

Leading Worship in Lifegroup

As worship leaders, we're called to do more than just strum a guitar, sing some songs or make a good iPod playlist. We are called to *lead* people into the presence of God. The goal of a corporate worship time – whether on a Sunday or house to house – is participation. Our aim as worship leaders then is to create a space in the least distracting way possible to lead people to collectively encounter God and surrender their hearts to Him. Here are a few things to think through as you're planning your worship time.

First, remember that though you've been thinking about worship, most people coming into your Lifegroup are thinking about work, family issues or really anything other than worshipping God. Our temptation is to jump straight into an intimate song, but the people in your Lifegroup need you to lead them into that intimate time. Psalm 100:4 says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise." In starting a corporate worship time, I generally default to leading people to thankfulness. If I can get people to remember Who God is and what He's done, then I get them to open their hearts up to Him in surrender. As we begin worship, people need to be reminded why we worship. When building your set list for Lifegroup, start with songs that declare and celebrate Who God is and what He's done. It's only after the declaration that people are ready to move into the songs of response and surrender.

We are often asked how we get people to raise their hands, clap, sing spontaneously, etc. The answer is simple: tell them to. Simply saying, "let's all raise our hands," calls people to step out of their comfort zone and to praise God. The only way that we teach people to be expressive in worship is by calling them to do it and demonstrating it ourselves.

For those of you who are less musically inclined and are rocking the iPod or Spotify during Lifegroup Worship, here are a few tips:

- **Intro worship.** Even though you are not playing an instrument, it's still your job to call people into worship.
- **Get loud speakers.** When everyone out-sings your laptop speakers, people lose the music and guests don't feel comfortable singing out.
- **Put your iPod/phone in airplane mode.** It's always awkward when the music stops for a second or two when you get a text or email.
- **Pick songs without talking in the recording.** People don't know what to do when someone on the recording starts preaching or someone else is praying. Also try not to pick the songs that have extended spontaneous parts or versions people aren't familiar with. Familiarity helps people engage.
- **Avoid songs that end abruptly.** Sometimes you can't help it, but try to get recordings that end with applause or fade out. Be ready as the worship leader to step into awkward silence between songs. You might need to pray between songs or help people reengage. Be ready to pray at the end and help the transition from worship into whatever is next in Lifegroup.

A few practicals for those leading live worship:

- **Tune your guitar BEFORE Lifegroup.** Don't make people sit through your tune up. Arrive a few minutes early to Lifegroup and tune in a back room.
- **Practice new songs before Lifegroup.** Don't think that just because you've heard a song multiple times that you know the song. There's a big difference in listening to it (or singing it in church) and actually leading it.
- **Pick songs in the same key** or in relative keys. There's nothing more distracting between songs than that awkward silence of changing your capo. Remember, our goal is to eliminate as many distractions as possible so it's easier for people to engage.
- **Lower songs from their recorded key.** Most songs are recorded to be at the top of a male vocal range. However in a small setting without a full band, it's more important to make the song attainable for everyone to sing.
- **Sing loudly.** No one wants to be the loudest person in the room. By you singing out, it gives other people permission to sing and not feel self-conscious about being heard.
- **Sing known songs.** Sing songs sung at our church or in the Church at large. Now is not the time to bring out the obscure song that has been ministering to you in your personal time with God. The goal is participation!
- **Print song sheets.** This isn't mandatory, but it helps the new person to your Lifegroup feel like they can participate (and even those who have been coming for years, but don't have a knack for lyric memorization). Even if a new person doesn't know all of the songs, they can at least read along and jump in once they get the hang of the chorus.

Finally, the only way we get better is to get feedback.

Don't be afraid to ask your Lifegroup leaders/members for feedback about how worship went. **Remember – the goal is to increase participation and eliminate distractions.** Often we need an outside perspective on how we can help people engage more!

Our prayer is that we have powerful, dynamic worship times in our Lifegroups each week as we continue to grow in our worship leadership together.

**Blog post written by Owen Wible with minor adaptations.*