



Establishing Effective Worship Teams:

Part One Introduction

Working with Jesus

iFOLLOW

The iFollow Discipleship Series

About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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Establishing Effective Worship Teams: Part One - Introduction

This presentation is designed for people who desire to serve Jesus Christ and help lead others to Him.

Learning Objectives

1. To be reminded about why we worship
2. To understand the importance of intentional planning of the corporate worship experience
3. To consider the value of establishing effective worship teams in the church

Content Outline

1. The Need for Worship
2. The Importance of Intentional Worship Planning
3. Establishing Worship Teams
4. Benefits of Worship Teams
5. The Back-Story of Worship

Background Material for the Presenter

The story is told about one of the famous eighteenth century classical composers who had a rebellious son. This boy gave his parents terrible heartaches. One of the things the boy enjoyed doing to make his father upset was to come in late at night after his dad and mom had gone to bed, and before going to his own room, sit down at his dad's piano in the living room. Slowly, loudly, he'd play a simple scale, note by note, deliberately. And he would intentionally stop the scale right before the final note, leaving the scale unfinished. Then he would go to his bedroom.

His father, hearing the scale minus the final note, would toss and turn in his bed, going crazy, his mind unable



iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus
Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Establish-
ing Effective
Worship
Teams:
Part One
Introduction

1

to relax because the scale was unresolved. Finally, in consternation, he would groggily stumble down the stairs to his piano and hit the final note of the scale. Only then would his mind and body surrender to sleep.

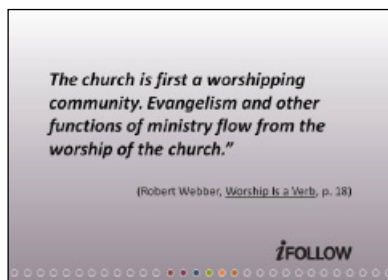
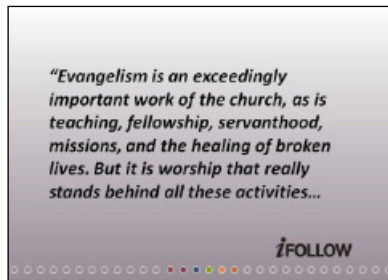
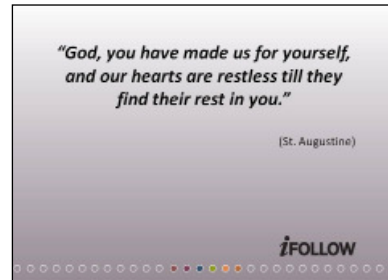
We have all been created with the need for completion and resolution in our lives. So when we don't experience that, we feel frustrated. We are half ourselves, like there is a need for something more. Thousands of people live their lives in search of something more, never quite sure where to look, often experimenting in ways that are not effective or healthy and that do not produce the desired result.

St. Augustine, one of the early church fathers of Christianity, noted this reality about life and penned the words, "God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you." This is one of the central truths of Scripture. We were created by God with a God-shaped hole that can only be truly filled by God. Another way of saying it is, when we pay attention to God in our lives and how God encompasses and embraces and fills all of life, we are brought to a sense of completeness and resolution like nothing else can do for us.

When we realize that the whole point of worship is to pay attention to God as the creator and sustainer and redeemer of life, to focus our hearts on God and God's purpose for life, we begin to sense the absolute value of worship to the human experience. Worship is one of God's most effective tools for bringing us to a place of completion and resolution in our lives.

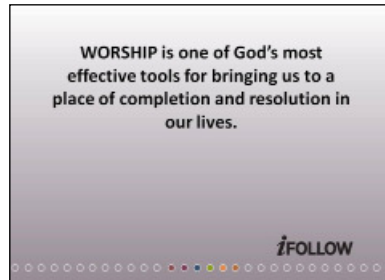
Yet the tragic irony is that the way so many congregations worship on any given Sabbath—the lack of intentionality, the lack of preparation and planning, the lack of focus, the lack of anything in the service that is engaging and meaningful—would lead one to think that corporate worship is not very important or less important than the other activities of the church. Our practice reveals our true belief and values.

"Evangelism is an exceedingly important work of the church, as is teaching, fellowship, servanthood, missions, and the healing of broken lives," writes Robert Webber in his book *Worship Is A Verb*. "But it is worship that re-



ally stands behind all these activities. The church is first a worshipping community. Evangelism and other functions of ministry flow from the worship of the church.” (page 18)

Worship as God’s tool to connect us with Him and bring us completion and resolution in our lives is of primary significance. But if the way churches plan and facilitate the worship experience often is not as effective as it could be, then this divine tool doesn’t accomplish what it was designed to. Perhaps sloppy and poorly executed worship experiences actually increase our sense of incompleteness, like the composer painfully experienced when his son left the final note of the scale unplayed. That is actually the way many worshipers describe their feelings when they attend church services.



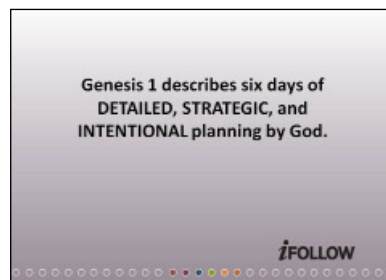
Importance of Intentional Worship Planning

Here is a typical scenario. You are sitting in your church sanctuary between Sabbath school and church. Announcements have droned on for about 20 minutes. The well-meaning elder has virtually read the entire bulletin. He then exits the platform. Mrs. Tinkerboom then begins to play the organ quietly. You recall the music from the last funeral you attended. Mrs. Tinkerboom plays the same piece every Sabbath. Mrs. Tinkerboom has been the organist at your church ever since you could walk.

After three false starts, four men walk onto the church platform, kneel for a moment, sit down and the service begins. You’ve memorized their every move. By the time the Scripture reading, the offering call, the pastoral prayer, and the special music all plod past you, like they do every Sabbath, in the same order, with almost the same participants ... you start taking a trip, in your mind’s eye. You are somewhere else. Your church services may not be like this. But many are.

What’s tragic about this kind of scenario is that it is so much in contrast to the very nature of the God who is being worshipped. Consider the story of Creation told in Genesis 1 and the very first message it communicates about God. Before God rests from His work of creation, before He presides over the first Sabbath worship service with Adam and Eve, notice how he plans and prepares.

Genesis 1 describes six days of detailed, strategic and intentional planning. God has a plan. It begins with bringing order out of chaos (verses 1-2). He then fills and infuses the order with more and more life. Each day builds upon and fills up the previous day’s creation to maximize what He’s done so far. Each day develops



iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus
Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Establish-
ing Effective
Worship
Teams:
Part One
Introduction

3

more complex life that requires the previous days' completed activity. All six days possess the total building blocks

necessary for a maximum experience on the pinnacle of the week, the Sabbath rest.

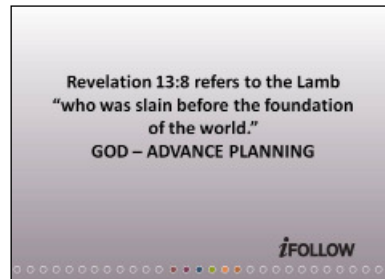
Imagine the worship experience Adam and Eve enjoy because of God's approach. The story of Creation is evidence that at the heart of God's nature is a creativity that flourishes with advance planning, intentionality, strategic thinking and action. There's nothing during that week that happens haphazardly or without thought and foresight. God doesn't just throw stuff together, hoping for the best results. He doesn't come to that first Friday evening and suddenly say, *"Well let's see, tomorrow's my first Sabbath worship experience with my creation! I wonder what can I put together for the service?"*

No, God brings order out of chaos at the very beginning of the week and then intentionally infuses that order with every kind of life imaginable as each day goes by, an ever-increasing energy as the week progresses, a Spirit-breathed infusion into the entire well-orchestrated process, so that when the Sabbath comes, it results in an amazing, life-enhancing, God-glorifying experience between Creator and creation.

There's another text that alludes to this important attribute of God's nature. The verse is about the Lamb "who was slain before the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8) What does that mean? Even before our world was created, God had made plans for the salvation of a fallen world. The Lamb would be sacrificed "in the fullness of time." Humanity would be redeemed. The plan was put in place. An intentional strategy for dealing with sin was developed long before the need arose.

The book of Revelation refers again and again to that Christ-event as the motivation for worship among God's people. "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created ... Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever." (Revelation 4:11, 5:13) Once again, God's advance planning, the divine intentionality, for both creation and redemption provides the context and content for the experience of meaningful worship.

If intentionality, foresight, and advance planning are core attributes of the divine nature, and worship is about focusing on God and giving value to what God values, why is so much of worship activity so haphazard? Why are worship services so often thrown together without much creative thought, planning and preparation? Why do so many people choose to stay away from church because they consider it boring, irrelevant, and not meaningful? Is it possible that the very lack of strategic and effective planning for worship might be a factor in worship that often does not help to bring the sense of completion



and resolution people are so desperately looking for? What could it look like for a congregation to place an emphasis on effective, intentional, creative worship planning?

Establishing Worship Teams

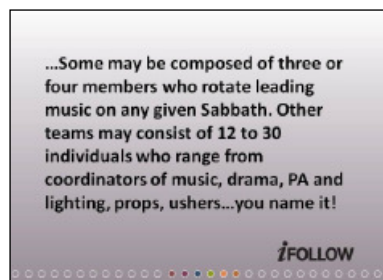
Another of the core values of the divine nature is collaboration. Notice again the Genesis 1 story of creation. The Hebrew word for God here is **Elohim** which is in the plural form, Gods. So when it comes to creating humans, God says, “Let **us** make human kind in **our** image and in **our** likeness.” (Genesis 1:26) The rest of Scripture alludes to this reality that all members of the God-head were intimately involved in the creation process: God the Father was the creative thought, God the Son was the creative expression, and God the Spirit was the creative energy. All three personalities-in-one worked in perfect collaboration to both plan and facilitate creation. And all three personalities-in-one worked in perfect collaboration for the redemption and restoration of the creation. The divine image is one of relationship and creative collaboration to accomplish the divine purposes.

This is why the New Testament (especially 2 Corinthians 12) describes the Church as “the body of Christ,” a body made of up of many parts, all of equal value and significance, working together for a common purpose; to bring glory to God. Creative collaboration is at the heart of God’s image and therefore at the heart of the life of the Church which lives out the divine life on earth.

So should it be any surprise that when the church gathers to worship there will be lots of creative collaboration among the members of that local expression of God’s body to plan for that worship experience? After all, that’s the nature of the very God we are worshipping every Sabbath.

So let’s take a practical look at how to establish worship teams in the church that will enhance the weekly worship experience.

What is a worship team? A worship team is a dedicated group of interdependent, collaborative people committed to prayerfully plan, coordinate and lead public worship. Teams may vary in size. Some may be composed of three or four members who rotate leading music on any given Sabbath. Other teams may consist of 12 to 30 individuals, including coordinators for music, drama, sound and lighting, props, ushers, etc. The focus of worship



teams will vary as well. In some congregations, the worship team simply provides music each Sabbath. Other churches spend time planning well in advance, in cooperation with the pastor's sermons, to select themes, Scripture readings, music, etc.

What is the difference between a worship committee and a worship team? Usually a worship committee gives broad guidance to worship services, developing a standard order of service or liturgy. Worship teams are involved more in the details of planning weekly services and actually helping to lead worship. A committee is usually composed of people selected to provide representation. Teams are built on the gifts and interests of the people involved. A growing number of church leaders are interested in utilizing a team to help plan and lead worship on Sabbath.

A worship team can help raise the level of planning, the excellence, the thematic focus, and the relevance of the music. A team can help remove distractions. It can nudge people beyond simply "going through the motions" to provide an uninterrupted and much anticipated focus on God, which in turn facilitates a deeper human experience of the completeness and resolution we were created for.

What is the role of the pastor in a worship team? Leading worship is often relegated to the pastor. He or she is seen as the "qualified" or "trained" professional to plan and implement worship services. We often separate clergy and laity in the body of Christ. Yet the Bible defines pastoring (or shepherding) as one of many spiritual gifts in the body. Since Peter calls believers a "kingdom of priests" (1 Peter 2:9), all God's people have been called to "minister" (serve) in the body with the unique gifts each has been given. Pastors have unique gifts that vary. Their gifts, united with other gifted members, provide a blend of abilities to give a "whole" sense to worship.

Ellen White describes this issue, going so far as to put "preaching" (often seen as the pinnacle of the worship hour) in context. She says, "Let ministers devote more of his time to educating than to preaching." (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p 20) She condemns pastors who "do the labor instead of educating others to share the responsibility." (*Review & Herald*, Nov. 6, 1888) We deny the New Testament teaching that we are a "body" of many parts when we expect one person to coordinate and lead worship. As one senior pastor of a growing church observed, "Worship planning is more than a one man/one woman job."

The focus of worship teams will vary as well. In some churches, the worship team simply provides music each Sabbath. Other churches spend time planning well in advance, in cooperation with the pastor's sermons, and plan Scripture readings, special music...and the list goes on.

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THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR:

"Let ministers devote more of his time to educating than to preaching"

(*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 20)

"Our ministers often do the labor instead of educating others to share the responsibility in the case"

(*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 6, 1888)

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TOP TEN BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING WORSHIP TEAMS:

#1. FOCUSED PLANNING

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Worship planning and leadership through worship teams is one of the ways the Church lives out its image of the divine nature.

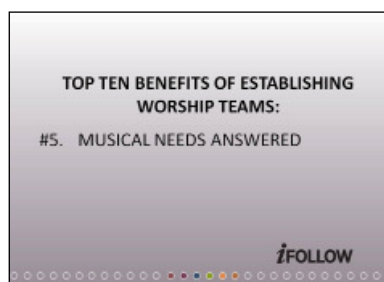
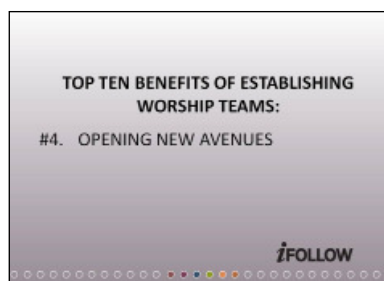
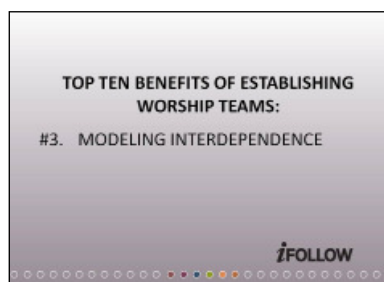
Benefits of Worship Teams

1. Focused Planning: A worship team provides an intentional focus on the planning of worship services. A team is dedicated to providing a worship atmosphere that glorifies God. This is the calling of the team. It is not a “task” but a “ministry” to take seriously. Worship teams understand the vision and mission of the local church and see their involvement as a way to move the church toward this vision.

2. Increased Participation: Worship teams, by nature, increase the level of participation both on the platform and for the entire congregation. When a “team” of people plan and lead worship, the number of people involved goes up. Many worship teams take on the challenge of bringing excellence to the service. That means utilizing a number of gifted people to provide a smooth service. Worship teams can also think of creatively connecting the congregation in worship through appropriate responses throughout the service.

3. Modeling Interdependence: As more churches move toward a gift-based approach to ministry, the desire to build “interdependent” teams is raised. Interdependence is the concept that each member values each other member for their unique and diverse contributions to the whole. In other words, “None of us is as smart as all of us.” An effective worship team models for the rest of the congregation that ministry is best done in groups.

4. Opening New Avenues: It is important to nudge people out of their ruts, to encourage them to sit up and take notice. Worship teams can enhance the worship experience by trying new methods to communicate the gospel. Ellen White suggests, “Whatever may



have been your former practice, it is not necessary to repeat it again and again in the same way. God would have new and untried methods to follow. Break in on the people—surprise them.” (*Evangelism*, page 125)

5. Musical Needs Met: How many churches are desperate for gifted musicians who can communicate a message skillfully through voice or instrument? Worship teams raise the level of music quality, for the glory of God, not any person. Rehearsals and scheduled practices say to

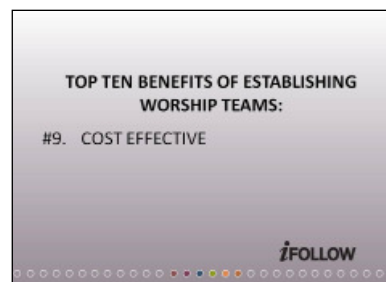
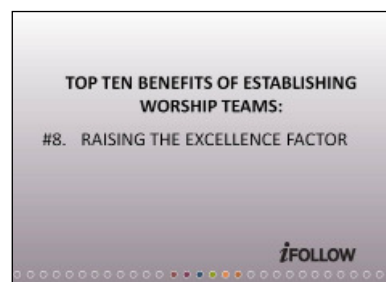
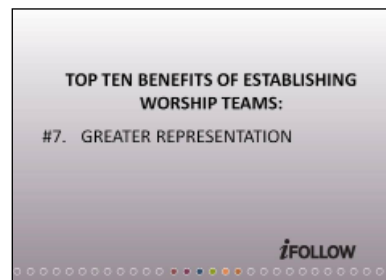
participants, “We want to give our best to God.” A worship team may also provide opportunities to teach and mentor budding musicians.

6. Shares the Burden: Many times a pastor’s well-planned Monday schedule is tossed into a blender on Tuesday because of an unplanned church crisis. That’s the nature of the work. Wednesday’s bulletin deadline produces a cute sermon title, a quick choice of Scripture for reading, and a hymn or two picked out by the bulletin secretary. What a blessing and relief a worship team can be to a pastor who is open to working with others on planning Sabbath activities.

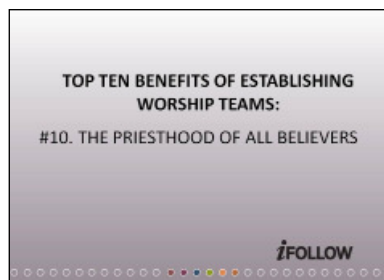
7. Greater Representation: A worship team that uses assessment tools and is composed of a variety of gifted people from the congregation will raise the “connect” factor. When a single person plans all services, the worship “lens” becomes quite narrow. A team that is open to suggestions and plans a variety of elements in worship can help more people connect with the worship experience. Some worship leaders half-jokingly say, “We try to offend everyone equally!”

8. Raising the Excellence Factor: Sometimes we confuse “Just as I Am” theology with “Give of Your Best to the Master” when it comes to worship. Worship teams raise the value of humble service and excellent service. It is no honor to God to “throw something together” at the last minute. A careful study of the sanctuary services in the Old Testament teaches us of the care that went into preparations for worship.

9. Cost Effective: Many churches pay for the services of an organist. There are some churches that go beyond this in providing a complete array of music services. By utilizing



and building a gifted team to lead music, churches may save costs spent on outside help. Such a team may also work to train others in the congregation, coaching and nurturing music talent for God's glory. Instead of paying money for someone to come and play at your church, invest that money in lessons, instruments, or seminars for your worship team to develop their gifts. What an affirmation that would be!



10. The Priesthood of All Believers: The 16th century Reformation reminded us that we have no need to approach the throne of grace through an earthly priest. We are a “priesthood” of believers (1 Peter 2), and priests have a ministry. What better way to emphasize this important Protestant doctrine than by modeling it on Sabbath morning. By involving a variety of members of your congregation in leading worship, your church upholds the belief that everyone is a minister in the body of Christ because everyone has been given a spiritual gift.

The Back-Story of Worship

A group of researchers studying the effects of stress used twin lambs as subjects of an interesting experiment. For the first part of the experiment, one of the lambs was placed in a pen all alone. Electrical pulsing devices were hooked up at several feeding locations in the pen. As the lamb wandered to each feeding station in the enclosure, the researchers gave the lamb a short burst of electrical current. Each time this happened, the lamb would twitch and scamper to another part of the pen. The lamb never returned to the same location once it had been shocked. This was repeated at each feeding station until the frightened lamb stood in the center of the pen shaking uncontrollably. He had no place to run. There were shocks everywhere. Completely overcome and filled with anxiety and stress, the lamb collapsed in a nervous breakdown.

The second part of the experiment involved the first lamb's twin brother. The researchers put him in the same pen. Only this time they put his mother in the pen with him. Presently, they shocked him at the feeding stations. Like his twin brother, he immediately twitched and ran; only he ran directly to his mother. He snuggled close to her while she grunted softly in his ear.

She apparently reassured him because the lamb promptly returned to the exact spot where he was shocked the first time. The researchers threw the switch again. Again the lamb ran to his mother. Again she snuggled with him and grunted in his ear, and again he returned to the same place. This happened over and over, but as long as there was a safe place, a reference point for the lamb to return to after each shock, he could handle the stress. He was able to cope.

We live in a world that is filled with the shocks of life; stress, anxiety, fear, danger, failure,

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus
Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Establish-
ing Effective
Worship
Teams:
Part One
Introduction

9

hurt, pain, brokenness. The list is long. We are surrounded by forces that drain us, damage our dignity, and call into question our identity. Each year seems to bring with it a faster and faster pace of life, more demands on us, more things to do just to keep up and survive, not to mention what it takes to go beyond maintenance to the increasingly impossible dream of actually thriving. There is a profound sense of incompleteness and lack of personal resolution.

Worship is the “safe place,” that “snuggling reference point,” that brings life into focus. It brings us face to face with a God who loves us and who embraces us no matter what. Worship’s encounter with God fills the sometimes nameless void we feel in this broken, fragmented, hyper-active world. Worship is our greatest human need and calling.

So when the stakes are so high, why would we want to be haphazard about it? Why would we simply throw a service together? Why would we let one person do it all? Why wouldn’t we choose to plan worship, to be intentional about the experience, and to do it all collaboratively, like the very God we’re worshipping?

Handout in this Package

1. Participant Guide



iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus
Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

**Establish-
ing Effective
Worship**
Teams:
Part One
Introduction

Additional Resources

Beach, Nancy, et al. (2004). *Creating Moments of Transformation and Wonder*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Brown, Cynthia (1998). *Experiencing Worship*. Lincoln NE: AdventSource.

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Schmemmann, Alexander (1997). *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

White, Ellen G. (1890). *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

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White, Ellen G. (1917). *Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Association.

DVD and Video

Center for Creative Ministry (1998). *Establishing Effective Worship Teams*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry. (A two-hour DVD seminar designed to provide basic orientation for local church worship leaders.)

Duerksen, Dick and Gladden, Ron (1996). *Permission to Worship, Permission to Change*. Lincoln NE: AdventSource. (Five sessions designed to lead a worship committee into a consideration of Bible principles of worship, the Adventist heritage and practical decisions.)

Website

International Adventist Musicians' Association provides a website with a number of resources related to worship and publishes the journal Notes. The website can be accessed at: www.iamaonline.com/

WorshipTogether.com is a website produced by a Christian business that sells sheet music in several formats (including printable and those used in computer programs that generate music), music DVDs, etc., for contemporary worship. It also has instructional videos that can be viewed online, Bible studies, articles and news about events where training is provided for worship leaders. It is essentially an online music store with all kinds of worship resources. It can be accessed at: www.worshiptogether.com

Magazine

Worship Leader Magazine is a professional journal for worship leaders from an Evangelical perspective founded in 1990 by Dr. Charles Fromm. It is published six times a year both on paper and electronically. The website also provides a regular schedule of Webinars to provide in-service training for worship leaders. More information is available at: www.worshipleader.com.

Best Practices for Adventist Worship is an email newsletter produced by the NAD Church Resource Center. The newsletter features short articles on the theology and practice of worship as well as an interactive Facebook page. To subscribe go to the Facebook page "Best Practices for Adventist Worship."

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus
Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

**Establish-
ing Effective
Worship**
Teams:
Part One
Introduction

Discussion Questions

Group Discussion Question: In groups of three, briefly describe a Sabbath worship service you experienced that was particularly boring or not meaningful and why.

1. How is your prayer life? Are you happy and at peace about it? Do you feel a need for new life? If so, what will you do about it?

Group Activity

Purpose: To understand the way in which the fundamental spiritual need for worship may not be met in some activities at church which are labeled “worship.”

Preparation: Perhaps a flip chart or white board or chalk board would be useful in collecting key themes or learnings from the experience shared in this group exercise, but it is not essential.

Assignment: Briefly describe a Sabbath worship service you experienced that was particularly boring or not meaningful and tell why.

Agenda:

1. Break out the total group into groups of three.
2. Announce the assignment.
3. Bring the small groups back together again for a time of debriefing, asking each group to summarize some of the most important things they learned from the stories that were shared.

Time: It takes two or three minutes to break out into groups of three. Allow about ten minutes for sharing and then 15 to 45 minutes to collect learnings from the small groups, depending on how many you have.

Handout 1

Worship Teams: What Are They and Why Have Them?

1. We've all been created with the need for _____ and _____ in our lives.
2. "God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you." (Augustine)
3. _____ is one of God's most effective tools for bringing us to a place of completion and resolution in our lives.
4. "Evangelism is an exceedingly important work of the church, as is teaching, fellowship, servanthood, missions, and the healing of broken lives. But it is worship that really stands behind all these activities. The church is first a worshipping community. Evangelism and other functions of ministry flow from the worship of the church." (Robert Webber, *Worship Is A Verb*, p. 18)

Importance of Intentional Worship Planning

5. Genesis 1 describes six days of _____, _____, and _____ planning by God.
6. Revelation 13:8 refers to the Lamb "who was slain before the foundation of the world." When did God make plans for the salvation of the world? What does this say about what's important to God?
7. One of God's core attributes is _____.

Intentional Worship Planning through Worship Teams

8. Another of the core values of God's nature is _____.
 - A. Genesis 1:26
 - B. 1 Corinthians 12
9. What is a worship team?
10. What about the pastor in worship planning?

“Let ministers devote more of his time to educating than to preaching.” (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 20)

“Our ministers often do the labor instead of educating others to share the responsibility in the cause.” (Ellen White, *Review & Herald*, Nov. 6, 1888)

Ten Benefits of Establishing Worship Teams

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.