want to improve otherwise they would not be there. The most challenging issue you may have, may not be the other person, but you in learning a new area of expertise or teaching method. If you are the leader in this position, it is your job to lead and equip your team. Even if the most or least you can do is find a teacher for that instrumentalist – do it. Great leaders either teach or find great teachers to help empower their teams. Education is the best tool you can provide because you are edifying and equipping the Body for the work of the Church (Eph. 4:12). Your team will thank you, as you are freed-up to move on to other things.

#### The Technical:

From the keyboard player's perspective, they honestly feel like a fish out of water. Here you have a great piano player that feels like they have their hands tied (I'll refer back to this point). They are at a loss of what to do. The guitar player or the worship leader are telling them they're playing the music wrong, but yet they don't explain to the pianist how to play the music in a way that's conducive with the band. Because the leader or other musicians are not as experienced to communicate musically, the piano/keyboard players are left in the dark. The main default answer is: just make it sound good, play slower or don't play at all.

Let's start off by explaining what is familiar to pianists. Most piano and keyboard players come from a classically trained background; hymns and classical piano sonatas are most common from their music experience. Because of the nature of typical piano music or hymns, the piano player is responsible for all three major forms of song: melody, harmony and rhythm - all played by two hands. Piano players are known for being the one-man band. Now if we were to create a band from each of these sections we would have three instruments: lead guitar, piano and bass. However, pianists are familiar with covering all parts in playing alone. When they join a band, they continue to play in the same mold. This is typical in many keyboard players in worship bands. What do you do? Earlier, I referred to the statement: tie the hands – this was my exact response to a worship leader and pianist's question from a clinic. I'll explain.

Instead of the piano player trying to catch all the music and play it at once, it is easier to break everything down by section. Let's use the previous analogy of the lead guitar player, pianist and bassist. Here each instrument is responsible for their individual part. Where does that leave the piano? Exactly, in the middle. This means the pianist is left to play in the middle register with tight chord voicings. It also means that the piano player is going to play half of what they normally play. Most often, individuals in worship bands typically overplay their part. The easiest solution is to either play one half or one quarter of the music. Let's try this with the piano player.

Tie the hands in the middle! Let the bass player play the notes that are normally played in the left hand by the pianist. Vice versa, the lead guitar will play the notes that are played in the pianist's right hand. Take the music down by a half. In other words, instead of the piano player being responsible for every 8th and 16th note, let's create a fourth member of the band and call him a drummer. Sounds like God creating man and woman!

Anyway, the drummer is going to pick up the busy rhythms, as they are played on the high-hat, kick and snare. There you go! The pianist is freed up from all the responsibilities in being the one man band. Each of the instruments have an equal part making up the whole. There is an uncomfortable result. Having fewer notes to play does increase the impatience factor. It's like taking a track sprinter and confining to a walk-a-thon. All musicians and piano players need to develop a calm approach and patience in playing less. What you will find in this new approach is the ability to create texture – shaping the song and sound environment. The most important job of the band is to support the singers. The congregation wants to hear the lyrics in order to sing; this can't be accomplished if everyone in the band is running a sprint. One of my favorite performance instructors in college always told me: the two most difficult lessons learned by any musician/singer is to practice softer volumes at slower tempos. Anyone can play fast, loud and busy, but just because you can doesn't mean you should.

This portion concludes Part 1 of 2 – check back tomorrow as we will study sheet music examples of the pianist in a worship band.

### Devotional Monday: Night at the Museum

This past Friday evening, my wife and I went to one of the main art museums in Houston. The exhibit of the month was Pompeii and the celebration of Roman art from early B. C. to the 17th century. The museum was featuring lost and recovered artwork from the eruption of Pompeii. As we approached the large stone floor entrance, we were greeted by the enormous sculptures of marble and slate. The museum featured more than 56,000 works of art, covering a total of 300,000 square ft. of space. We encountered many figurines and life-sized works of art. The most impressive, were the sarcophaguses and decorative royal burial tombs. The carved artwork was in fancy detail without blemish.

We ventured to the second floor to find other life sized sculptures and paintings. Many of the sculptors were idols from the Babylonian period enclosed in protective glass. The hues of color shined blue-gray from the overhead lights. As we were studying the molded images, I had discovered that most of them were small and hand sized. I became curious to understand how someone would fasten themselves an idol in the first place. The more I looked at the artwork I began to wonder of man's temptation to fall in love with its beauty. However, from the bottom of my heart was a voice that cried: why?!

Creating a piece of art in itself is a beautiful thing. What I could not fathom was man who is made by God, was making something else to worship other than God. I was reminded by the stories of Moses in Exodus, when the people casted for themselves images. They traded the worship of God for the worship of man. Because they could not see God, they worshiped a visible image that was lifeless and could not deliver. The more I studied the idols in the museum my heart sank. I was filled with compassion for these people from long ago, who put their trust in worthless images. All I kept thinking about were the words from Scripture that compared the worshiping idols to Almighty God.

Psalms 115:4-8 says, "they are idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see. They have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.

It was an amazing moment to stand before the very idols that God was talking about, as the fear of God ran through my spine. As quick as I could catch my breath, I was uttering praise to God. Thanking Him that he is the Almighty God who is holy. He is clothed in majesty and justice, not earthly stones or decaying wood. He is the Light of all creation, of all men and yet became flesh on our behalf. There in the museum, I worshiped God. Our God, who always speaks with his mouth, sees through his eyes, hears with his ears: all of our prayers, thoughts and praises. He not only knows our needs, but knows what we ask before it is ever on our tongue. He is a God refuge, a song of deliverance, the God of mercy, grace and love. Most of all, he is the living God. Praise to His holy and awesome name! Again, I wondered at the fact, of how man being created by God, worshiped creation rather than the Creator. How foolish.

Read this section of Scripture from Isaiah 44:

9 All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. 10 Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit him nothing? 11 He and his kind will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and infamy. 12 The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. 13 The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. 14 He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. 15 It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. 16 Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire." 17 From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god."

My wife and I concluded that our culture today, does the same but in different ways. The world worships things of the world: money, sex and power. Like Scripture says, how can a young man stay pure in this world? We need to keep close the Word of God. Like what Peter says, we live as journeymen - strangers in this world, living before Holy God. The world thinks we are strange because we do not run in the same flood of dissipation (1 Pt. 4:4). We need to reflect the praise of God and the worship of Christ through our actions and relationships with others. It is here, where Jesus said in John 13:35, by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. This is where we find God's work of art: love for mankind and love between mankind. We on earth are the living images of Almighty God. We are the work of his fingertips; we were formed by his very breath that gave us life. Man made idols are without life, hope and resilience. It is a sad but true statement when the Bible says: those who make them are like them, as well as those who worship them.

How can our lives today be a work of art that reflects the love and life of Almighty God? When people look at you, do they see the Master's mark of craftsmanship? Do they also see the etchings of hardship and determination? Moreover, do they see the polishing of mercy and grace that once were cracks and crevices? As we are a work in progress, may our worship be to the Creator who is worthy of worship. May God's artwork of love shine through you to touch people with the peace and hope of Christ.

3.6.08

Theology of Worship Thursday

What is your response to God in worship? Have you ever considered God as the one who is seeking you to be found in Him?

Worship is: a response in giving worth to God (worth-ship). Ideal worship is an active authentic response to God, declaring and praising him for who he is according to Scripture; through that we celebrate the life, death, resurrection and the return of Christ – overthrowing the powers of evil. God is the seeker, we are the responders, and freely worship Him, knowing that He freely loves and receives us. Worship begins with two words: thank you. An authentic response to God defines worship; music and the arts are used when necessary. Worship is not about the person, but about the God who created all things, which have passed and exist. Worship is not about what a person gains from the experience, but what is given to God as a response. What God gives to man through worship is unconditional and by His choosing only. God does not base the amount of grace and/or gifts given to man on the determination of how much He is praised. God has already given grace and every spiritual blessing freely to man, on the account of His righteousness.

Man responds to His holiness, fullness and acts of His righteousness and faithfulness. What man could not do in the flesh, God did by sending Jesus and the Holy Spirit – in that we are justified by faith. God first choose us to become His children and to grow and to walk in the likeness of Jesus through grace. We respond as a result to this calling as articulated by Scripture. Because of His great love we give thanks and offer our bodies as living sacrifices – not dead works (Rm. 12:1-2). Perspective comes when we worship. Whether read, prayed, spoken, acknowledged, sung, shouted, visualized, acted or in stillness and silence – all is a response in the context of worship. The responsibility of worship and worship leading is to maintain a biblical approach which upholds sound doctrine and biblical interpretation. Our action of worship is to engage, connect and respond to God through obedience and in joy not in compulsion – according to Scripture (Hos. 6:6). We are to acknowledge God rightfully by regarding Him in his respective place.

What are some other ways or unexpected instances where God has reveled himself to you - inviting you to respond to Him in worship? Email Response

May God refresh your step this day, as you soak-up each moment and repond to his Splendor.

3.5.08

Double-Shot Wednesday - We are catching up for two days.

Tuesdays now will be "Tech Tuesdays." and Wednesdays will be "Worship Song Wednesday."

Here we go with the Tech blog:

BD's 9 Step Guitar Stringing Recipe (Tech-Tuesday; Yesterday's Article)

Many of you may have a system down as there are 1001 ways to string a guitar. Here are a few tips I generally follow.

Ingredients: Guitar, new strings, pliers, neck rest system and cleaner-polish.

1. Rest Guitar on a neck rest system to ease stress.
2. Don't rip off those strings yet! Try this idea.
  - a. Change one string at a time; leave the remaining strings on until complete.
  - b. Work outer-strings first to inner strings: E and E, A and B, D and G. (as shown).  
This method ensures the fret board and truss rod from bending too much during typical string changing. While keeping tension on the guitar with the old strings as you change-out with the new strings one by one, the guitar truss rod will not freak-out.
3. Put on each new string, thread the string through the machine head with one hand, keep tension on the string slack with the other hand.
4. After threading the string through, at the top end of the string, bend it back once and hold down to make the string lock over the existing loop. This ensures no slippage.

Wind the number of loops per peg-shaft.

D – 4    G - 5  
 A – 3    B - 6  
 E – 2    E - 6

5. The string needs to be wound completely down to the peg-shaft over the nut to make each loop smooth as it winds. Be sure to check/press bridge pins down on the other end of the guitar before and during winding to ensure the string's seating.
6. As you wind the machine head to tighten the string, keep tension down on the slack to ensure a smooth wind around the peg-shaft. Tune-up to the string's tuning note.
7. After initial tuning of new string, take one hand near the sound hole and locate the new string. On the top of the fretboard, press down on the new string with your thumb and hold; with fingers 3-4 pull up on the string to stretch. Work your way down the fretboard as a combination of thumb and fingers – pulling the string easily from frets 12, 7, 5, 3. This process helps stretch and breaks in the string more evenly.
8. Repeat above steps on other strings – working your way from outer to inner strings.
9. Wipe-down strings and guitar with Martin Guitar Polish.

Play at 350 degrees as long as you like – caution: fret board may still be hot!

### 3.5.08 Wednesday "Worship Song Wednesday."

Glad you're here - today is a Worship Song Wednesday. Each Wednesday of every week we will be conducting a song study of new and popular praise and worship tunes.

Today we will be discussing the song entitled “Revelation Song,” by Jeannie Lee Riddle. This song is based on Revelation 4:8 which says: “holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

First off, what I love about this song is that it engages the reality and thought of Christ’s Return and forever Reign in heaven and on earth. There are not many songs that center on Christ's Return or the Revelation. Some people see the Revelation as a taboo topic because of the many varying interpretations of eschatology and the last times. On the other hand, some people see the return of Christ and the end times as a terrifying event, because thoughts turn towards the Apocalypse, battles, gnashing of teeth and the fiery pit. Whoa! That in itself is a scary thought for those who are without Christ. What is agreeable is that Christ is returning to Reign and we will forever be with the Lord.

The concept of this song is to convey the Reign of Christ and His triumphant power. From the perspective of the songwriter and those who sing the words, we are in awe and wonder of His glorious power, splendor and majesty. Holy is the Lamb, who is seated on the Throne! What awesome truthful imagery!

When the song opens, we hear majestic chord shifts. The tonic chord moves to the minor five, to the seventh and lastly to the fifth chords (layman’s terms please: D – Am7 – C and G). This progression moves closely to the circle of fifths. The second chord in the tune (Am7) is the minor five chord. Hearing the progression move to this chord is uncommon in most worship music because you expect to hear a Major chord and not a minor five. Upon hearing this chord, at least in my opinion, it produces an ethereal and mysterious texture that denotes emotions of stillness wonder and awe. This is perfect for the song. When we think about God's only perfect Son, who was slain and died on the cross on our behalf, we are compelled to give Him worth. He is worthy of our praise, not just because of the death, but also because of His resurrection power, return and Eternal Reign.

Notice how the melody line moves upwards on the words: “sing a new song to the one who sits on.” We see the Lamb seated upon the throne high and lifted up. The melody gives us this ascending depiction; this is a great example of what we refer to as “text painting,” (lyrics and melody that denote emotion or personification). When we move to the chorus section, we have the words: “holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.” Notice again, the melody moves upward to convey the angels’ praise as in the key Scripture verse. (you know, where the angels are never ceasing to render praise to God). Along with the ascending melody, we have the return of the majestic chordal shifts. You almost don’t even notice the re-cycling of chords because the melody is doing something different from the verses. This is precisely how melodies can appear new and fresh; they sound different all the time when they are varied and inverted against simple chord progressions.

Through the song’s chord choices, melody and lyric content, we have a glimpse of the praise and worship activity taking place in the presence of the Great I AM. What would your response be standing below looking above to the Lord on high, reigning from His

throne? Can you imagine the One who is seated on heaven's mercy seat, calling you and I to worship, to be invited, to take part in his loving fellowship of peace, as we join with all creation, to utter praise and adoration to the Creator? Wow! This song rocks and well conveys God's beauty and holiness and mankind's place in worship.

The songwriter urges us to take into inventory all of the worth, mercy and grace that is found in Christ, who makes us complete. God and His everlasting love for us is our everything. He is our everything. Our response is to adore Him.

Jenny, thank you for sharing your heart song and message to be embraced by all worshipers, as we worship the Lamb, the Lord God Almighty, who was it is and is to come.

Check out and purchase this song! Get the sheet music, the audio reference, piano vocal charts, orchestration and/or our newest product: ClickTracks - Preview. Take your worship team to a whole new level - today! Buy The Revelation Song Today at Praise Charts.

### 3.3.08

God's Covenant, Relationship, Holiness and Our Response.

Good Morning or Afternoon - where ever you are in the world! Glad you choose to join us on today's posting! Remember, today is the day of our Newsletter - comin' atcha' later today; be sure to stop by and Sign Up.

Here we go with today's read...

Covenants between men during Old Testament times, were used to bind good intentions and loyalty between parties. However, covenants between God and man were more significant and serious than ones made between mortals. Overall, negotiating with God is never an option. God offers a promise and a relationship; God gives and man receives. Man is instructed by God to maintain the relationship by acts of righteousness. God called out to Abraham in Genesis 17: 1 and said: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless." Now, can you imagine God appearing to you and saying boldly to walk before Him and be blameless? In the lives of Noah, Abraham, Moses and David, we see how God created these covenants to seal his acceptance and relationship with man. These covenants pointed to God's pursuit of his people; they also foreshadow God's plan of salvation through the work of the Messiah, as Jesus Christ truly is the better covenant (Heb. 7:21-22). God is the initiator, we are the respondents. Question: how do we respond to Holy God in this offering of an incredible relationship?

Holiness is the human appropriation of God's grace. God draws people to himself and not only invites us into an intimate relationship but commands us to imitate his Holiness ("Be holy, because I am holy." 1Pt. 1:16). God requires holiness. How does this look in our daily lives, relationships, home-life and worship? What comes to mind for me is humility: that I, a wretched sinner is loved, accepted and redeemed by Almighty God. We are redeemed! We are purchased back to God and set free from the confines of sin,

brokenness and shame. Out of our relationship with God, how can we respond in any other way but to live lives of committed thankfulness? Doing good, acts of righteousness, acts of praise, works of invisible and visible hospitality and loving others better than ourselves are a few of many responses. What is your response today? I pray for you on this month of March, that God fills your soul with songs of thanks and praise, while you walk in his holiness. May the beautiful words of this timeless hymn echo from the chambers of your souls to spring up into a declaration of praise:

But when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in.  
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,