

Small Church/Big Worship —

10 Ways the Senior Pastor Can Make This Sunday Remarkable

I believe the senior pastor of any church is the CLW: Chief Lead Worshiper. He sets the tone for corporate worship. For the solo pastor of a smaller church, he may be actually leading the worship, or at least doing most of the behind-the-scenes work for Sunday.

Here are ten ideas to reshape your worship experience.

1. PLAN YOUR SEGUES.

Let's face it, smaller churches are known for poorly planned, start-and-stop, no-flow services. Small churches can produce a "wow-factor" for guests (and regular attendees) by simply creating intentional transitions from one service element to the next. (See blog series on www.worshipteamcoach.com for more on segues.)

2. CREATE A MUSICAL BED FOR SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER.

Underscore any scripture reading or longer prayer with light guitar or piano, or even soft recorded music. If using a recorded song, instruct the sound tech to avoid the abrupt on/off. Those little plastic "slider-things" are called "faders" for a reason.

3. ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION, ONE: CUT THE NUMBER OF WORSHIP SONGS IN HALF.

Inform the team (yes, even the pianist) that since they only have three songs versus six, you're "strongly encouraging" them to memorize the words and music. They may balk, but throw it out as a challenge. If they rise to it, they will find the worship experience to be much deeper because of their ability to sing and play from the heart. And since the team won't have their heads buried in their stands, they will draw in your congregation more than usual. *[If they really won't buy it, put a sanctified wager on who looks at their notes more: you during your message or the team during their songs.]*

4. ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION, TWO: GET RID OF THE MUSICAL CLUTTER.

Ask the music director/worship leader to encourage the team to play *only half* of what they normally would during the verses of each song. Less strumming on the guitar, less beats on the drums, fewer fingers on the piano, fewer voices on the mics (the others can sing, just "off mic"), and sing only the melody, no parts. Heck, you might even want to take a few instruments completely out of the mix. Here's why. First fact: verses usually contain more words than the chorus or bridge. Second fact: most worship teams overplay. Couple those facts and you get musical clutter competing with worship.

5. ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION, THREE: CUT YOUR ANNOUNCEMENT TIME BY 75% (OR EVEN 100%).

Make announcements that only pertain to 60% or more of the church. While you're at it, script them. That doesn't mean read it word for word; it's just a clearer path to succinctness. And...(file

this in "I hate to say it")...you're probably not as good on the fly as you think you are. I know I'm not.

6. TIE EACH REMAINING ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE VISION OR MISSION OF YOUR CHURCH.

"We're trying to reach the five-square mile neighborhood that surrounds our church building. A significant number of those people drive past our church every day. What kind of impression do we give them when our paint is peeling, our gutters are sagging and weeds are overtaking the landscape. We're having a massive work day this next Saturday..."

7. VISUALLY CONNECT WITH EMOTIONS VERSUS INTELLECT.

When using PowerPoint for announcements and the message, use pictures to emotionally reinforce the point instead of a written summary of what you just said. People remember pictures and emotions more than bullet points.

8. STOP LETTING YOUR SOUND GUY PLAY THE PROMISEKEEPERS '99 CD BEFORE THE SERVICE.

Create a mix CD of uptempo, fresh songs that will set a great tone as people walk in. Bonus: if possible, use your CD creation software to crossfade the songs. This will eliminate "dead air". You can also create a cross-fading playlist on iTunes and run it straight from your projection computer.

9. CHOOSE ONE ELEMENT THAT OCCURS EACH WEEK AND SCRAP IT.

Or, at the very least, change it significantly. (Communicate really, *really* well to those it might affect...)

10. MAKE PRAYER DURING YOUR CORPORATE WORSHIP BOTH CORPORATE AND WORSHIP.

Change your prayer time from being *request-driven* (Betty's cousin's former classmate is having cataract surgery) to being *worship-driven* (we seek His face and give Him glory and honor before asking for anything...*hint: pray scriptures*). And from being *pastor-led* to *pastor-prompted*. For example, when praying for those who are sick, invite people to say aloud the first name the person. Then after a moment, pray for those names as group. (Again, a great place to pray scripture.) God doesn't need the details...you know, as an omniscient Being and all that. This works for praying for lost people, people who need jobs, and--be bold on this one--corporate sin to be confessed.

Worship leaders and larger churches, you can try some of this stuff, too. But I want to encourage the senior pastors of smaller churches that transforming their worship services is in their grasp. Small, continuous efforts over time will create a new culture of corporate worship in your church.

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For more ideas like these go to www.worshipteamcoach.com.