

## TWENTY RULES OF THUMB FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

1. Christian worship is the “divine conversation,” through Christ: God speaks to us, through Christ; we respond in address, through Christ. This conversation is primary. Emotion, instruction, inspiration, etc. are secondary. All you do as worship leader should serve this conversation.
2. Worship, the divine conversation, is participation in Jesus’ death and resurrection. When you forget or shy away from this reality, you end up leading something other than Christian worship.
3. Worship leadership is not precisely for the sake of God; it is for the sake of the people of God, who worship for God’s sake – by God’s command and promise. As leader, you are the community’s servant. You are the one whom Jesus uses to be host. You are “standing in” for Him as the community’s host. Such an honor!
4. Don’t be apologetic about presiding at worship. True community action cannot happen without effective leadership. You are the host for the believing community. So be host, graciously and hospitably.
5. Keep yourself in the background. Worship leadership is not a performance.
6. Worship does not have to be entertaining. It does not have to be “fun.” It does have to be faithful to God’s Word in Christ. Otherwise, it is not Christian worship.
7. Among all possible texts for use in worship, scripture holds a privileged position. Take it seriously; and let it be taken seriously.
8. The “tried and true” in worship, while perhaps not always the most entertaining, is at least both tried and true.
9. Tradition is not static. It invites innovation, adaptation, and novelty. Good innovation grows from deep roots. If you depart from tradition, know well that from which you are departing. Such knowledge well shapes innovation.
10. Don’t be afraid of doing what has been done before. “Plagiarism” in worship planning is a deep compliment to other planners.
11. Don’t be afraid of structure and repetition in worship. Most worship needs a beginning, a middle, and an end. Direction, progression, and familiar signposts are usually significant in worship. Plan them carefully.
12. Words matter. In worship, your words are the embodiment of the Word: Your words – and the community’s words – are the manger cradling the divine Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, the cross on which hangs the Word who died for us, the empty tomb from which the Word was raised for us. So be careful with words. Let your manner with words reflect the care and respect due to that which embodies the Word.
13. Worship is not all “sermon.” Give people a chance not only to hear, but to speak/pray. Good conversation needs both hearing and responding.

14. Not all symbols are visual or auditory. Worship also involves us as bodies. Motion and gesture (or specific lack of it) can be significant for the conversation. Worshippers are involved in some kind of positioning and movement whether you have planned it or not. So plan it.
15. Some symbols carry more power than others. Use symbols carefully and be aware of the context in which you are using them. There may be a difference between what you want them to do and what they actually do.
16. Worship leadership meant for the eye cannot work if it cannot be seen. Worship leadership meant for the ear cannot work if it cannot be heard.
17. Take seriously the special needs of large and small gatherings of worshippers.
18. Worship leadership is hard work. It takes time.
19. Your worship leadership is going to need to be forgiven.
20. Prepare for worship leadership with prayer.