

10 Reasons Many Contemporary Christian Worship Leaders Are Spiritually Bankrupt

This article is pertinent in light of the fact that several popular worship leaders have come out in the past year saying they either don't believe or are considering walking away from the faith. The following generalizations are not meant to imply that all worship leaders and churches behave in this way. This article is a general observation that fits in principle in various expressions of the church. I have also seen many talented worship leaders who love the Lord, worship from their hearts and have a solid walk with the Lord.

One time I ministered to a young man involved in the gospel music scene, and he confided in me that he almost lost his faith because of what he experienced when he went on tour with a band. (He said other gospel music performers regularly propositioned him!)

That being said, as a pastor and trans-local minister for more than three decades, I have come to the conclusion that many involved in Christian worship seem to have a very superficial relationship with the Lord and His Church. (I thank God we have had a strong process for ministry involvement in our local congregation. Because of that, we usually have worship leaders who have a solid walk with the Lord.)

These are based on my personal observations, not hard data. That said, I write this from the context of one who was a professional musician who served on the worship team of our local church for more than 25 years.

The following are some of the reasons I believe many worship performers are spiritually bankrupt:

1. Many are hirelings and not committed members to one church.

I have been shocked and dismayed to see how many large churches just hire out their worship team members, even if they are not committed Christians or committed to their local church. Consequently, when a gifted singer or musician first comes to Christ, they are sucked into a culture of play-for-pay and go where the dollars are, rather than where the Lord is truly leading them.

2. Some pastors do not enforce the same standards upon talented singers and musicians.

Some pastors turn the other way when it comes to the immoral or unethical behavior of their most talented musicians and singers. The reason for this is obvious: these performers help draw crowds into their congregation.

3. Talented people often get ahead without being deeply rooted in Christ.

Many people in this field find they get promoted, idolized and celebrated in their church merely because of their talent. Consequently, they have a superficial lifestyle and rarely see the need to die to self, seek God, and allow God to penetrate their soul.

4. Gifted Christian performers are idolized in the church.

Evangelicals have created a culture of entertainment that empowers and promotes the most gifted among us. These very gifted singers and performers are admired and celebrated for their abilities in a way that is not different from *The Voice* or *American Idol*. With all this adulation in the environment, it is no surprise that many Christian bands and performers are lifted up with pride and never mature in their faith.

5. The focus of worship is more about them than about Jesus

The church usually puts talented singers and performers front and center during Sunday services. Because of that, a service is largely judged by how well the band performed. This is the kind of setting that engenders man worship instead of Jesus worship. Worship leaders and performers often have big egos to match their talent and many erroneously (if subconsciously) think that the service is all about them.

6. They often don't sit under the Word after they perform

I am amazed with how often I see many worship team members leave the service after they perform. I guess they think that the highlight of the service was their performance and everything else that ensues, including preaching, is a letdown.

7. They perform but do not worship from the heart

When a pastor and the congregation only care about the talent and effect of the worship experience, they perpetuate a culture of performance more than a culture of worship. Consequently, band members and singers will then focus more on performance than on worship. This results in band members programmed to equate worship more with performance than with drawing close to God.

8. They are overly sensitive and do not easily receive correction

In my opinion, many in the music world are overly sensitive, ego-driven megalomaniacs. (I know this because as a professional guitar player for many years, I was or am guilty of this!) Folks like this are very competitive and have a hard time admitting they are wrong. This does not make it easy for a pastor to bring correction to them, since their identity is rooted more in their ability than in their God.

9. They do not study the Word but rely upon performance sessions in church for their walk

Many years ago I was shocked to realize that many of the worship leaders I got to know had no prayer life and rarely cracked open the Bible for personal study! Often, they depended upon worship practice or the Sunday services to try to connect with God. It alarmed me that many worship leaders were not themselves worshippers!

10. They do not have a spiritually mature worship person leading the team

All of the previous points mentioned could be dealt with if the worship leader held them accountable. Of course, this will only happen if the worship leader is not a diva but a real disciple of Christ. Leaders set the culture of a team, and if he or she is a spiritually immature “performer,” then most likely the whole team will be more about performance than worship.

In conclusion, I pray pastors and leaders will have the courage to sit down talented but prideful, worldly worship team members, so that Jesus will once again be the center of our worship.