

Guidelines For Worship Leaders

(Part 1)

In my opinion the definitive scripture for worship leaders and church musicians is found in Ephesians 5:18-20...be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything.

From these verses specific things pertaining to being filled with the Spirit are clearly listed. Notice that there doesn't seem to be any unusual procedures listed here to be filled with the Spirit. The underlying assumption is that it is within every believers reach to simply be continuously filled with the Spirit. (Be being filled is a more exact way the original Koine Greek language has it). In fact it is written in the imperative mood, which means it is a command, not an option! Of further note is that this is one of the very few verses in the New Testament that mentions being filled with the Spirit.

And a real exciting fact (especially for us musicians) is that being filled with the Spirit and making music is the very first thing that is listed in this text! First share songs with one another and then make music in your heart to the Lord! Notice that the underlying theme of the songs is to be one of thankfulness and gratitude. Simply start being thankful to God, share His goodness with others, and a song of gladness will be upon your lips! No several hours of huffing and puffing are needed to be filled with the Spirit! No need to work yourself up into a frenzy or hypnotic trance! On the contrary, a very practical, down to earth example is given for us to follow.

Thankfulness to God and being filled with the Spirit are the best of friends. No way to separate them! No way you can be filled with the Spirit if you're not thankful. Think of thankfulness as the fertile soil from which the fruits of the Spirit ripen and grow into full bloom! In fact I would go further and say that although not listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, thankfulness is indeed a fruit of the Spirit. You will find it as a predominate theme throughout Paul's writings as well as the rest of the Bible. Remember the Exodus story in the Old testament? God delivers the children of Israel out of Egypt in the most miraculous way but two days later they are grumbling to themselves and to Moses that "Egypt really wasn't that bad!" Personally, I believe it is hard for God to understand why creatures made in His very image can be so ungrateful for the gift of life.

Worship leaders and church musicians, do you really want to hear a word from the Lord? It is found in this Ephesians passage. It is God's will that we be continually be filled with His Spirit, to sing songs of thankfulness, and that our hearts well up with gratitude and praise to the one who alone is worthy of all

praise! Instead of all the other pre-occupations that we get caught up with it is of the utmost importance that we be filled with the Spirit. And if you haven't already heard, the well never runs dry! If you are thirsty why not ask for a drink?

Try starting your pre-worship prayer with prayers of thankfulness and gratitude for what the Lord has done. Not something worked up or contrived but from your heart thank Him for his goodness. I guarantee you that you will begin being filled with His Spirit and enjoy the fruits of the Spirit as well. You will go into your worship service filled with His Spirit and your worship songs will overflow with this attitude and gratitude!

There is nothing in the Ephesians passage of scripture (or in the context) that implies that God has run out of living water or has decided to stop the flow of His gracious Spirit. But we are all caught up with our cutting edge worship sets, tight grooves, clever lyrics, and vocal and instrumental gymnastics! And then we cry out to God and ask Him, "where have the joy and anointing gone?" And God cries out right back to us," **You need to be filled with my Spirit!** **"You need a heart filled with gratitude". "Come and get a drink!!"** As Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear let him hear!"

If you are filled with the Spirit, your music will reflect this as well as your whole Music Ministry. And this is not some hocus-pocus or a trip to the realm of the "spooky-natural"! In the normal course of our lives, jobs, and homes we can be thankful and filled with his Spirit. Instead of being judgmental of others in our secular jobs we can exhibit thankfulness. Instead of harboring a bitter attitude around our families and loved ones we can reflect gratitude for the gift of life. Instead of exhibiting the SUPER INFLATED SUPREME MUSICIAN'S EGO we can express awe and wonder for the source of all gifts and blessings, the creator God!

Only in this way can we avoid the trap of "singing a love song to Jesus on Sunday - only to be bummed out on Monday". The late John Lennon made one of the most incredible and incisive statements about Christians. When asked, "What do you think about Christians" John said, "Yeah, the Christians got all caught up with Jesus and they forgot to do what he said!" As worship leaders in a time where it has become a *fad* to sing worship songs and lead people into God's presence we must ever be mindful to be filled with the Spirit in our daily lives and that our attitudes and actions reflect the Spirit of Christ to a watching world.

Don't think I am implying or suggesting that this is some cute little formula that is always easy to do. Sometimes it is one of the hardest things to let go of all our busyness, all our perfectionist tendencies, and our ego-inflated ways. It involves a very deliberate and conscious effort to set our minds on the goodness of God. Sometimes that can be a very difficult thing to do. But God will reward your efforts and you can have a heart of gladness by consistently adhering and applying this scripture to your life.

Being filled with God's Spirit is more important than anything else since we are people who claim to be musicians who serve and represent the Lord God! Remember this...there is no greater honor or privilege than to sing and make music for the King of Kings! By God's grace, may we make it our first priority as musicians in His service, to continually drink of His Spirit with our hearts overflowing with gratitude as we sing and make music for our God.

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