

Leading a Rehearsal

I have sometimes fallen into thinking that a rehearsal is a necessary but 'unspiritual' part of leading a worship team. However, so much of the way you lead a band, lead a congregation in to truly charismatic worship, and learn how to pursue God together stems from your time in rehearsals.

Here's some top-tips for leading a rehearsal well.

- 1) Begin with and continue in prayer. Invite God into the process from the very start. Worship together before you rehearse together. Stop and pray at any point, even on creative decisions. After all, the God we worship created music. He knows what he's doing and has a few ideas to pass on.
- 2) Come prepared. A rehearsal is not the context for hearing and learning a song for the first time. Learn your parts beforehand so your time together can focus on playing as a team, working on dynamics, and finessing arrangements rather than getting your fingers round the individual parts. This means sending out songs, arrangement ideas, and parts to the team before the rehearsal.
- 3) Use rehearsal time wisely. If time is short (which it so often is), don't feel you have to play every song from beginning to end. Prioritise intros, endings and transitions between songs. Give time to difficult musical moments and allow space for people to ask questions. Pause occasionally to ask, "Did that work?" Invite feedback and discussion but learn how to make decisions quickly as a team. If you're leading the team, know when to gently draw a line under the discussion and move on.
- 4) Model discipline. It's likely that you have limited time so do all you can to avoid wasting precious minutes. I'm very aware of how easily I can get distracted when I have a guitar round my neck, so I need to use self-control in rehearsal contexts. Being disciplined in a rehearsal means arriving early, honouring people's time by not running over, playing only when you need to play, putting your phone away, listening to others when they speak (including sound engineers!).
- 5) Rehearse moments of spontaneity. This sounds like a contradiction, but Jonathan David Helser wisely says, "Spontaneity is the reward for preparation." The more prepared you are, the more freedom you'll have when plans change or when you sense God leading in a particular direction. The reason the great jazz improvisers can do what they do is because they have devoted hours each day of their lives to practice.
- 6) Finally, remember to hold preparation and creativity together. Be disciplined with your planning, honour people's time and come ready. But don't hold the plan so tightly that you leave no room for the unexpected. Some of the most precious moments in corporate worship happen when a well-prepared team is free enough to follow where God is leading and remains open to the gifts of the Spirit.