

What We Need in Worship Leaders

By Gordon MacDonald

Here are five things I believe every congregation should consider when choosing a worship leader.

1. How the worship leader prays in public. Are the leader's prayers marked by deep reverence? Do they reflect an awareness that every decade of an adult's life brings new issues and preoccupations needing intercession? Some younger people know this; others don't. Are the prayers purposed to accomplish more than just segue between songs?

2. The dignity given to public reading of Scripture. The people need to hear the Bible read with a quality that rivals that of a good soloist.

3. The songs the worship leader picks. They should be singable (so we can hum them during the work week; sing them if we go to jail, like Paul and Silas); realistic (not schlocky, with vocabulary we'd never use outside church); honest (not promising God things we really have no intention of being or doing); and broad (representative of the varied singing traditions of the last several centuries; old songs with new instrumentation is a great idea).

Worship music that speaks to us is both timely and timeless.

4. The use of corporate silence and encouragement of historical reflection. Not all worship is done to the beat of a drum. We need expressions that speak to all the senses. And we need connection to the ancient expressions of our faith. Note how the worship leader feels about the great historic traditions of creed, liturgy, and sacramental symbol that remind us that folks have been worshiping for centuries before we arrived.

5. How the worship leader lays the carpet for a sermon to reach both heart and mind. Are the worshipers prepared emotionally and theologically to be encouraged, challenged, or reproved?

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