

The Studio

EPISODE // REHEARSING A BAND

Worship leaders spend a lot of time thinking about ways to engage others in worship. Usually, that's the congregation, but it's also the musicians who sing and play with worship leaders. A lot of worship leaders describe themselves as the "lead worshiper" but their greatest challenge is focusing too much on engaging others in worship. So, they often have to remind themselves and the other musicians that they are worshipers as well.

One of the best ways any worship leader can prepare themselves and their musicians to be a worshiper is through rehearsal. In rehearsal, you teach the nuts and bolts of each worship service. As the leader of musicians, your job is to know the way, clear the path as much as possible, direct musicians around any obstacles, and draw their attention to the important things.

As you prepare to rehearse your band, here are a few things to keep in mind.

- ✦ **Plan a thoughtful worship service.** No amount of rehearsal and skill is going to make up for a worship service that has been poorly prepared, so the best place to start is in the planning phase. There are other videos from anima about how to do that, but remember, you're planning so that other people can participate. That means you don't have to plan all brand new music every service. Instead, think about your congregation's responses to particular songs and plan accordingly.
- ✦ **Choose accessible arrangements.** There are a lot of arrangements or versions of any one song, so choose one that your worship band can play and sing. If every other chord is unknown or too complex for your group, look for another arrangement. It's often helpful to learn about the musical skills of your band members. Grab lunch or coffee with them, and learn about their musical background and process, so you have a better idea of what they're capable of.
- ✦ **Share real music early.** You'll have the best chance of a great rehearsal if you get the music out early. Most band members will appreciate having a recording and printed music to each song. Instead of giving out words with chords over them, grab lead sheets that have the melody printed. You'll be able to rehearse faster by referring to measures, and all the instruments will be able to visually see how long each chord lasts. Don't forget to give music to your audio and visual team. They are the key to a great rehearsal.
- ✦ **Show up early.** As the leader, you need to be at rehearsal early to make sure the music is out, lights are on, and sound system is powered up. Go ahead and get your gear hooked up and tested, and then take a few minutes and review your rehearsal plan. Once your team arrives, take a deep breath and invite God into the rehearsal time.
- ✦ **Allow time for sound checks.** If you have monitors or in-ears, start with those. Have the sound person mute the house, and layer each instrument on one at a time. Your goal is to set the volume for each instrument so that you can hear it easily. Choose 4 to 8 measures to loop or vamp and build the sound in this order: drums, other percussion, bass guitar, electric guitar, acoustic

guitar, piano, organ, other instruments, vocals. Repeat the same process with the house, leaving the monitors on.

- ✦ **Begin with familiar music.** It's best to choose the most familiar song in the worship service to start with. This will allow the entire group to lock in together on something that doesn't take as much concentration as a new song would.
- ✦ **Rehearse the music.** It's important to have an idea of what you want each song to sound like before rehearsal. In other words, what instrument is leading each section of each song, and what instruments are secondary. An easy way to do this is to divide the song into sections (chorus, verse, bridge, tag, channel, etc.) and make notes about them. Like an orchestra, all instruments don't need to play all the time. And remember, not every song needs a special arrangement. Pick one, maybe two songs to really dress up. Over time, you'll end up getting to them all.
- ✦ **Mind the book ends.** As you rehearse, be sure to pay attention to the beginning and ending of each song. Make a definite assignment to the person in charge of the beginning of the song. Practice ending each song well and on purpose. Then, practice transitioning well into the next song.
- ✦ **End on time.** Finally, honor your worship band's time. When rehearsal time is over, you need to be finished. Offer a brief prayer of gratitude, and then thank everyone for their investment of talent and time. It's a lot of fun to lead rehearsal, and a little preparation will make it enjoyable and productive for the band, too. In the process, you'll all become better musicians and worship leaders, and you'll be more free to worship yourself. Most importantly, God will be honored as you prepare to lead your church in worship.