

Worship Matters Video Intensive with Bob Kauflin
Session 12: Loving Your Musicians and Pastor
(From Chapters 30-31 of *Worship Matters*)¹
Transcript

Welcome to the last session of the Worship Matters Video Intensive. If you've gotten through all of the videos to this point, I just want to say thank you. In the last session we talked about loving those we serve—our family members and our churches. In this final session we're going to talk about loving those we serve *with*: our musicians and our pastor.

I. Loving Your Musicians

In the forty-some years I've been leading, I've had the opportunity to work in a lot of different circumstances: big and small churches, teams with many and a few members, church plants and well-established churches, churches in the process of change, and churches that are pretty settled in what they're doing.

In every case, I've found it's important to know two things: your role and how to build a culture.

A. Know your role and capabilities

One of the greatest frustrations in leadership can come from trying to map what you do on to what someone else is doing without taking into account the differences. So, you see someone at a conference, or someone leading in your town at another church and you think, "I should be like them." But you don't realize how different you are. Some of those differences can include

- Full time, part time, or volunteer
- Size of your church
- Long term or just getting started
- Community demographics
- Denominational ties
- Differences in musical training and gifting
- The desires and vision of your pastor

And that's just a few of the ways you might be different from someone else.

B. Have reasonable expectations

All that to say, have reasonable expectations for how you're going to relate to the musicians in your church. Your band doesn't have to be a small group, or like a family, or best friends. You might not have time for that. In fact, I wouldn't even recommend that. Musicians tend to be insular. We tend to be drawn to people like us. It's good for musicians to get out into the rest of the world and find out there are people with problems who have the same Savior that we do and that's just a good thing. You might be a twenty-something trying to lead a team made up of 50 and 60 year olds. There are just different

ways that God puts people in situations and we want to take those into account.

C. Talk to your pastor

So, I'd recommend you talk to your pastor about what "realistic expectations" are. Make sure you agree about your goals, your theology of music and worship, and what those relationships should look like.

II. Building a Culture

Once you've established your role, or become clearer on your role, the next most important thing you can do is to seek to build a culture among your musicians. As I've had the opportunity to interact with hundreds of leaders through the years, I've realized there's a difference between managing a team and building a culture.

If we don't give time to cultivating Christ-exalting attitudes and practices, we'll constantly find ourselves putting out fires rather than fulfilling what God has called us to do. Building a culture makes people less conscious of following rules and adhering to standards and more apt to follow the example of those around them.

So, I'm going to give you five ways that we can build a God-honoring culture among our musicians. Even if you're not leading a band, you can contribute to building a gospel-centered culture. They all begin with "E" so they're easier to remember.

A. Expectations

You don't want people joining your band thinking the world is going to revolve around their schedule, their gifts, and their preferences. So as early as you can—and I know a number of people who have put these in writing—you want to let people know things like:

- What kind of musician God is looking for
- How often they might expect to play or sing
- The fact that people have different giftings
- That you expect them to grow
- That no one has a life time membership card in the band
- That you expect them to be an active participant in the life of the church (We ask all our musicians to be members of the church and we expect them to be actively participating)
- And also let them know that they should come to you if there's ever a reason they shouldn't be serving on the team (something like unconfessed sin, or a season of life).

Let people know before you use them what you're expecting of them, because, believe me, it's much easier to wait to put someone in the band than it is to take them off. So, that's building a culture of expectations.

B. Encouragement

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” - Romans 12:10²

Encouragement is like oxygen to the soul, and for musicians, who are used to being told what they’re doing wrong, encouragement can have an exaggerated effect. Encouragement should be consistent, private, and public—all three. We can encourage people anytime: in the midst of rehearsal, before and after the meeting, by email, text, when the group meets—don’t miss any opportunity to build a culture of encouragement.

Public encouragement accomplishes at least two goals. First, it builds up the person being encouraged and it also lets people in the band know what is valuable, not only on the team, but in God’s eyes. We can encourage growth or consistency in things like character, musical skills, a love for God and others, care for others, and lots of other things. Doesn’t have to be complicated. I think of comments like:

- *"Dave, thanks so much for always having your gear set up and ready to go for rehearsal."*
- *"Julie, your ability to sing harmony has really improved. Thanks for working on that!"*
- *"Jay, that's a great suggestion. You've been really helpful these past few weeks. Glad you're on the team."*
- *"Becca, when you sing, your joy is contagious. Thanks for inspiring us."*

Any comment like that will both encourage the person you’re speaking to and help build a culture of encouragement.

C. Equipping

Unless your church is a rare exception, your musicians need to grow musically and theologically. And if you’re limited by time and budget, you just might tell your musicians to find ways to grow and commend those who do. But it doesn’t take too much effort to find ways to equip your band.

- Go through a book or chapter once a month. *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer, *Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer, *True Worship* by Vaughan Roberts, *Unceasing Worship* by Harold Best, the worship chapter from John Piper’s *Desiring God*. You can do a Bible study in the Psalms or attributes of God.
- Send out encouraging emails or notes to people.
- Attend a conference together.
- Suggest courses that they can take at their local college or online.
- You can get some of your older, more experienced, mature musicians to help some of the younger, less experienced, less mature musicians.
- Or you could use this video course (which you’re probably doing because you’re watching).

D. Evaluation

This is one of the easiest and most beneficial cultures to build, but also one of the most neglected. An unevaluated band will never grow. We resist evaluation because it shows us where we're really at, where we're deficient, but it's invaluable if we're going to become more effective in serving the church. It requires humility. It requires humble musicians. At different times, the teams I've led have evaluated the mix, the sound of someone's instrument, transitions, rehearsal practices, stage set up, the flow, tempo, and how much different people are playing. We've talked about all of those things.

One of the most helpful times for evaluation is right after the meeting. At some churches we've huddled at the end of the service and quickly gone through the meeting, emphasizing first, all the things that went right and went well and then being really honest and brief about the things that didn't go so well. Those are such great opportunities to let people know that your position on this team isn't determined by playing perfectly every week. No one plays perfectly every week. Jesus perfects all our offerings and we usually say something to that effect. Your mistakes, my mistakes, our mistakes didn't hinder God from doing what he wanted to do in people's hearts, but it doesn't mean we can't get better. So, we take time to evaluate. Now, we might not do it after the meeting. It might be an email during the week, it might be a text, it might be a mid-week rehearsal. Few things help us evaluate more effectively than a video of what we're doing. If you've never done that, I'd encourage you to do it, as I encouraged you in a previous session of this intensive series. Video doesn't lie and it's one of the quickest ways to get better at what we do. So, build a culture of evaluation among your musicians.

E. Enjoyment

Most church musicians come early, stay late, and work hard. It's only right that we do whatever we can to make it more enjoyable. Of course, our greatest joy comes from knowing we're walking in the steps of the Savior who said,

"Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves." - Luke 22:26

We want to follow in his example and that brings us joy. But beyond that, we have the joy of laughing together, making fun of each other's mistakes, and learning to appreciate each other as jars of clay that contain a priceless treasure. I found this especially helpful during rehearsals. I try to make rehearsals a fun, enjoyable time.

I remember one time I was leading at an event. We had 13 or 14 songs to do and because of different issues that came up, we had 45 minutes to rehearse. Now, most of the people were familiar with the songs, but not everybody, so I just said, "You know what, we're just going to enjoy this." And we did. We had a fun rehearsal. The evening went fairly well. No one came up to us afterwards and said, "It sounded like you only rehearsed for 45 minutes. No, we did our best and we enjoyed it. So, if you're the type of

leader who tends to be tight and doesn't want anybody making mistakes, I want to encourage you to remember that Jesus is the one who perfects all our offerings of worship and as we seek to get better at what we do, that's for the purpose of serving people more effectively. We don't want to be a distraction. But it's not a make or break deal. And God certainly doesn't want us to sin to bring it about. So, enjoy your time together.

As I'm talking about this, I think of a dear friend, Dave Campbell, who I served with for years in a church who had this unique ability to mock me and my decisions at various points during the rehearsal. And sometimes he was right on, other times he was wrong, but in any case, we all laughed because he wasn't saying it to spite me, he was just saying it to bring lightness to our time together, and it was so encouraging. It was so helpful, so seek to cultivate a culture of enjoyment. Don't take yourself too seriously and enjoy it when others mock you. It shows that they love you and it greases the skins of ministry. Don't allow people to feel tight about playing. Like, if they make a mistake, everything's going to fall apart. They don't play as well when they're overly concerned. No one does. We work hard to not make mistakes, but it's Jesus who perfects our offerings, so we want to serve him with joy.

III. Handling transitions

Now there will come a time in your leading when there will be transitions on the team. Besides a change in life circumstances or moving, there are two primary reasons why someone might need to leave a band: skill and character. I want to talk about each briefly.

A. Due to lack of skill

There are various reasons why someone lacks the skills necessary to be a part of a band. It might be it's someone you inherited, might be someone who's related to the pastor, someone who just needs a better assessment of their gifts, it might be that there are people with better skills joining the church. So, here's a few thoughts about how to handle that:

- Audition people in advance wherever possible. And at those auditions, seek *more* information, not less. Get to know them as well as you can. Ask as many questions so you won't be regretting it later.
- Teach your musicians the biblical principle of feet and hands (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). There God makes it clear that different members of the body are gifted in different ways and he doesn't want hands looking down on feet saying, "Well I'm glad I'm not like you." He doesn't want feet looking up at hands saying, "I wish I were like you." Every part is needed. And it may be that someone really wants to be on the team, but they're not skilled to be on the team, and what I generally tell them is, "Your desire does not determine your place on the team. I appreciate your desire to serve, but it doesn't seem God has gifted you in this way, at least with this team, so lets find other ways for you to serve."

- The minimal standard is not using people who would be a distraction to the church (1 Chronicles 15:22). There's a wide range after that. You might be at the place where someone has to be fairly skilled, fairly gifted, to be part of the team. Or you might be at a small church where you're just happy to take any godly person who comes close to playing an instrument. That's okay, both are okay, but you don't want people leading the church who are going to be a distraction.
- If you have to ask someone to leave the team, speak honestly, briefly, and kindly. Make sure that your heart is to love and serve and care for them, not to blast them or just get rid of them. The truth might hurt but it doesn't need to be communicated in a hurtful way. It might be helpful or even necessary to involve another leader or a pastor in a decision for perspective and counsel. I've done that even as a pastor. It can be very helpful.
- If appropriate, encourage someone to pursue growth, to take lessons, to study, and have them come back later. It might be that in 6 months or a year, they might be fit for the team.
- Point out other ways God has gifted them, just encourage them that they are gifted and if you know some of the ways they're gifted, then certainly suggest other ways that they can serve in the church.
- Don't burn your bridges too quickly. You might need a lesser skilled musician when none of your good musicians are available. So, don't assume that if someone's not fit now, they might not be needed later.

B. Due to lack of character

Passages like 1 Timothy 3:2-12 and James 3:1 imply that those who serve in the church publicly are subjected to higher standards than others.

Now, you might say that musicians aren't "elders" and they're not "teachers," well that's true, but their presence in front of the congregation week after week implies that their life is worthy of emulation— not flawless, but demonstrating the fruit of the gospel. When that's not true, the church gets the message that worship is more about music than the way we live. Likewise, when non-Christian musicians are used, we're implying that the *art* of worship is more important than the *heart* of worship (it isn't). So these are some of the things we might do to deal with a person whose character might lead to them being asked to leave the team.

- Regularly ask how people are doing. Find out how people are doing at home with their families, with their jobs, with their souls. That can be a way of heading off surprises.
- Don't assume you know all the details of a situation. (Proverbs 18:17). When someone comes to you and says, "Well, I heard that so-and-so's doing this," go to that person and ask them about the situation.

Don't assume you know everything because someone else told you about it. Find out for yourself.

- Establish the significance and effect of the sin. For instance, being late and disorganized is less serious than persistent anger or fornication. Struggling with some form of sexual lust is less serious than regularly visiting a prostitute or online pornography.
- If appropriate, get help from others rather than simply handling it yourself. And if it's possible to keep a person on the team, and help them grow, do that. Sometimes we're quick to think a person has to leave a team when what they really need is just someone to help them walk through the steps of repentance.
- Involve others in restoration. We don't want to say to someone, well you're off the team, and then not care for them. That might members of their small group, it might be other musicians, it might be a pastor. Just make sure that you try as much as you can to lay out a course for a person for restoration.

IV. Loving Your Pastor

The first thing to remember about your pastor is this:

A. He's a gift you should be grateful for.

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," - Ephesians 4:11-12

He is a gift from the ascended Christ. John Stott wisely said, "Gratefulness is a soil in which pride does not easily grow." Pastors might be a work in progress, but they're gifts nevertheless, so spend time in prayer thanking God for your pastor.

B. Listen to and study your pastor.

"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." - Proverbs 18:2

Pastors come in all variation of personalities, backgrounds, quirks, visions, and gifts. It will serve you immensely to explore things like his vision for the church and what moves him.

How does he like to communicate? Facebook, face to face, phone, email, text? *When* does he like to communicate? On Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, Monday morning, mid-week? Find out what your pastor prefers, and if there's a tension, just ask questions.

Find out if you speak the same language. I've realized that sometimes what my pastor is saying to me isn't always what I'm hearing. So his "dull" might be my "simple". His "frantic" might be my "jubilant". When he says the songs are too wordy, I might be thinking the songs are theologically rich. It's especially important to know how much your pastor wants to be involved. Some pastors like to be a part of every detail, while others only want the big idea and you to handle all the details.

C. Serve your pastor.

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” - Hebrews 13:17

There are a variety of ways you can serve our pastor, beginning by praying for him. Seek to adapt to his preferences rather than fighting for your own. Take it upon yourself to research a question rather than assuming that he will find the information that he's looking for. It's important to recognize that the pastor and the lead musician are on the same team, but the pastor's is the coach. So my job is not to defend my territory, to defend my leading time, but to realize we have the same goals, we have the same aims, but when it comes to disagreements, I want to submit to him. I want to make it a joy for him to lead me. I don't want him groaning about having me as the lead musician.

D. Initiate with your pastor.

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.” - Proverbs 3:27

Seek out new songs. Find articles or books on music and worship you can recommend. Be the first to ask for evaluation. One thing that can be helpful to do is just to regularly communicate, “If you find someone who does this better than me, I'm fine with that.” Now he may never find someone who is better than you or you may have to move on before that, but it communicates a willingness, a desire to serve rather than to fight for your position.

E. When disagreements come...

- Before taking a position at a church, whether it's a church you're currently at or one that you're investigating, make sure you do your research. Ask as many questions as you can about their doctrine, about their relationships, about the history, about the vision. Too many times I talk to leaders who didn't do enough investigation up front and they find themselves regretting it 6 months to a year in.
- Make sure you've identified the right issues in the disagreement. Is it a theological disagreement, is it a musical disagreement, is it a methodological or generational disagreement? Is it just a disagreement of

personalities. That will help you know how much weight to give to your differences.

- Take care of your own heart issues first (Matthew 7:1-5). We can't see the problems in the hearts of others unless we have seen clearly the problems in our own.
- Use a neutral third party (could be a book) to bring clarity to the discussion.
- Try to resolve issues as quickly as you can rather than let them linger. As issues linger, we can tend to form judgments about the other person, which tend to affect the way we view the person.
- Do everything you can to support your pastor.

Now, there are times when you find you worked through the issues, you've tried to work through them, you've involved other people, and you realize there is a significant difference. Your heart's in a good place, but you can't really support your pastor. At that point, it might be wise to consider being in another church. But let me say this about that: I would never encourage someone to take a job in a church that they wouldn't want their family to be in, where they didn't think their family would grow and be nourished and encouraged. The church is not a platform for our career. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ and so we want to serve where we can, but if it comes down to a choice between serving in a church that I don't think is good for my family or getting a job outside the church and being in a church that's good for my family, well, I always commend the second choice.

V. Final Thoughts

That brings us to the end of the Worship Matters Video intensive. Again, if you've watched all 12 videos, THANK YOU for the time you've invested, but however many you've watched, I do hope what we've covered has been helpful.

We have sought to put the role of music in its proper place, where Scripture puts it – we're leading songs for the church that remind us who God is and also gives us words to respond to him in ways that magnify his greatness and goodness in Jesus Christ.

Most importantly, I hope your heart has been stirred to desire to use not only your music, but your life to bring glory to Jesus Christ, to use your talents, your gifts, your skills, your efforts to magnify the one who is worthy of all praise and honor and glory because it's only through Christ and because of Him that we're able to do what we do. This isn't for us. This isn't for our fame. This isn't for our glory. It's for the glory of the one who left his throne, entered this world through the birth canal of a woman he created, lived a perfect life, that we could never live, took our sins upon himself so that He might endure the wrath of God in our place, who then was raised from the dead, ascended to his father's right hand, is now interceding for us, and one day will return for us so that we can spend

eternity forever with him. He is worthy of praise. He is worthy of glory. He deserves all the fame and all the honor.

The Father invites us, the Son has made it possible, and the Spirit has opened our eyes to see it and enjoy it.

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” - Jude 24-25

Session 12 Discussion Questions:

1. Are you clear on your role in worship ministry? (If not, talk to your pastor and get clarification.) Are your expectations appropriate to your role, season of life, church size, team size, etc.?
2. Bob says “Encouragement should be consistent, private, and public.” Which of those do you need to grow the most in? Discuss practical steps you can take to grow in that area.
3. How do you respond to evaluation? Discuss your level of openness/eagerness to be evaluated?
4. Why is evaluation so important for a team? What can you do to help contribute to a culture of healthy evaluation (that is, one that is helpful and not merely critical)?
5. What are some Biblical truths that can help a team enjoy what they do more and more, rather than always feeling stressed out or under pressure?
6. What are some steps you can take to better understand your pastor, communicate with your pastor, and serve your pastor?
7. What's one truth or application that has helped you the most from the Worship Matters Video Intensive?

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