

Excellence in Worship & Praise

Marcus Johnson, Worship Leader
Houston, Texas

Introductory Thoughts (to be tailored for your needs)

1. It Must Begin with Me

John 13:1-5, 12-17

A ministry is most effective when its leader is setting an example for others to follow. If we want excellence in our worship and praise ministries, then worship and praise must be a vital part of our personal relationship with God. We need to have our heart, soul, mind and strength in line with the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, so that we can love and connect with God and love the people around us enough to call them to God's throne in order for them to offer their sacrifice of praise. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:34-40; Hebrews 13:15)

How can we call others to the throne of God if we're not going there ourselves? (Matthew 7:3-5; 23:1-4) If we call people to a standard of excellence, and we're not living it ourselves, then we will be ineffective in our mission as a worship and praise team.

2. God Expects What He Gives

Think about this for a moment. Consider God. Reflect on all the things He's given us...all the things He's done for us. Reflect on His love, His grace, His mercy, His lordship, His sovereignty, His truth, His justice, His holiness. Does God half-step on anything He does? He expects us not to, either.

Genesis 4:3-5
Malachi 1:6-14

God will NOT accept anything less than our best. Our praise offerings must come from a pure heart, and it must be the best that we can offer Him. Anything less than that is contemptible, and God won't accept it.

3. "What's My Motivation?"

Matthew 6:1-2, 5, 16

This is what I fight against every week. God has given me this musical gift, and I praise and thank Him for it. He wants me to lift Him up and serve others with it (1 Peter 4:10), so that He'll be glorified and that His church is edified (instructed or improved morally or intellectually). I don't need to prove anything to my brothers and sisters, especially to my musical peers. As soon as I start trying to get people to look at me instead of God, I will receive praise and accolades from them--if that, because it's not guaranteed--and that's it. How are you in this area?

"How will I know if I'm trying to receive praise from people?" If you are truly

living by the Spirit and keeping in step with him, then you'll know.

We need to get ourselves and our personal agendas out of the way, so that we can truly be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16). God does want us to shine, but it must be on His terms. God's glorification and His church's edification **MUST** be our motivation, or our worship and praise will not be excellent.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

It doesn't matter if we're skilled singers, musicians, audio engineers, or multimedia gurus. If we don't get this straight, then we're wasting our energy, because God will not be pleased with what we're offering.

4. Keep the Passion Burning

2 Samuel 6:12-23

Don't let someone keep you from rejoicing before the Lord with his or her critical attitude--God will deal with that person. As stated earlier, you as the worship leader--and worship and praise team, for that matter--need to be an example for others to follow. Extol (praise enthusiastically) the Lord with your Spirit and your mind and in an orderly fashion. (Psalm 34:1; 68:4; 95:2; 109:30; 111:1; 115:18; 117:1; 145:2, 10; 147:12; Romans 15:11; 1 Corinthians 14:15, 40)

Here's some food for thought: When did extolling the Lord become a disputable matter or a matter of opinion? The point I'm making here is that it shouldn't be. God wants us to extol Him--the above Scripture references clearly show that...and they're just the ones that use the word "extol" in the NIV (with the exception of the 1 Corinthians reference)! How does extolling the Lord look? Consider what you get excited about in your life, then ask yourself, "Do I get excited about God in this fashion?" This being said leads me to this little tidbit:

Romans 14:1-15:13

This Scripture shows that some people are going to do things differently from others. It's because of this that each worship leader has a unique style of his or her own. Yet, if those things are done for the Lord, then He has accepted that person. People should be able to extol the Lord within corporate worship without judgement or persecution, for God has accepted them if the praise is real, true, pure, and organic. (Remember, He'll know whether it is or not. You can't fake this.) Now, don't misinterpret my words here. I'm not saying that we have the right to become unhinged and to lose control of ourselves, for self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Make sure that your Spirit and your mind are engaged in your praise, as mentioned earlier. I believe that if each person takes on this mentality, then mutual edification will naturally occur, because everyone's focus will be a vertical one.

5. Get Skilled

Once our hearts are in the right place and we continuously strive to keep our

hearts there, THEN we can focus on developing our skills. This is also important because we should always want to give God the absolute best that we can give Him. As soon as we allow pride and arrogance to get into the mix and we start thinking that we don't need to hone our skills, that's when the trouble starts. Here are some Scriptures that show that being skilled has value:

Psalm 33:1-3

1 Chronicles 15:22; 25:1, 6-7

Proverbs 22:29

Excellence in worship and praise is a God thing, and it's got to start with each of us on a personal level. We need to see and to understand that God expects the best from us because that's what He gives to us. Our motivation for being in this ministry has to be right. The joy and passion for our Father must exude from us. Finally, we can't ignore the fact that we have to be skilled at what we do. All of these things combined will help us to attain excellence in our worship and praise of God.

Mark 7:31-37

Jesus did everything well. As His disciples, we are to do the same thing, knowing that it's only by the Spirit that we're able to do so. May God be glorified in every part of our lives.