

than a *'noisy gong or clanging cymbal'* to God (1 Cor 13:1). This is not to say that we are out to *please* people, simply giving them what they want. But we are to serve them, following Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian church: *'admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all'* (1 Thes 5:14).

As we serve others, we are helping to fulfil the pastoral responsibilities to look after the church. As such, we have been given a position of delegated leadership by the elders and so we serve under their guidance and authority as we lead. Scripture again is clear on how we are to do this: *'Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.'* (Heb 13:17)

5. I am committed to the ongoing development of my skills, both in leadership and music, that I might better serve others and bring glory to God.

Speaking about the exercise of gifts in corporate meetings, Paul instructs the Corinthian believers to *'...strive to excel in the building up of the church.'* (1 Cor 14:12). Later, he urges Timothy to *'...fan into flame the gift of God which is in you...'* (2 Tim 1:6). Lack of skill can be a distraction to people and hence does not serve them best. We are to be good stewards of the gifts and talents God has given us, to be faithful in playing our part to put in the graft to grow and develop and musicians and leaders.

A commitment to excellence, however, can be a tricky thing. We can quickly fall into the idolatry of perfectionism or of drawing unhelpful comparisons with others. Harold Best defines excellence as 'the process of becoming better than I once was. I am not to become better than someone else or even like someone else.' This attitude will help to spur us on to grow in our gifting, while saving us from the dangers of unhealthy competition with others.

Additionally, excellence is not the end in itself. For just as someone may become distracted by lack of skill, so others might become distracted by overly ornate skill that focuses attention on the skill itself, rather than on God. We seek to excel that the church may be built up by being directed again to the unrivalled, compelling splendour of the God who has given us every gift and talent that we possess and who is very one who enables us to use them for his glory and renown.

'Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!' (Ps 115:1)

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For more information, visit the Training and Study section of our website, where you'll find much additional material to help you consider these issues further. In particular, you might find the resources in the Encounter section useful.

Glenabbey Worship Leaders' Goals

1. Aware of my tendencies to rob God of his glory through my idolatry, I am committed to an active pursuit of his glory in all I am and do as I serve him.

2. I am seeking to deepen my biblical grasp of the character and works of God so that my own worship of him might become richer, and so that I may be better able to paint a compelling picture of him to others as I lead.

3. I desire to be a servant leader who seeks to be increasingly conformed to biblical standards of godliness in my life & service.

4. I desire to work gladly as part of the body of Christ in Glenabbey, fostering a pastoral heart of love for the people I'm leading and serving, and serving willingly under the authority of the elders.

5. I am committed to the ongoing development of my skills, both in leadership and music, that I might better serve others and bring glory to God.

Leading people as we worship God

Each one of us who stands at the front to lead is, in a very real sense, a worship leader. We must not see ourselves as just musicians, or just singers. We ourselves are there to worship – both through the service we give and the adoration we bring to God. And as we are at the front, we are, in a very real sense, leaders. We may not be the spokesperson in the band, but we are part of the team that has the privilege of leading others as we worship God together. This leaflet aims to help us to think through some of the responsibilities that come with this privilege of our highest calling – the worship of the one, true living God.

1. Aware of my tendencies to rob God of his glory through my idolatry, I am committed to an active pursuit of his glory in all I am and do as I serve him.

Scripture teaches some basic facts of human existence. It tells us that we are all created worshippers, that we have an in-built need to give ourselves to something other, something greater. Of course, we should be giving our worship to God, the only worthy Object of all true worship. Instead, in our fallen state, we have rejected him and instead give our worship away to trinket gods, to lesser things, to the things he has made rather than the Maker of all.

Romans 1 outlines our condition, saying that we have *'exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen!'*

The bible has a single word to describe this situation: idolatry. Scripture is full of warnings against the all pervasive dangers of robbing God of his glory through idolatry. For example, just after God had intervened on behalf of his people in miraculous ways by rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, he gives them the 10 commandments which start with a reminder of what he has done and a stark warning: *'I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the land of your slavery. You must not have any god but me. You must not make of yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous god who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods.'* (Ex 20). You might think that, with the supernatural evidence of God's commitment to them still fresh in their minds, they wouldn't need such a warning. But then think of the Golden Calf...

John puts it simply and succinctly like this at the end of his first letter: *'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.'*

Given that idolatry is our default setting, as worship leaders we must work intentionally to follow John's instruction and to actively pursue God's glory and not ours as we lead. We must let 2 Kings 17:41 warn our hearts: *'Even while these people were worshipping the Lord, they were serving their idols.'* We serve, not to build up our standing, not to accrue credit for ourselves, but to direct others to the One true Object of worship: God himself. We must be honest with ourselves and pursue this with a vigour and passion to see God glorified through our service of worship.

2. I am seeking to deepen my biblical grasp of the character and works of God so that my own worship of him might become richer, and so that I may be better able to paint a compelling picture of him to others as I lead.

In John 4 we get an invaluable insight into what is at the core of true worship. In the middle of a conversation about worship, Jesus makes this radical statement to the Samaritan woman: *'true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth'*. According to this

passage, true worshippers are defined in the first instance by the *object* of their worship; true worshippers worship God. So the essence of worship is acknowledging God as the central value of our lives, the centre of gravity around which everything else we say, think and do revolves.

As worship leaders, we are seeking to direct others to worship Christ. We all have too readily given ourselves to our trinket gods; our job as worship leaders is to reacquaint people with the incomparable beauty of God. We seek to paint a compelling picture of the glory of God in Christ so that our idols may be exposed for the worthy bits of junk that they are and so that we might once again give due glory and honour to God.

If we are to do this effectively, we must be seeking to grow in our grasp of who the bible reveals God to be. If our descriptions of God are to compel people, they must be deep in meaning, emerging from a life committed to growing in knowledge of and relationship with Christ.

To that end, we must prayerfully study our bibles, hungering to know him better, that we might both worship him better ourselves and be better able to serve others as we lead them to his worship.

3. I desire to be a servant leader who seeks to be increasingly conformed to biblical standards of godliness in my life and service.

If true worship has God as its object, it follows that we should try to find out what God wants from us as worshippers – how does *God* define acceptable worship? The bible is clear on what is God's priority in this regard: God is seeking worshippers before he is seeking worship events, and so he wants the worship of our lips to spring from lives of worship that are lived for his glory. We must be studying scripture and allowing the Holy Spirit to illuminate, expose and convict us of our sins that we might become increasingly conformed to the standards God outlines in the bible.

In addition, as leaders, God calls us to *'set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.'* (1 Timothy 4:12). If we want to have credibility as leaders as we stand publicly in front of the rest of the church, then our lives must demonstrate godliness. As leaders, we are there to serve others, and we serve them better if our lives show strong convergence between what we sing and who we are.

4. I desire to work gladly as part of the body of Christ in Glenabbey, fostering a pastoral heart of love for the people I'm leading and serving, and serving willingly under the authority of the elders.

We don't so much lead worship as lead *people* as we worship. We are there to serve God by serving others in love, and we must strive, with God's help, to cultivate a heart of love and compassion for those we are leading. The decisions we make as we prepare and the attitude we bring as we lead must be motivated by a love for those we have the privilege of standing before. Scripture is clear: if love is not our motive for serving, then, however skilful our music might be to human ears, it's nothing more