

Conducting an Effective Worship Service Rex Deckard

Introduction

All of our efforts- outreach, Sunday School, youth ministry, promotions- avail us very little if we don't have 'good church.' In spite of this, we will spend many hours and dollars purchasing curriculum, decorating classrooms, buying advertisements, upgrading buildings and then spend very little time preparing for a worship service.

If we don't have an effective worship service we are like the family who sent out invitations for dinner, cleaned the house, set an attractive table, and then served cold leftovers to their guests.

I. Planning

Every church, regardless of seven or seven hundred in attendance, needs to plan on effective worship times.

He who fails to plan, plans to fail.

A. Scheduling

Who, what, when, where? At least a month in advance you should plan who does what and put it on a calendar that is easily available

1. The extra mile

Use technology, drama, preparing exciting formats. You don't have to have a lot of money or be a large church to do this, and it goes a long way.

2. What does your church need right now?

Constantly evaluate where your church is NOW. Not where it was, or will be some day. Then plan accordingly. Big churches, small church, new church- all have different needs.

B. Pre-service preparation

1. Checklist of pre-service preparation

Lights, locks, sound, temperature, copies, media, setup.

Don't do these at the last minute when you should be praying and greeting guests

2. Prayer, Prayer, Prayer- if you don't have that, turn out the lights and go home. Machinery is a wonderful thing, but it takes more than just putting it together to get it in motion.

a. A great German general said that there were four reasons why the German nation lost World War II:

(1) lack of air power; (2) lack of oil; (3) broken communications; and (4) failure at the source of supply.

(2) They had the machinery, but they did not have the oil to run the machinery. They had the organization, but there were broken communications. And they experienced failure at the source of supply.

(3) Often the success of the service is determined in the pre-service prayer.

3. Pre-service meeting of those involved for 5-10 minutes- whether it is 2 or more, meet in a customary place to touch base on what is happening and pray together

4. Visitors take priority- if you don't shake anyone else's hand, make sure and greet visitors

II. The Worship Service

A. Being Mindful of Time

1. A pie can be sliced many ways, but it doesn't change much in size. *If you do more of one thing, you have to do less of something else. People are time conscious, whether you are or not, and visitors are especially time conscious during their first visits. It may be the one thing that causes them not to return.* Don't Waste Time. Some services are like Israel wandering in the wilderness. They spend thirty-eight years getting back to where they started. Announcing Ms. Smith's wedding shower needs to be communicated another way. Further, don't fill time – a good hour at church is better than a mediocre ninety minutes.

B. Begin With The End In Mind. Had you rather the people dance for an hour or baptize a new man?

1. Would you rather Sis. XYZ get to sing her solo, or that the hungry sinner interrupts the service by coming on to the altar. Granted you can have both... but if you could only have one of them, which would you and those you lead rather have. Surely the response of the saints during the service is secondary to what happens in regard to repentance, baptism and Spirit infilling

C. Balance

1. Everything in service should flow together and reflect balance. Too much of any one thing is not healthy.

D. Determining the goal of each service

1. Every service has a goal and a focus.
Who is the target audience? A Wednesday Bible study for Saints is different than a service with a lot of sinners.
What is the pastor feeling from God?-He needs to have heard from God, even if it doesn't make sense at the moment. A lot of what the prophets felt and said didn't make sense to them when they said it, but they were simply the spokesmen for God.
What are others feeling from God from prayer and surveying needs? - Ask what others who are praying and seeking God for a service are feeling, especially if you are having difficulty finding direction.
What special things are happening? SFC, celebrate quiz team, holidays, a death- the dynamics of a service can be drastically altered depending on outside factors, such as the season, tragedy in a church family, and other items

E. The Flow

1. Yo-yo services wear out everyone. A Yo-yo occurs when each person in the service believes that they need to pump until 'it's happening' then ride it until it subsides.
2. Analogy of the Sprint Medley or the Olympic Torch- pass the torch while things are moving, if at all possible

F. Songs

1. Bring in as many styles as possible to reach a broader audience
Style is not just to appeal to you, but to appeal to the community you minister to. If you only sing or promote one style, you are not adequately ministering to people, you are just following your personal preferences.
 - a. Three types of songs

Adoration, testimony, and doctrinal songs. All three are important. Singers and musicians should be in place when they are to sing.

2. Song leaders

- a. The majority of songs should have been selected before the service starts and communicated to the musicians and others involved. They should be selected during a time of prayer, and seeking the Lord. It is dangerous and not advisable to 'make it up as you go along.' The musicians won't know the key, you won't know the lyrics, and you will tend to repeat worn out choruses that everyone is already tired of singing. It is VERY advisable to practice song service songs with the musicians on a regular basis, outside of church time, and to refresh old songs and learn new songs.
- b. Praise Leaders Are Not Entertainers But Facilitators. Their job is to help lead US into worship, not worship on our behalf. What these people do on the platform affects those in the pew.
- c. Our goal is to create an atmosphere that not only welcomes the visitor but also welcomes the Lord Jesus Christ. In Gary Erickson's book on worship, he wrote, "Making much ado over Jesus will cause others to consider Him." We should ask Jesus, after service is over, "Jesus, did YOU enjoy the service? Would you like to come back?"

G. Worship

Keep in mind WHO we are entertaining. We might be MINISTERING to one another, but we are only entertaining One- Jesus. Our society has a spectator/entertainer spirit that they take to the Church, and they have to be retrained. They are not spectators in the pews- they are the entertainers.

H. Testimonies

1. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of our Testimony. Testimonies are powerful, but they can also kill a service. I learned that opening up a "whosoever will" time of testimony quite often opened a "can of worms. A wise service leader uses testimonies to focus and strengthen praise.

I. Preaching

1. Everything should lead up to preaching, and preaching should be the climax of the service. If everyone is satiated before preaching or, worse yet, wore out, the preaching will not be as effective. The goal of teaching is typically long-term acquisition of knowledge or a new skill. The goal of preaching is for immediate action, generally, but not always at the conclusion or altar service. Too many preachers bring the people to a place of conviction, faith or repentance and should transition immediately to prayer but- because they are at a 'high point' in the Spirit, ride on until they reach a 'low point' to conclude. This is counterproductive.

III. Post service

A. It's not over when it is over-

1. *Visitors*- meeting them after service is as important as before service. Also, you may need someone to 'explain' things that they have observed that they don't understand, such as the Gifts of the Spirit, or worship.
2. Meet and greet- This is important, but don't get 'trapped' in the front while people are leaving in the back. Better to slip out and do this at the exit door.

3. Shut things down- when everyone else walks out, someone has to turn out the lights. Try to delegate this to others.
4. Follow up- the day after the service may be just as important as the service. Jot down notes on what you need to follow up on with the Saints or visitors, then do it as soon as possible.

Conclusion

Finally. Relax And Enjoy The Journey.

The unusual and unexpected utterances of new converts should be enjoyed. Laugh at things that go wrong. Don't take yourself quite so seriously. Things happen, and sometimes when things don't go the way you planned it might be that God is working through that, as well.