

## **Training – Worship – myfishbites.com**

### **Note**

Yes, this is a basic guide to worship leading. This was just some basics that I wanted to share early days. New content has been added, April 2010. It is very difficult to share everything so this is just some tips and advice from what God and others have taught me :)

### **Worship**

As we all know, worship is an attitude, a way of life. It is not simply music, nor is it simply about bands. It is our 24/7 submission and obedience to God. Worship is an all day thing – eating, walking, thanking God, praising God, singing, loving people, expressing God's love through good works, giving, helping, listening, providing, serving. It is our response to what God has done for us.

This section doesn't explore what worship is, rather it looks at tips in leading musical worship.

These ideas to help you lead 'music' worship in churches and events come from years of experience from leading, and from training various young people and others. Please read through the wisdom gained over the years, see if it sits right with you. I pray it helps, inspires and makes you think – so we can all learn and move forward together.

This is mainly – but not exclusively designed for those involved in music worship via 'normal' worship bands and this is just some of what he has taught me..

### **Your Attitudes / Focusing on God**

1. Hear the call from God and respond faithfully. Have a servant heart. Tim Hughes (worship leader) writes how he would often get to band practice before the band to set-up for them. This is what God loves.
2. Get your hearts right. If you aren't right, how will God use and speak through you? On the flipside, if you are walking, serving God humbly, think how much he will be able to use you. This goes for the worship leader, and the whole band.
3. Be humble, prepared to listen, learn, watch others, grow. Only the arrogant think they've made it. If you need to, spend time learning from those even outside of your immediate situation, if it will help you grow. Read, look at the internet, listen to how

other musicians play, watch DVDs. Grow vocally and musically.

4. Remember why you're doing it. It's about God, not you.

5. The Bible says the eyes are the light for the soul. We also know that what we take into us, we give out. So, like John 15 says, stay connected to Jesus. How can you lead others if you are deliberately sinning, or straying away from God? You can't very effectively. So without being religious, know that your relationship to God will empower and enable you in leading worship and even in playing your instrument. Out of your love for God will flow other things.

6. 1 Chronicles 25 talks about musicians who were set apart (verse 1), musicians who were under supervision for this ministry (verse 6), who were skilled in the art for the Lord (verse 7) and who worked in teams and served according to how God called (verse 8). What can we learn from this? Well, being a musician in worship is a serious thing, it's something that God places on our lives or gives us the freedom to do. There was a leader, someone experienced musically and no doubt in leading. The musicians were skilled in the art. Do you set aside time to practice and just to worship? You should. Keep on growing in the gift God has given you, it's Biblical. And remember that the focus is the Lord and not you. Don't be a worship leader, be someone who serves God by serving his people. Then there were teams for worship. Teams are good and can work effectively but make sure you choose wisely and work together humbly as God directs. I am amazed at the organisational levels of the music and worship as found in 1 Chronicles 25. There are many musicians, different instruments, teams, young and old, teachers and students. It's an amazing picture of the people (the church) working together to praise God.

### **Musical Good Practice / Evaluation**

1. Practice, practice, practice. You're only as good as your personal and corporate practice, so do both!

2. Don't simply copy, although that is fine too. Think about what you do, why you do it. Listen to other bands – how do they do it? Listen, learn, copy, then change and develop your own style.

3. Play live and assess what you do. You may want to record your playing or even video it. Watch back how you play, interact, whether you look like you're enjoying it (smile!)

4. Tune up! Make sure you are in tune. Then while others are tuning, show

discipline and let them tune. Don't go thrashing your drums or guitar so someone else can't tune up.

5. Everyone in the band needs to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to how the song is panning out / the congregation etc. We need to learn when to get louder, when to break down etc. Playing in a band means we each play our part, not all parts! Sometimes finding the silence and adding the odd note is more powerful than simply playing constantly.

6. Learn the songs off by heart. It helps if you know the songs as you can watch people, watch each other and stay in time, as you're not concentrating on what the next chord or note is.

7. Keep levels balanced between instruments, especially electric guitarists using amps. You can ruin a great sound by having one guitar amped up so loud it drowns out other instruments. Don't do this. You're looking for a good balance of sound across the mix, including vocals.

8. Don't keep changing the volume on your instrument because you're not confident. One person I worked with always turned her bass down. In the end we set the PA very low, and through a worship session, turned her up via the PA as she turned herself down!!

9. Use foldback where you can, so you know where you are in a song. This is especially important for a drummer, and for the lead / vocalists. In fact, I'd say it is essential. In-ear monitoring – wired or wireless is better than foldback monitors (but don't have too loud).

10. Play songs at the correct tempos and don't let them drag or go super-fast unless this is the vibe you're going for! I went to one worship night where the band played one song at an incredibly slow pace. It dragged and didn't take off at all. Increasing the tempo by just 10bpm (beats per minute) would have made it a very different experience and it would have really worked! Alternatively, I remember one week when a professional piano teacher played, 'My Jesus my Saviour' at a ridiculous speed. Hearing people sing was like hearing the chipmunks.. It was hilarious for me and the young people, but not great for people worshipping!

11. Utilise different musicians, but make sure you get the right balance. Bear in mind using different people, allowing opportunity to grow together. Also think about how great it can be to 'bond' and 'click' as a regular band, together.

12. Are there any CD, DVD, print resources that will help you move forward as a worship leader, or as a worship team? Have a look around and buy in resources for your team. Don't be dishonest and photocopy etc. Think about other resources. One place I learned a lot about worship was in a hip-hop DVD from Crossover Community Church in Florida. So think about different books and resources too. The resources from [Music Academy](#) are incredibly helpful.

13. Visit other churches or watch how Bethel / Hillsong / whoever do their worship. Every church has a different way of seeing and doing 'worship'. For example at one church I know well, they value variation in their worship. They have a sometimes random assortment of musicians. But they value the differences. Another church I know is obsessed with complete professionalism with timings and everything done to a click track. Those that don't practice are out. They want to honour God by their professionalism. My church has a great balance of musicians, practice, including others and doing what we do well but informally. It is a good balance. But I have learned lots from other places, as we have going on the road and leading in different churches. So be open and learn!

14. Learn to move as smoothly as possible between songs. Don't shuffle music or keep tapping your iPad. Perhaps use a foot pedal to move between songs or simply learn them. Use pads. Learn to have different members of the band start songs, to pray, to have a spontaneous time of singing led by one guitar, maybe end a song accapella, use a chord change (by using the 5th note of the key of the song you're moving into, for example). If we have a number of songs, we want this to blend and be an experience, rather than a set of individual songs.

15. Don't go on too long with songs, or play the bridge / chorus too many times. Choose carefully how many times you play / repeat a song. I attended a service recently where the leader sung a song around 7 times. What did it do? It killed the atmosphere of worship that had built. So just be sensitive to this. I've been in times of worship where new songs just spontaneously come up from the church and it is incredible. Be aware of the spiritual atmosphere and be sensitive!

## **Band Dynamics**

1. Pray lots – for each other – before you set up – practice – play. Pray afterwards, giving glory to God.
2. Have time out at band practice – we always do this. Build a team spirit, a group, you're a band and in this together. For God, for each other and for the congregation who you'll be serving as a team. We've also been out to have food together or all done PA training together. Meet up together as musicians socially and serve one another, pray for each other. Interact outside of 'music'. We have a termly worship musicians gathering.
3. The band inter-personal dynamics can become a real issue. Many bands have failed because of pride, poor communication, lack of leadership, not listening to each other and not sharing. In a Christian band, there must be prayer together, encouragement and support of one another outside of band practice if possible. Let people have a voice, build honesty and debate into practice, but do so in love. If you're the 'leader', make sure you serve the band with humility, just as Jesus has commanded. You are not the daddy, you don't always know best and you do need to act as a developer of others, not as a tyrannical despot. People need to know when practice is (I text everyone at the same time). Have music prepared for them, help set up and down (first one in last one out). Encourage people in their skills, build teamwork, but keep focus on God and what worship really is. In a band, you may even have to take hard decisions if people are not right with God or if they start acting like a spoilt maestro muso! Be very aware of pride and how it ruins bands, lives and our relationship with God. 1 Corinthians 3 for help and warnings on division.
4. Think about the band you are going to choose (if you have a choice of musicians). At our church, we have core bands and solo musicians. Within the core bands, there are floating regular musicians who play often between bands. If you are able to choose who should play, you don't do this by rolling a dice or picking random assortments of instruments out of a hat. Consider who plays well together, who could play well as part of the band. Consider the event / service you are playing for and who would be appropriate. Don't choose the lead guitarist who loves to riff away during a reflective service. Don't choose beginner musicians to a big event or seeker service necessarily. Who are you looking to bring through?

Don't have a massive band then pile the pressure on the new sound person who's not very confident. Consider the PA people and the people doing words. Think about the number of musicians on-stage. One week, there was a band that had

around 9 people in it. There were so many that there wasn't enough in-ear monitors to go round and some people didn't have foldback.

With inexperienced musicians or ones that don't normally play in worship – or where you have some random assortment of instruments rather than a 'full band'... think about the musical mix.. What instruments naturally fit together? Which solo musicians across the musical genres and instruments, are sensitive to playing within / as part of a larger band. How can you help them to be aware of musical dynamics. What I tend to do is choose one 'solo instrumentalist' in my band perhaps every other time.

### **Band Musicianship**

1. Intros, outros and endings – practice them (if nothing else!) to get them tight. You will not believe what a difference tight beginnings and ends make to a song, to worship, and to your 'audience.' It is important for band and church to know what the ending is and when it will end! It also raises the standard and sounds professional. If you make changes as worship leader, communicate very well.
2. Break downs and changes in songs – learn how to go into these and out of these (for example a bridge or a coda) gently or as the song dictates. Especially important for a drummer. You are leading people in worship so you need to let them know very clearly where you're going and be clear where the break downs and build ups are.
3. Don't have too many instruments all thrashing away. Listen to other music, what you hear is a stereo, layered, textured sound. Not just a thrash of sound – unless this is what you're going for. But even then, have parts between guitars. Like the human body, we are one unit but we don't all do the same thing.
4. Stay in time!! Try not to end up twice or half the speed of the start of a tune, unless intended! Staying in time is very important, as is choosing the correct tempo of the song before you start. If it's wrong and you've already started, change it by looking around the band and making sure everyone knows to play faster (or slower).
5. Play tight to the bar. Make sure all the instruments come in at the same time at the start of a bar, especially when coming in and out of a chorus.
6. Have different rhythms between guitars and instruments. For example, someone plays rhythm, someone else plays a riff on lead guitar, another person comes in and out on guitar, or plays only on the off beat.

7. Tie the bass guitar to the bass drum pattern for some effective grooves. This also emphasises the 'sub' bass element and can give the band and the congregation a real lift.

8. Remember not every instrument has to play every bit, unless you're a thrash or death metal worship band. Experiment with guitars coming in and out in different sections of a song.

9. Keep your self-control in a song, within the band. On lively songs, as people get into it, there's a tendency to lose control of the song in your enthusiasm. Don't do it. Play a little harder, strum a little harder. But keep it tight and controlled. Don't lose discipline.

10. Build down and build up into choruses and verses. Don't snap between loud and quiet, hard and mellow. Take things up and down according to the nature of each song. The posh name for this is 'dynamics'. Sometimes you will need to use crescendo and decrescendos (gradually getting louder and quieter). Other times you may want the band to kick in, using more of a 'terraced dynamics' sound – ie. shifting ('stepping' up or down) more suddenly to a louder or quieter sound.

11. Think about the 'spirit-led' (spontaneous) parts of your songs and work on them. These are the instrumental times, ends of songs or perhaps fill-in times as people may sing out, pray, sing new songs.. Think of riffs and how you can allow the song to go up and down. Plan the kinds of things you are going to do so you know them well enough to be able to play them freely – or just learn your scales of all varieties!

## **Choosing Songs**

1. Don't choose songs that are too high in pitch – alternatively, change key and pitch them down. (eg E → D). This is tough with many modern guitar-based tracks that are based in G (or G with a capo). However, we can pitch things down. Where there are a number of people present, high pitched songs are not so much of a problem as the crowd effect encourages people to sing out more. In an intimate setting, people will feel more comfortable with songs within their vocal range. A common vocal range guide [can be found on this website...](#)

2. Think about choice of songs – are they personal, for congregations, or performance. All are OK, just think about what you are wanting to achieve, what God is saying.

3. Ask yourself if the songs you play would work in your worship situations? Are the congregation ready for certain songs, are there enough people to sing the types of songs, do they know the songs?

4. When choosing songs, think of who will be there, the occasion. Choose songs appropriately. Don't sing full-on massive youth-event style rock anthems for your over 60s service... Or vice versa!

5. Remember that songs are different between generations. In the old days, songs were written for organs and hymns. Some of these have a note / chord per word (and even per syllable at times!). These don't always work that well for bands, without being changed to have fewer chords. So choose songs based on your style and competence.

6. If possible (depending on your church and time), allow space for songs to develop as you're playing or practicing. One day at band practice, we carried on playing the song after the 'end' and started playing a new 'song' out of the original. In a live situation, or even practice, allow the space for this. You may also start to add new lyrics to a song you're playing spontaneously – or even use words to another song, in the chords of a song you are playing. Read 1 Corinthians 2.13.

7. If you're writing or playing a children's song, please use or write a song that is simple for them to pick up. I heard a kids song recently with around 5 verses of great complexity. How can that be a kid's song? A kid's song needs to be easy to pick up and simple. But this underlies a far greater principle. When writing songs, we should consider writing some very simple songs, or ones with clear and easy lyrics in the choruses. Why? Because not everyone is very literate or able to read, and not everyone understands big words. Not to say every song should be like this, however. We equally need songs that explore the creativity of God's world and linguistics in our songs as well. But it's another thing to think about!

## **The Act of Leading**

1. If you are leading the singing in a band, make sure you let the congregation (and the band) know when you are going to repeat a chorus, or play a verse again. They can't read your mind, so make sure they go with you. This means you have to learn the art of physically telling them (where possible and in whatever way) before you move to the next section of the song.



2. In a band, you can have sign language to show others what you're going to do. For example, the leader decided he wants to play the chorus again – he looks round at the band, or nods, or lifts up his leg – whatever!

3. Don't beat yourself up, some weeks will go better than others. It's OK. Learn and grow from your mistakes. Don't worry when band practice doesn't seem to 'work' or when people aren't focused. Sometimes, it's best to put down the instruments and do something else. We do this all the time, from football to free running, to having a drink, to playing daft games.

4. Train your voice if you're a singer. For example, you can buy training books and CDs. I have a book (and CD) called, 'Set Your Voice Free' by Roger Love. There are many others, take a look around and see which one may suit you. As you develop and work more professionally, deficiencies in your instrumentation and vocals will become apparent. So decide to invest to the level you feel God is leading you to, and expect more! Music Academy do fantastic resources including CDs and DVDs. I have the Vocal DVDs and they're amazing, also teaching some basic music theory too.

5. As the leader of the band, watch the congregation closely. If they start losing interest, you need to think about stopping, or changing song, or praying. Don't always be tempted to kill a song. Learn when to go with the flow.

6. Don't think you've arrived. Ever. You can get to a stage in a band where things are working nicely, where you can play the songs well. But there's always more. You can always learn. Never lose sight of God as your enabler and the one who has gifted you. Never lose focus on why you're doing the music – it's not just for you. It's about God.

7. Leading music worship, playing an instrument – is an act of service. In the Old Testament, the Levites (responsible for worship) were even restricted in what else they could do. God wanted a people dedicated to him. Our attitude must be the same. In Numbers 8.6, God said, 'Take the Levites from among the other Israelites and make them ceremonially clean.' So the Levites were set apart. Numbers 8.14, 'In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine.'

Interestingly, we also know that the Levites carried the Ark of the Covenant, carried furnishings from the temple and worked in the temple generally. This was an incredibly sacred and holy task. So we know that even in music worship, the word 'worship' goes beyond the music, to acts of service and an exceptionally close

relationship with God. There is something of the prophetic in music and vice versa. People often have both giftings. So we need to value our musicians and they need to value their relationship with a Holy God.

8. Leading worship is a responsibility. In 1 Chronicles 23.27 we read this, 'According to the last instructions of David, the Levites were counted from those twenty years old or more.' I have met many young people gifted in leading worship and I don't think there needs to be an age restriction on this! However, we need to allow young people space to lead, while discipling and training them. I have allowed (over the last year), a 17/18 year-old to lead music worship. I have met other youth workers who just ask people to 'lead' because they can play a guitar or a piano. But while OK, in my view this simply is not enough. Even if you as a youth worker have no musical ability, you do have knowledge of God and his Word. Your duty is to pass on to the young person to enable, encourage, praise, train, disciple and discipline. Then they will grow (and so will you). Then they will know how to train and grow others. If we are to truly use the gift of music and prophetic gifts, then we must expect them to develop, supportively.

8. When leading with a band, consider the silence, the space. It's equally powerful as playing. Sing parts of songs with minimal instrumentation, with accapellas (no instruments). Pray, seek God, read from God's Word. Allow the Spirit of God to breathe through you and the whole of God's people. Listen. Designers make great use of 'space' in advertising. Musicians can learn from this.

9. Remember the difference between the Biblical words of 'praise' and 'worship'. Praise is an attitude of thanks towards God. 1 Psalm 103:1 – "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." Whereas worship is almost always associated with a body position and speaks of our life of service for, to, because of, before God. From Genesis, to Revelation, we find people, angels and the elders before the throne of God, bowing down in worship in awe of God. Same with your times of 'music worship'. There will be times of praise, times of worship and reflection, space to allow God to speak. Leave room for both and humble yourselves before the living God.

10. As many worship leaders will say, the worship leading and being up front is not the most important thing and shouldn't become an end in itself. Instead, it is your personal worship with God that is highly important. Your worship leading ability (as with other things in your life) will reflect your life of worship. This means your prayer times, Bible reading, words, actions, eating properly, resting, treating people in a Godly way (esp at home) and so on. So think and act wisely.

11. Communication with the band is essential, during the worship time. It's quite a hard art to lead, follow God's prompting, communicate with the band, keep an eye on the clock and someone who's guiding the service or session through. But the art will come!

12. Think of the congregation and continue to communicate with them as well as the band. You need to help them know where to go. Start worship times strongly and confidently and it will set the tone for the rest to follow.

13. Make sure there is only one leader in the band. Too many 'chefs' spoil the spiritual and musical 'broth'. You may sometimes have another leader in your band. They should submit to your leadership and respect you, help and encourage you. Make sure you do this when supporting others.

14. When it comes to play, make sure the musicians and the people doing the words / PA etc know the outline order – what songs that will be played and as far as possible, in the order to be played.

15. If God starts to do something during a song, or perhaps someone is moved by something a song says, you may want to consider playing it again. Don't repeat too often or you'll bore everyone and lose the moment!!

16. Pray for those in your band / care. Pray for them by name and cover them in prayer. Pray for their personal life, for their musical skills, sensitivity to the Spirit, protection from evil and from falling.

17. Finally, many worship leaders have 'fallen' from grace and stepped outside of God's will, with male leaders sometimes the worst offenders. Stay very close to God, read the Word, be open and have complete integrity. Pray for deliverance from evil daily and stay accountable to your wife / pastor etc.

## **Experimenting**

1. Learn to incorporate new elements musically. We've used everything, including rap and DJ-ing. This has been an incredible experience and has released new ideas and helped / encouraged people in their ministries.

2. Play songs you don't really like, or songs that stretch you. Try to avoid just playing songs you find easy and ones that you like. Keep challenging yourselves and learning. However, when leading up-front, try and play songs you are comfortable with, initially.

3. When thinking of using additional items in worship such as backing tracks.. Make sure you test them over and over. There are many stories of people who thought / presumed something would work, but it didn't. This includes everything. When we last played worship, the sound engineer hadn't checked one channel. This channel was the main mic for the pastor's pulpit. Fortunately God spoke and we figured out one lead needed changing. But it was a lesson.

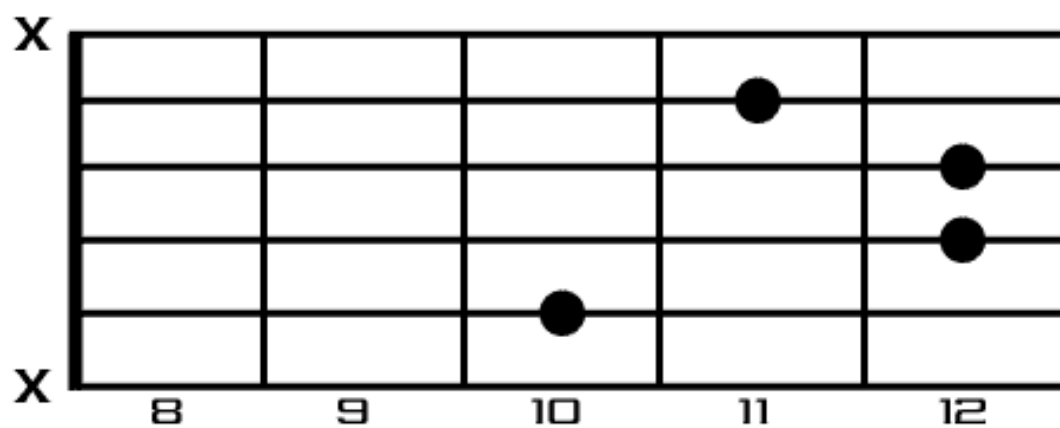
Make sure everyone knows the backing track – so get it out to people before via mp3 or YouTube etc. Get people to practice it and know it before a Sunday. Most important, make sure you practice it and know it inside-out.

4. 4. Backing track other thoughts.. Here is where I once had a debate with a church leader. He felt that music worship should be Spirit led and therefore by a band or a piano. However, I felt that you could have equally Spirit-led worship from a backing track. The disadvantage of a backing track is that it cannot be changed (unless using certain types of sequencers and keyboards live). The advantage is that those leading know when it will end and can lead very clearly. I've done many backing tracks for Christian worship (from copying the exact song through to drum'n'bass remixes). These can out of the place of personal worship between me and God. God is in the organisation before you play as much as when you play live.

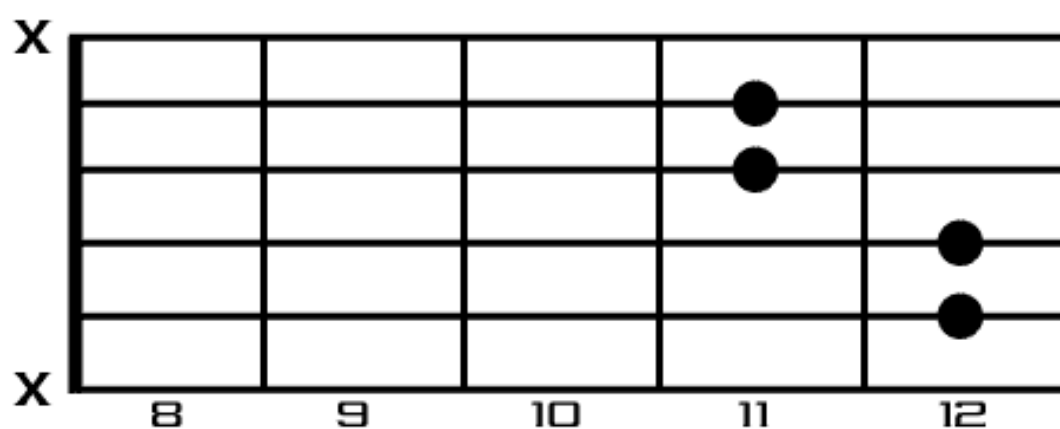
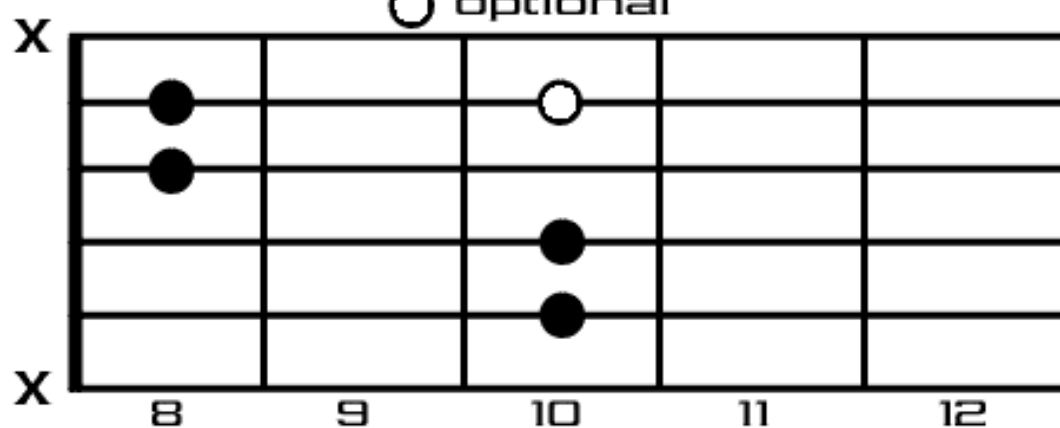
## **2 Chord Sheets - Shackles / Over The Mountains**

Change up your music. For example, you can get a more 'gospel' feel to your music – by incorporating new chords, new basslines, using semi-dischordant harmonies, playing diminished chords – and augmented chords. A good song for this is 'Shackles' by Mary Mary, or 'O Happy Day' (the original tune, not just the Tim Hughes one).

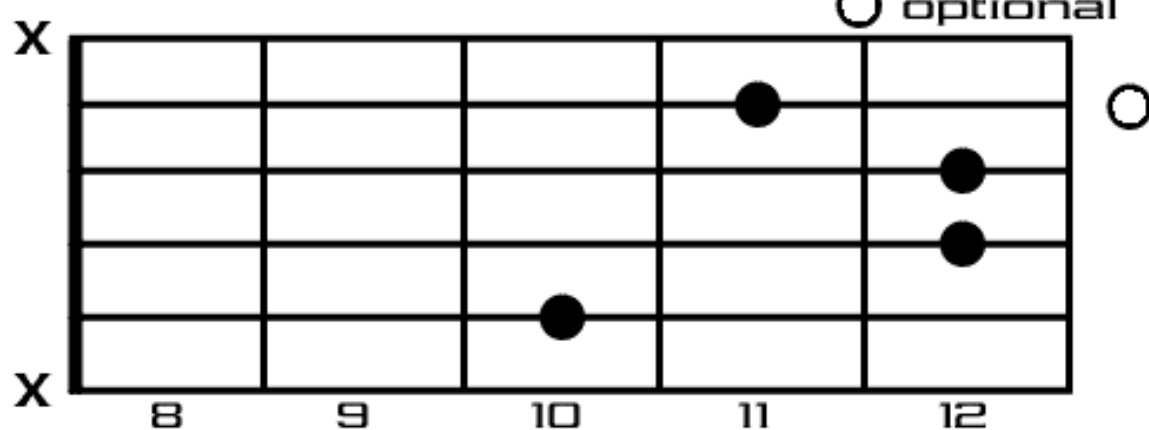
One mix I heard on the New Wine 2006 CD is great, very funky, very 'black' jazzy chords, which I absolutely love!! Here is one guitar interpretation. The bassline is a rolling bass of: G – C – D – G. The actual guitar chords would be: Gm – Cm – D(aug) – Fm. Here is an interpretation of the guitar pattern:



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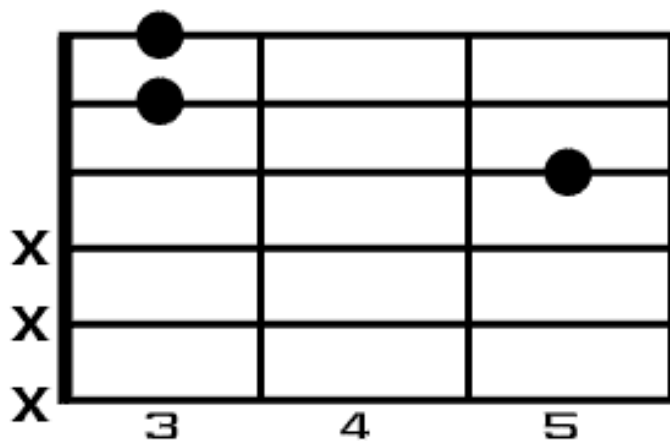
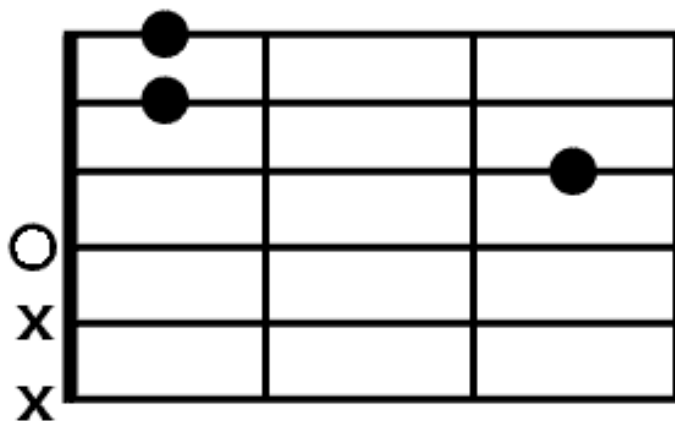
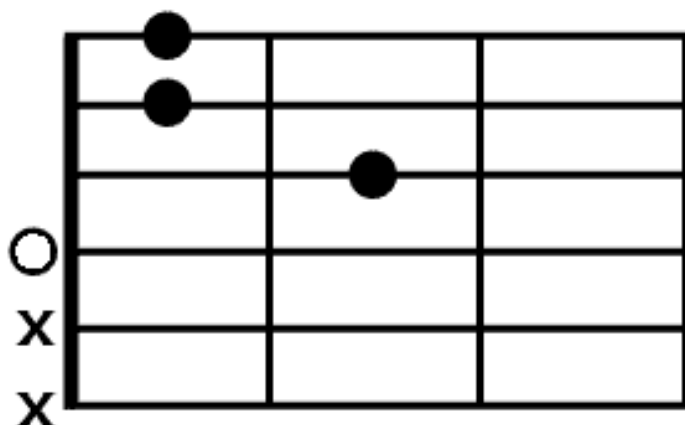
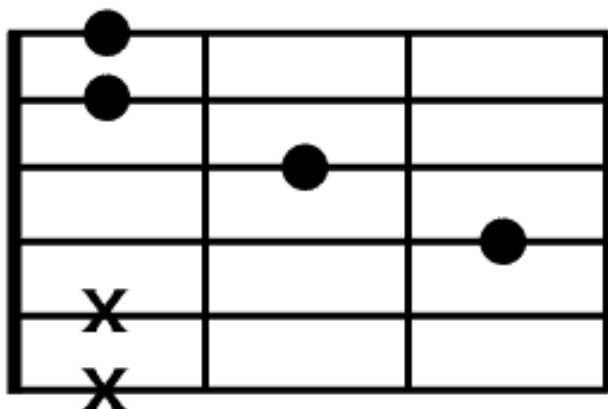
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We have also changed songs like 'Over The Mountains And The Sea' by Martin Smith, very slightly and simply..

So, instead of the standard chord sequence of: F – Gm7 – B flat – C  
 We used this: F – Dm7 – B flat – (Alternative lead guitar chords):



1. In a PA situation, make use of the 'pan' facility. Listen to an album – you'll hear instruments 'panned' to the left and the right speaker. This is to create a stereo effect. If your instruments are mic'd up or DI'd through a PA, make subtle use of the pan. A good idea is to pan guitars left and right, pan backing vocals slightly to right or left. But keep the drums, the bass and lead vocalist in the centre of the mix / pan. This also makes parts sound clearer. Of course, your PA needs to be set up in stereo (not mono) for this to work.

2. Tips on amps – mic-ing up amps does produce a better sound, so consider doing this when hooked into a PA. Otherwise, use the 'DI out' or 'Line Out' on the back of your amp to go into the PA. If your guitar doesn't have either of these connections, don't use the headphone socket, as you won't be able to hear your amp. What you need is a 'DI Box'. Don't worry too much about what these are. You can get an active or a passive DI box. A passive DI box will be sufficient for now. What you need to do is plug your guitar into the DI box. Then use the 'jack' output (the type of lead your guitar uses) to go into your amp. The XLR 'out' connection (with 3 pins) on your DI Box then uses an XLR-XLR lead to go into the PA.

Bass players – if you're just using a regular amp, go into the PA via a DI Box. Remember that simply plugging any instrument straight into a mixer is not advisable / not the best thing to do. This is all to do with the way instruments and mixers work. A DI box will change the signal to make it 'mixer friendly'. It will also reduce humm, especially on bass guitars. This is done by flicking on the 'Ground Lift' switch on a DI box.

Make use of Myfishbites PA guide under the Audio section for loads of help!

### **Guitarists Only**

1. Make use of effects pedals etc. but don't over-use. Be sensitive to the song. Where you have 2 or 3 guitarists, vary the sounds to create an effects-harmony (one guitar clean, one acoustic, one with distortion/delay etc). Unless you're going for a very specific effect or are playing a very heavy sound – then distort away!! Change the preset effects on pedal boards to create your own sound. As with many bands, consider using specific effects for specific songs.

2. If you are a guitarist, keep your chord-playing hand nails short! Depending on how and what you play and your skill level, you may choose to keep nails longer on the other hand in order to pluck the strings more effectively.

3. Make sure that when you play notes, you push down the strings firmly, making

sure not to play other notes, or make the strings sound 'duff' or dull, cos they're not depressed enough.

4. As a guitarist, make use of strumming and plucking techniques. Learn new styles of playing with your instrument. On guitars and bass, learn how to strum differently, to pluck differently, learn slap bass, palm muting, like drop tuning to 'D', learn your scales (normal, major, minor, chromatic, blues, pentatonic etc)

5. Everyone is helping to lead the congregation / audience in worship, so be aware of all the other members of the band. Listen to what is happening in the rest of the band (especially to the 'lead' person in the band). No point you thrashing away, while he's trying to make the song more mellow.

6. Guitarists – think about terraced dynamics if it's just you leading on your acoustic guitar. I recently heard someone lead on acoustic (only) and it was great. However, they really needed to think about their strum patterns, playing more lightly, fading in and out while playing so the congregation could sing accapella. The mistake made was to play at the same 'dynamic' level (fairly full-on strumming) for most of every song.

As you grow with your instrument, learn to change the mood by how loud or quietly you play. When you stop playing, unless it's a big ending, gradually play more quietly rather than ending abruptly.

7. Think about using your instrument beyond its normal use. So for example, in the same worship time as mentioned in point 71, there was a song where people started clapping and it was starting to take off. What I would have done is to use my acoustic guitar as a percussive instrument by drumming on the body of the guitar with my hands. If you drum around the cutaway part of the guitar and then move your hand around the body area, you will get different tones. You will also add something into the mix by slapping the strings with your strumming hand, to give a sense of rhythm. Try it and experiment.

### **Vocalists Only**

1. Try and match people's voices together. I once played alongside someone with a very similar voice and found it so hard to keep in tune, I actually removed my in-ear monitoring. Choose carefully, or get the other person to sing certain lines, or a harmony.

2. If you are a backing singer, consider the lead vocalist's way of singing. For example, if they do a slight amount of vibrato on the end of the line and fade out,



copy this. You don't want to have one person singing a part endlessly and not matching what the lead vocalist is doing. Be sensitive.

3. If you are a backing singer doing harmonies, make sure you stay either above, or below the melody line. Don't hop in and around the melody like a mad thing. Stay consistent and help produce a more quality and helpful sound.

4. As a vocalist, you must invest in training, and you must warm-up before you sing. This will enhance and protect your voice. Remember to avoid coffee and dairy products for at least 12–24 hours before where possible. Have lukewarm water with you on stage at all times.

5. Some key things for vocalists to think about: Firstly try to extend your 'register' and raise the point of your 'break' in voice. What does this mean? Well, we all have a natural voice which we call our 'chest voice'. This voice seems to 'break' when we go up to a certain note (different for everyone). For me, it varies between a top 'C' and top 'F' although I can sing much higher. At this point, your voice seems to become more 'tame' and quiet. This is the point at which your 'chest' voice turns into your 'head' voice.

Your job is to extend this note upwards and do vocal exercises so that it no longer becomes very apparent what your 'chest' and 'head' voice are when you sing. One method to do this is to slur notes upwards in the octave. Another method is simply doing scales while being aware of trying not to shout top notes, or sing them too quietly.

6. Breathe properly, using your diaphragm (just below where your 2 ribs are) and not your throat to achieve notes. Try saying the word 'huuuhhh' to find your diaphragm. Try singing notes with a 'cry' voice (as if you've got a sad face on).

7. If you find there is more than one vocalist / backing singer with a similar sounding voice, talk with them and encourage them to think about how they 'sit in the mix' together. Perhaps one sings a harmony line, the other doesn't. Sometimes one takes the harmony above the melody line, the other takes a harmony below the melody line, or in another place. It may mean talking to the sound engineer about panning voices left and right, or changing the EQ so the vocals sit in a different place in the overall mix. It may mean adding reverb to one voice and not another. It may be down to the vocalist changing their voice a little so that their voice doesn't clash with someone else's voice.

## **Drummers Only**

1. Drummers (especially, and mostly those in their early months and years of drumming) – try playing at home with a metronome. It will improve your timing no end! A metronome may well work for the whole band, too. I've heard bands play many times with massive variations in tempo within a song – up and down 10–20 bpm (beats per minute)!! A metronome will give a steady and regular tempo to enable you to practice and learn tempo accurately.

## **Learn and Play the Songs Correctly**

Learn the songs as they should be sung in terms of the melody line and timing. I'd say it's really important. If you are teaching a school class, you'd make sure that what you were teaching was correct. It's no different in church and often the way the artist has written the song is important and we often won't improve on what they've done.

## **Worship Thoughts**

New songs – songs have seasons. Songs have seasons within churches. Seek God in prayer for the songs that he is calling you to sing at your church. Of course, have a balance of old and new. But seek fresh 'manna' from heaven – see what God is doing and hook into this. He is always doing a new thing. Of course, this starts with your relationship with God – listening, hearing and obeying. It is also good practice to write songs and see how God is leading you at your church. Involve other musicians and worship leaders in choosing new songs and test them, see if they work.

Prophetic singing – I don't know your church, but there are times where the music should just flow on, and not just stop in some start–stop–standup–sit down style thing. But beyond this, think about how songs can be extended / grown and how you can develop a song. An example of what I mean on a popular album is how Tim Hughes moves into a new song from 'Here I Am To Worship' (track 4) on his 'Happy Day' album into 'I love the King and the King loves me.' Yes, this was planned for the album, but it's an example of how a song can flow into something else. Of course, this is dependent on you, your church and your band's musical abilities.

Holiness – I have recently been reminded how important this is. As Al Gordon said at Worship Central (paraphrase). – the greatest gift you can give to your church as worship leader is to be a true worshipper of God.

New musicians – Think about how you involve new musicians and bring younger musicians through. Be very flexible, be open and honest with new musicians and never feel threatened. People like you love to worship so as you empower and involve them, they take ownership and feel they belong.

Bands – feel free to have set bands or to be flexible. We have both set bands and flexible bands. This is extremely healthy. A set band means people get to know each other, share experiences and relate on a spiritual level. This brings the power of agreement and unity to a band – and this is where God commands his blessing and power. But don't be so closed off that you become a clique!