

The Worship Leader As Shepherd

by Rob Still



Dear Worship Dude or Dudette,

I encountered something in God's word today that stirred my heart and I want to share it with you.

I have a question.

Do you ever feel like a hired hand performing a gig?

The sheer technology and pressure of leading worship can be a heavy burden, skewing the focus of your heart and mind as you lead.

Today's typical worship leader wears a lot of hats.

Picking songs, arranging music, rehearsing and directing the music team, working out vocal harmonies, making it flow, teaming with the pastor, engaging with the congregation, encouraging them to participate, organizing schedules, communicating with team members, coordinating media, making sure the lyrics are projected right, calling 11 drummers trying to find a sub at the last minute, hey tune your guitar ,.... oh man I get so overwhelmed just writing this list!

There is one primary role though, that the best worship leaders embrace.

Shepherd.

"I am the good shepherd, I know my own and my own know me ..." John 10: 14

I pray these words of Jesus motivate your approach to leading worship.

Jesus said we are to feed his sheep. (John 21:17)

Though I am no expert on the topic of sheep, here's what I've learned along the way about leading worship with a shepherds heart.

1. A good shepherd cares.

Leadership is all about relationships.

So, a good shepherd knows his sheep. He connects personally to individual people. He knows their stories.

He does not see them as a crowd or audience. He relates to the people in his church as individuals, not a group.

2. A good shepherd is not pushy.

He does not manipulate. He does not push out of some selfish ambition or man driven agenda. Neither does he beat the sheep, rather, he gently leads out of a sense of spiritual direction.

Now sheep are not so smart, but people are very smart.

Respect their intelligence. Prove your leadership is trustworthy.

Earn their trust. Let them give you permission to lead.

3. A good shepherd is clear.

He is going somewhere and taking the sheep to that place.

Psalm 23:2 describes that destination as a place of refreshment, of *“green pastures and quiet waters”*.

How do you lead worship clearly?

Set an example.

David understood this and taught it. (He was a real shepherd, by the way.)

His methodology is Psalm 34:3 *“Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together.”*

David explains that worship is not a performance by the people “up front” to be observed by the people “out there”. No, he declares he is going to worship God personally himself and invites the people to join him,

“Let’s do this together.”

4. A good shepherd is firm.

He knows the way to go. He does not let the sheep lead themselves to another destination.

“Your rod and your staff guide me.” (Psalm 23:4)

The rod and staff are the shepherd’s tool kit. Imagine the worship instruments, the lights, the projection – all as part of the shepherd’s toolkit.

I have this visualization of my bass guitarist leading our sheep skillfully with his rod and staff – the bass guitar. And so it is for the keyboardist. Or vocalist. Or guitarist. Or drummer. Or any other member of the worship ministry. All have a leadership role.

We are all instruments of His peace.

5. A good shepherd sacrifices.

He checks his ego and agenda at the door. A good shepherd is not a hired hand, he's not in it for the money.

Even if you are a volunteer (which most of us are) don't be in it to have some other need met like recognition, affirmation, etc.

As servant-leaders, we have to go low and lay our pride, ambitions and desires down.

The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. John 10:11

6. A good shepherd even exerts discipline when necessary.

Sometimes you have to use words of correction. Yes for the whole gathering, in front of everybody. That is extremely rare but I've seen it done appropriately.

More oftentimes, you have to have a difficult conversation with someone privately.

The point is, a good shepherd understands his authority and uses it when needed.

You Are A Shepherd

No matter what your role or title, if you are any part of a worship team ministry – musician, singer, tech, you have a role that needs to be expressed with a shepherd's tender heart and clear mindset.

I hope that's helpful and may the Lord be with you!

Vaya con dios,
Rob

PS. Read John 10:1-21

Question:

Do you see yourself as a hired hand doing a gig, or a shepherd desiring to lead people to the green pastures of God's presence?