

# UNDERSTANDING AND SELECTING WORSHIP SONGS

## **Declarative/Celebratory-**

This could be a song that declares who God is, what He does, His character, and His power. These are great songs to open up a worship set with. They are often written in 3rd person. They might use phrases like: He has, He did, He does.

## **Testimonial-**

These types of songs might be first person, but the person is not God. I do songs like “There Was Jesus”. These songs tell the story of what He did for me. These would be the songs about the prodigal son. He found me, He healed me, He restored me. He saved me. All great songs, but still not speaking or singing directly to God.

## **Psych 101-**

These types of songs are a lot of what you hear on Christian Radio. They often talk about how I feel, or how God makes me feel. While these songs are absolutely critical in the life of Christians, they are often not lyrically directed at God. Lyrics like “You have my attention”, “I am who you say I am, ” and “You make me new.” These songs may not really be congregational worship songs. But your congregation might put them on in the car and sing them on the way home.

## **Intimate -**

These are the songs I always try to get to at least once or twice in a worship set. These are songs directly talking to God; they could be: “You are worthy to be praised”, “You are the beginning and the end”, “Jesus, (I or we) love You.” “Come Holy Spirit.” These are songs inviting people to engage with the presence of God that has already been in the room the entire time. These are the songs when I try the hardest to read the room. These are also the songs I often try to create flex-time in and also give back to the congregation. There is so much value in the congregation hearing themselves sing all together. It is powerful, and in congregational worship, it is often the only place this can happen.

## **What to consider when selecting a new song for the Sunday Morning 15 minute Congregational Worship Set:**

- Are the lyrics biblically sound and consistent with what we believe?
- Is the song a congregational worship song? The band needs to be able to play it. The singers on stage need to be able to sing it. The congregation needs to be able to join in and follow it.
- Does the song point people toward God (Intimate- songs talking directly to God)?
  - o Examples: “Blessed Be Your Name,” “Better Is One Day,” “Amazing Grace.”

- Is it a song that the congregation can follow and sing (not too complicated or pitched too high for them to reach)?
- Is it a song the band can play?
- Is it a song that we can find or create charts for?
- Does the song encourage genuine congregational participation rather than simply becoming a performance?

**What to consider when selecting a new song that falls into a Performance Song:**

- Are the lyrics biblically sound and consistent with what we believe?
- Does the song have a message to it that would encourage the congregation at a time of need?
- Can the song support a series or message that is being preached from the front?
- Is it a song the band can play?
- Is it a song that we can find or create charts for?

**What to consider when creating your song set for the 15 minute worship set: By Charlie Hines**

1. Are your songs, the way you are singing them and what you are singing scripturally accurate? Do the lyrics of the song contradict what the Word of God says? I do not include songwriter liberties, like two Holy's instead of singing three Holy's. In one of my own songs, I wanted to use the lyric "Wounded Healer, Broken Savior," knowing that Jesus was promised that not a bone would be broken; however, in terms of communion or his body being broken for our sins, I made sure it was biblically sound before introducing it into my Rotation.
2. Is it tone deaf for what is happening in your community? Maybe don't sing songs about fire falling if your city is dealing with the aftermath of devastating fires. Maybe don't sing about the water washing over us if your community is recovering from tragic loss of life from flooding.
3. Is the song keyed for congregational worship, or is it keyed for the worship team to perform the crap out of that song, but then forces the congregation to sit back and watch but not participate? Key songs for the congregation to vocally reach and worship with you, without having to be a professionally trained vocalist.
4. Arrange the songs for the least proficient player on stage that weekend. Avoid over-producing a song if you don't have players to perform it. Arrange the song not to honor the record, but to honor the spirit of the song with the team you have. If you are missing musicians, stay simple and worship God. Sometimes these worship sets are the best worship experiences the church has ever had.
5. Don't be afraid to mash up songs. Some songs are super wordy, but the congregation explodes when you get to that one part of the song that everyone sings. Don't be afraid to take that one part of a song and tag it to the end of a similar song.

6. Warning: strip your songs down to the bare minimum and make sure you can actually worship before building them up with the band. If you have to have the full band to pull the song off, that is a red flag. If you can worship with the song being sung with just a piano or guitar, then it should work with any size band.
7. Do the short version. When you get your songs from the concert youtube footage, you have no idea what happened in that venue before that song was played in a congregational setting.
8. Strive to have a flow to your worship set without having breaks. If you have breaks, make sure they are intentional for giving a testimony, reading a scripture or giving a prayer. The sweet spot is when you have a great flow to your worship set without the quiet breaks between songs unless they are planned.

\*\*\*Remember, you have kids, elderly adults, disabled people, and a great diversity of people who did not come for an 11-minute concert version.

I hope these provide some clarity around how to effectively plan a worship set and choose Songs.

Blessings,  
Charlie Hines