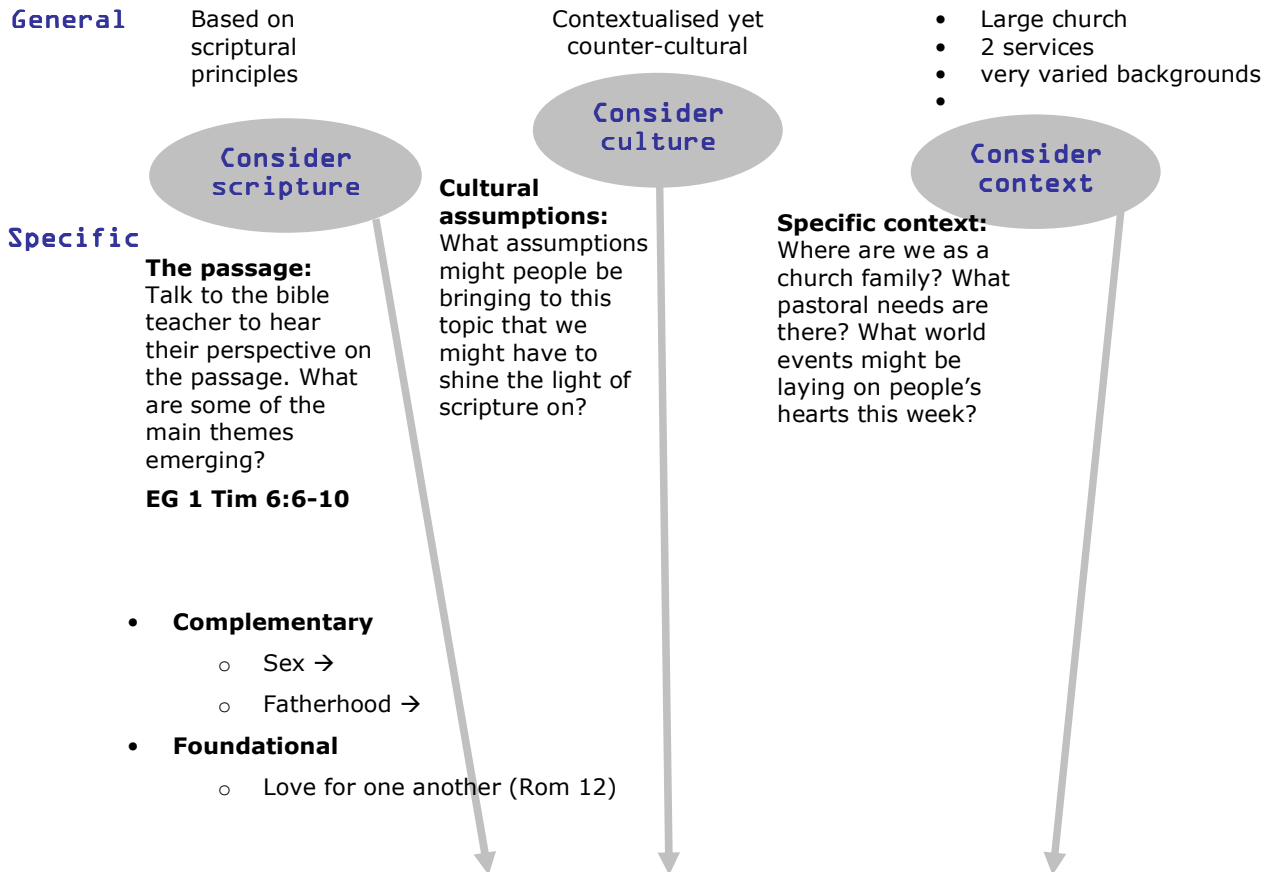




PURPOSE: to motivate people by painting a compelling picture of the glory of God in Jesus Christ.



1. Determine the destination

- A one sentence summary of where you hope people will be at the end of the journey
 - Keep it short – if you can't say it in a phrase, you're probably trying to do too much.
 - Keep it simple – we're not trying to preach the sermon!
 - Think how it will help people see something of the reality and supremacy of God.

EG: 1 Tim 6:6-10

- AIM: to connect people with the greater worth of God above and beyond the things he has made



2. Shape the journey

- **Elements**

These are servants to our greater goal and never ends in themselves. Remember our purpose: to paint a compelling picture of the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

- Songs
- Prayers
- Readings
- Links/exhortations
- Multi-media content
- Others – we're not alone!
 - Teaching
 - Announcements/communications

- **Some examples of patterns**

- Revelation → response

Ps 95:1 Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
3 **For** the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

- Exalt, encounter, respond

- **It's an art**

- Practice it – see how your ideas connect with people
- Soak up influences – observe what others do and learn from them
- Invite feedback – from trusted & respected people, including other worship leaders. Surround yourself with people more experienced than you and allow yourself to be stretched by them.

- **Plan out the bigger concepts of the journey**

- Get the major components of the journey in place. What scenery will we be travelling through?
- Where are the key transitions?

EG: 1 Tim 6

- Start with focus on incomparable character of God – reading from Micah 7:18-19
- Introduce theme of desire for wealth cf desire for God
- Move our to our response

3. Fit the elements together

i. Choosing songs

Songs will be the main component of what we do and the primary means of carrying out what we're seeking to do: painting a compelling picture through the truth content of the songs; helping people to respond to God; proclaiming the truths of the gospel to unbelievers present etc.

Take a look through your file and brainstorm the songs that could be used.

- **Content matters** (see Choosing songs wisely leaflet for advice on assessing the overall suitability of songs)
 - *Think carefully about the words you're putting in people's mouths – and minds & hearts!*

'The words of worship songs matter. They convey truth - the truth to which we are supposed to respond. They aren't just sounds to enable us to join in the melody. They are the means by which the mind understands what God has done for us ... Banal, meaningless lyrics, badly crafted and expressed in confusing language, will not lead us into the deep worship that our world and church need to see.'

Nick Page

- *Determine the subject of the song*
 - Beware lists of classifications in song books or internet sites – not always the most reliable guide to the main point of a song
 - Look at **all** the lyrics in a song, not just your one buzz word:
 - What is the **main** theme?
 - What does the **chorus** say? Very important, as it's repeated & is often the musical high point of the song so will have a big impact on what people will hear in the lyrics (Kathryn Scott – thank you – what's it about?)
 - The emphasis of the song can be changed subtly depending on the following:
 - With a carefully worded **intro**, drawing attention to a particular aspect of the lyrics
 - With the careful use of **repetition** ie with a purpose (not just because the music cries out for it – we're not after the perfect 3 minute pop song!), perhaps with a very brief link explaining why we're repeating songs.
 - The position of the song in the **flow of the set**
 - Eg How can I keep from singing can change subtly if sung after songs of lament compared with songs focusing on God's love.

Try it out

What is the main theme of the following songs?

AMAZING GRACE how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

*My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace.*

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine.
But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine

WHEN I SURVEY the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

This is the message of the cross, that we
can be free,
To live in the victory, and turn from our sin,
My precious Lord Jesus, with sinners you
died,
For there you revealed your love and you
laid down your life.

This is the message of the cross, that we
can be free,
To lay all our burdens here, at the foot of
the tree,
The cross was the shame of the world,
but the glory of God,
For Jesus you conquered sin and you gave

us new life!

*You set me free when I came to the cross,
Poured out your blood for I was broken and
lost,
There I was healed and you covered my
sin,
It's there you saved me, this is the
message of the cross.*

This is the message of the cross, that we
can be free,
To hunger for heaven, to hunger for Thee,
"The cross is such foolishness to the
perishing,
But to us who are being saved, it is the
power of God!"

OH, TO SEE THE DAWN
Of the darkest day:
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men,
Torn and beaten, then
Nailed to a cross of wood.

*This, the power of the cross:
Christ became sin for us.
Took the blame, bore the wrath -
We stand forgiven at the cross.*

Oh, to see the pain
Written on Your face,
Bearing the awesome weight of sin.
Every bitter thought,
Every evil deed
Crowning Your bloodstained brow.

Now the daylight flees,
Now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two,
Dead are raised to life;
'Finished!' the victory cry.

Oh, to see my name
Written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death,
Life is mine to live,
Won through Your selfless love.

*(Final chorus)
This, the power of the cross:
Son of God - slain for us.
What a love! What a cost!
We stand forgiven at the cross*

ii. Flow matters

A good flow in a service (ie a sense of progressing on a journey, sensitive transitions, lack of unnecessary distractions/interruptions) can help people stay focused as we worship.

I've downloaded some great sermons to my iPod. But sometimes after listening to a message for about twenty minutes I'll think, *This guy isn't making sense. I can't understand the flow of thought, and his transitions are non-existent.* Then I'll check my iPod. Oh. It's set on shuffle. That means I've been hearing five-minute tracks of the message out of sequence. No wonder I'm confused. That's how some of us lead worship - on shuffle. We sing great songs, but they're unconnected and in no discernable order. That's why we need to plan our songs progressively.

Bob Kauflin

- **Reorientation (aka call to worship)**

Ideally when we're leading, all who gather with us will have been serving the Lord whole-heartedly all week, having wonderful devotional times, seeing God at work in their lives. That morning, they'll have been up early to spend three hours in prayer and bible meditation, preparing their hearts to meet with God, ready to engage from the first note the band plays...!

In reality...

'Many of those we lead on a Sunday morning are eager to join us and have been magnifying God's unsearchable greatness all week. Others are distracted. It could be anything from the superficial to the serious - deadlines, unpaid bills, a friend's unkind comment, a lab test for cancer, the *thump-thump* noise the car is making, a rebellious child, some besetting sin. Or a million other details of life. What size does God appear when our mind is preoccupied with all the cares, worries and concerns of life?'

Bob Kauflin

The start of our meetings should have something that will help re-focus people onto the greatness of God. It's often best to have more of an emphasis on the objective truths about God in our early songs and readings, to re-connect with the truths about our God, to warm people's hearts to respond to him.

- **Lyrical flow**

Allow your songs to nudge people along the journey. A good question to ask is: **where will we be at the end of this song?**

- **Key transitions – links & signposts**

During your journey, there'll be times when the emphasis will change slightly, where there'll be a shift in direction. These are times when links can be useful, to reorient and refocus people, and to contribute to building this compelling picture of God. You can use prayers, readings, or multimedia for these. But, more often than not, they're going to involve spoken transitions.

"Comments can bring clarity, inspire faith, build rapport, sharpen focus, establish rapport and teach. But if we don't think in advance about what we're going to say, we can sound aimless and confusing. And we almost always end up saying too much. Our words can become filler to cover up feelings of awkwardness or uncertainty. We gush with emotion but don't have any substance."

Bob Kauflin

Here are a few tips about these:

- Keep them short!
- Plan them out beforehand – either write them out word for word, or, if you feel able, jot down a few key phrases to remind you.
- Avoid religious-sounding jargon that doesn't actually connect with where people are at.
- Help people see the transitions and links that you saw in your planning.
- Allow your own passions to show – don't be afraid of modelling a passionate engagement with the truths your celebrating – but avoid melodrama!
- Seek to grow and develop in your skills in being able to paint this compelling picture of God – work hard to fan into flame the gifts that God has given you.

Instead of telling us a thing is 'terrible' describe it so that we'll be terrified. Don't say it was a 'delight', make us say 'delightful' when we've read the description. You see all those words (horrifying, wonderful, hideous, exquisite) are only saying to your readers 'Please will you do your job for me?'

CS Lewis, giving advice to a young writer.

• Musical flow

Think of the following:

- Key –
 - same key or related keys help smooth flow – liaise with your MD
 - BUT, don't force songs together just because they're in the same key
- Tempo
- Mood
 - The main point is not to 'create a mood' – we can love the feeling or worship as much as we love the God we're seeking to worship
 - But sensitive leaders will try to avoid jarring transitions between songs
- Work with your band on transitions between songs
 - Will you be slowing down?
 - Continuing to play – who will do it?
 - Get chord charts ready & in order – or work towards abandoning them totally??!!
 - Get your band to watch the worship leader very carefully

• Timing

- Be aware of your time allocation and plan to stick to it!
- Be realistic in your timing – have you packed so much in that there is no space for people? Have you allowed enough time to respond to the promptings of the Spirit in repeating a verse or chorus?
- As a rule of thumb: assume you'll need longer than you think. It's better to sing fewer songs peacefully than more songs frantically. I work to a five minute slot per song, which gives me space and room to breathe in the set.

• Pacing

- We're aiming for maximum engagement from people, so consider the pacing of your set list. Does it start with singable and well known songs that will allow people to engage from the beginning? If you're using performance songs, or other elements that are more passive,

think carefully when would be best in the flow to place them. When do you think people are ready for more passive and reflective elements?

- **Sensitivity to the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit can inspire plans beforehand just as much as he can inspire on the hoof. Planning can make us very aware of our need of God well in advance of the meeting & can help us to approach our leading sensitively, in an informed manner and wisely.

As we sit down and ponder what God wants to accomplish on Sunday, we may start to feel very needy. People will be walking in confused, empty, and bitter, facing financial worries, life-threatening illnesses, and family struggles. We know that God is Sovereign, wise and good, and that he cares for them ... We have God's word, four or five songs, and thirty minutes to help them see that God is bigger than their problems and that Jesus Christ is a magnificent Saviour. How can we arrange this time so people are best positioned to hear from God and receive his grace? What can we do to serve him most effectively? I'm never immediately sure. That leads me to pray.

Bob Kauflin

But that doesn't mean that our plans are the final word, divinely inspired and beyond any likelihood of change. We should seek to remain sensitive to the Spirit's leading as we lead, open to promptings, and not afraid to take a few risks!

Encourage your band to expect changes and to follow your lead. And encourage them to keep sensitive to the Spirit as they're playing.

Transitions

Worship leaders are the main guides that lead the congregation on their journey through the service. The words that lead from one part of the service to the next are key tools that help in this task. To be honest, many worship leaders don't spend much time at all considering the words they will use. Some refuse to because they react against anything too planned or canned. Some have simply never thought about doing it. But the words we speak have the power to inspire or frustrate. They can make a visitor feel welcome or unwelcome. They can lead the congregation to focus on the purpose of worship, or get everyone bogged down in mechanics. Many times, when we don't think about the words we say, we end up communicating some inaccurate, dangerous, or hurtful messages. The following are actual lines spoken by worship leaders.

"Men and women sing the first line together. Men sing the second with the children. Women sing the first and the third. Then everyone finishes it up."

"Well I guess that now we have to have the confession of sin."

"Well, I didn't really prepare for this next part of the service."

"We really haven't had time to rehearse this, but oh well."

"Ok? Let's see what is next. Well, next we will say the creed."

"Isn't this more fun than in a traditional worship service?"

"Wasn't that song great? I'll bet they don't sing that way at the church across the street!"

"Well, our secretary messed up again, and the song number in the bulletin for this part of the service is wrong."

Often, without intending it, worship leaders say something very different than what they mean. They are utterly confusing. They suggest that worship is routine. They mock another church. They signal that worship is not all that important. They blame someone else for a mistake. None of these

comments focuses on the meaning or purpose of what is happening. They are barriers rather than enablers of worship. To avoid transitions like these, ask the following questions: Are my instructions about the mechanics as concise and clear as possible? Does the transition

link two acts of worship, showing how they are related? Does the transition avoid being pedantic or preachy? Is the tone of the transition warm and

inviting or cold and inhospitable? Are there especially poignant lines in a song or hymn that you could highlight in your introduction?

Consider these examples:

"Some of us gather for worship this morning with great joy. Some of us gather with tears. Our opening song is based on a Psalm that expresses both joy and honest pain."

"Next, we state precisely what we believe, using the words of the Apostles' Creed. These words are printed in your worship folder. If you are visiting with us today, we would be happy to explain the joy we have because of these statements. Simply ask one of the greeters at the door at the end of the service."

"The sermon ended with a call to confession. Our song of response enables us to just that."

Consider writing out your transitions ahead of time—even if you don't refer to your notes in the service. Even if you speak extemporaneously, you'll do better if you've worked out a written version ahead of time. Then after the service, go back and listen to a recording of what you said. Work together with other worship leaders in your congregation to think about ways to improve the hospitality in your spoken transitions.

John D. Witvliet