

Psalm 33:3

A JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE WORSHIP MUSICIAN/LEADER

"SING TO HIM A NEW SONG..."

Be creative! If you think you've heard that popular worship song one too many times, imagine how many times God has heard it! This isn't meant to imply that God ever tires of our authentic praise, but I do believe He wants us to continuously find new ways to express our adoration. God gave us creativity for a reason – so we can use it to glorify Him.

It's also important to note that God was very careful in preserving lyrics for us. He knew that if we didn't have guidelines to follow, we songwriters might end up writing our own theology so we could fit a lyrical rhyme. So He gave us Scripture, which holds a great wealth of things to sing about. More specifically, He gave us the Psalms, an entire book of lyrics for us to use without any copyright infringements.

But we have no idea how those original songs *sounded*. We don't know the melodies, the chord progressions or the cool drum grooves they were listening to thousands of years ago. God could have given us some way to know this, but instead, He asks us to be creative.

Of course, not every musician or singer is a songwriter. Still, I'm relatively sure that most of you reading have at least one song in your repertoire that you've been doing the same way for years. This might be an opportunity to change it. Use your God-given creativity and

"Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy."

This simple verse outlines some major responsibilities for the church musician. Let's pick the verse apart and see what God is asking for...

remake it as your own. Your congregation probably needs to experience those lyrics in a fresh new way. Studies have shown that after a song has been sung 50 times, people stop thinking about the lyrics and start singing by rote.

Does this mean our creativity should know no bounds? Of course not. An orderly worship setting allows creative expression bound by certain responsibilities. For instance, walking into your church where your congregation prefers hymns and forcing your new speed-metal rendition of the Beatitudes on them is probably not your best move. Your "creativity" has just kept your congregation from participating in that time of worship (it's hard to worship while running out of the building with your ears covered).

Also, you may want to try allowing some creative expression from your musicians. If you are holding on so tight that the only musical ideas ever presented are yours, you need to loosen the reins. You may be limiting what your team can offer and, at the same time, slowly losing your musicians' interest. Experimenting by allowing the drummer a little freedom

to be creative, as long as it does not distract from the congregation's ability to worship, can add another dimension to your worship time. Soliciting and intentionally utilizing your team members' creative gifts are ways of showing your appreciation to them. That appreciation and personal ownership can do wonders in building the morale and dedication of your musicians.

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"PLAY SKILLFULLY..."

The author doesn't mince words here. He doesn't say "make it just good enough." So, it seems pretty clear that quality IS important! Does God expect that all of us must play guitar like Phil Keaggy before we approach the worship platform? Of course not! But He does want YOUR best.

The call to being a worship musician brings with it certain responsibilities (such as quality), and with these responsibilities comes sacrifice (*practice*). You certainly wouldn't want your pastor to just pull out his/her Bible on Sunday mornings, and shoot from the hip; so why should your congregation expect any less of you with your instrument?

I realize that many church musicians are not full-time players and hold the responsibilities of a day job and a family. Still, if you are not practicing your instrument during the week in preparation for Sunday mornings, you are offering simply a "good enough" performance in an area where God expects our best. Even those musicians who feel competent enough to play most modern worship music without much practice are choosing to leave a "good-enough" gift at the altar when they decide not to try and improve their skills.

"But I already sacrifice my time to play at the services, and I don't have the time to sacrifice during the week."

Well, I hope this doesn't offend too many, but playing our instruments on Sunday mornings is not that much of a sacrifice. Let's face it – playing music is fun. A hundred percent of the musicians I know got into and pursued music because it was FUN! Chances are,

music ministry appealed to you because you enjoy playing, and for many it is a chance to relive those old 'fun' days when music was a more regular part of life.

Sacrifice is not usually fun. Showing up at 5:00 a.m. to sweep up the sanctuary would be a sacrifice for any working musician, but showing up to do something you enjoy doesn't necessarily qualify. Let's not even mention receiving the usual kudos, prestige, appreciation and applause that usually accompanies music ministry. Sure, there are times when over-scheduling, multiple services, outreach events and the like involve sacrifice, but I think you get my point.

"SHOUT FOR JOY..."

Have fun! No, this is not in contradiction to the last section. Remember what we are doing when we come together – we are standing in His presence worshipping Him! If that doesn't sound fun to you, then Heaven might not be all that appealing, because from what I understand, there will be a lot of that going on. Our times of worship should be an exciting preview of what Heaven will be like.

Let's commit to making every expression of worship a joyous one and show God how much we love Him. Why do we do all this? Because, as Psalm 33 continues, God's word is right and true, and He is faithful in all He does! God deserves our creativity, our best efforts and our joyous shouts of praise!

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