

**OVERCOMING THE**



**CHALLENGES OF A  
WORSHIP PASTOR**

**A special report by Jason Hatley**

*Pastor of Worship Arts, The Journey Church, New York City*

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# INTRODUCTION

What we do as Worship Pastors is not easy. We work under the nonstop pressure of having to rally people, deal with administrative details, and continually plan and prepare for that singular event that comes around with amazing regularity: the Sunday service. While our calling is incredibly fulfilling and life-giving, it is also undeniably challenging. But here's the good news: there is a way for us to operate above the inherent difficulty, a way to accomplish our tasks and goals with our sanity and time intact. By putting systems in place to help us do our job more effectively, we can save ourselves huge amounts of stress, time, energy and money (*S.Y.S.T.E.M. = Save Yourself Stress, Time, Energy and Money*). As I have taught and coached hundreds of Worship Pastors over the last few years, I have found that through the prayerful implementation of proven systems, we personally, our teams and our ministries can thrive.

The systems that I am referring to, and that this report will cover, were born out of necessity. When I arrived in New York in 2002 to help start The Journey, no one had ever taught me how to be a Worship Pastor. I had been leading worship for years, and I understood the music side of things quite well. But I had never been trained on how to:

- Develop my leadership potential
- Create a dynamic working relationship with my Pastor
- Plan worship services in advance
- Grow my volunteer team from 2 to 200 people in just a few years
- Manage my time
- Invest money wisely in the Sunday service
- And on and on...

***S.Y.S.T.E.M. =  
Save  
Yourself  
Stress,  
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Energy  
and Money***

Those lessons I learned the hard way – by trial and error, success and failure. When I look back to 2002, I wish that I had someone to guide me through those early days. It would have saved me serious stumbles and pain – the same stumbles and pain that I believe all

Worship Pastors go through in leading a growing ministry. In those early weeks and months, I learned almost immediately that, for the good of my church and myself, I needed to create systems that would enable me to succeed in the calling God had given me.

I believe that is your desire as well: to become all that God has called you to be in the place he has called you to lead. But in order to get to this place of operating successfully within systems that God blesses, there are some very real, common challenges that we all have to overcome.

In this report, you will find that these seven challenges are not unique to one type of church, or one area of the globe. In fact, you will find that you are able to identify with each of these challenges regardless of whether you are a seasoned Worship Pastor or new to the call. The first step to building successful worship systems that will relieve stress and free you and your ministry to advance to the next level is identifying the Seven Challenges that stand in your way.

As we grow in our understanding and mastery of these seven challenges, we will be on the path toward continual excellence for God's glory.

# **THE SEVEN CHALLENGES OF THE WORSHIP PASTOR**





Arguably, the most difficult challenge any of us face is in overcoming ourselves. Not only is this our first and greatest challenge, but it is an ongoing one. None of us is in danger of reaching perfection, which means there is always going to be room for us to grow. As the late President Harry Truman once noted, "In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves.... Self-discipline, with all of them, came first." Truman's reference to a victory acknowledges that there is an actual battle going on within us, something each of us knows all too well. One side of the artillery is fighting to keep us defeated, run-down and living in the status quo, and the other side is calling us to continued improvement and excellence for God's glory.

***At its core, every challenge that we face as Worship Leaders sprouts from the soil of where we are personally.***

During my time as a Worship Pastor, I have realized that when it comes to this battle, we are often our own worst enemy. Many times, my lack of attention or my failure to communicate well causes something in my ministry to be less than excellent. My inability to organize a project thoroughly can keep it from getting off of the ground. My failure to return a phone call can lead to a misunderstanding that gets blown out of proportion.

As a result, I have finally learned that whenever I face a challenge, I need to look at myself first. At its core, every challenge that we face as Worship Leaders sprouts from the soil of where we are personally. When we avoid the temptation to over-spiritualize what we do for a living, and humble ourselves enough to honor God by being excellent in the everyday details of our job, we will grow. As we grow, the people around us will grow, and God's ability to use us will be multiplied.



The relationship that exists between a Pastor and a Worship Leader is the most critical one within the leadership of the church, because it is the most visible and because it impacts the execution of the weekly worship service. As Worship Pastors, our role does not exist separately from the Pastor. Our goals and mission are inextricably intertwined with his.

The great paradox is that the most important church leadership relationship is the Pastor - Worship Pastor relationship, while at the same time, the greatest tension in church leadership tends to be in the Pastor - Worship Pastor relationship. It stands to reason, then, that one of the major reasons why many churches struggle to design a God-honoring, life-transforming worship service every week is the relationship (or lack thereof) between the Pastor and the Worship Pastor.

Here's something I know about your Pastor: whether you realize it or not, he is committed to your success. He wants to see you reaching for excellence in every area. He wants the worship experience on Sunday mornings to be the absolute best that it can be, just like you want his preaching to be the best it can be. We are on the same team, and have the same desire to make sure that each and every Sunday morning fulfills its complete potential. As we create communication and planning systems and make a commitment to work together, we sharpen each other and begin to see things from each other's perspective, and much-needed synergy starts to flow.

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There is a “moment” that moves you. I know, because it’s the same moment that moves me. It’s what you and I dedicate our lives to creating. It’s a Sunday morning, when the music is just right, the people in front of you are engaged in passionate worship and the Spirit is truly moving. All over the room hearts are opening toward God. You are humbled by your ability to play the role you do in God’s plan for His people. That moment is the reason we do what we do, wouldn’t you agree? So, here’s what we have to understand: that perfect moment won’t happen without quite a bit of planning. Setting the stage for it takes detailed administration – and to say so is not anti-spiritual. I believe that as we are diligent in planning, God works through every aspect of the process. We are called to put our hand to the plow. He instructs us to work as if working for Him, to strive to represent His glory, not to sit by, do nothing and expect Him to pick up the ball on Sunday.

***We are called to do the very best we can with what God has given us.***

Planning opens doors of opportunity for people to experience God. Just think about the other things in our culture that compete for your people’s attention. Think about what could keep them from church on a Sunday. In New York City, Broadway is the first and best answer. Now, if you have ever been to a big Broadway production, you know that they are top quality. Every successful Broadway show dedicates months to fine-tuning the right script and musical score, selecting the right actors, rehearsing, tweaking and rehearsing even more before they first open the doors. And their goal is simply to entertain. So if my goal is to lead people into authentic worship with God, why would I think that I could strive for anything less than that same kind of excellence? Why would I let the world provide a better quality, more enticing lure than I can? I am not saying that we have to match the professionalism of a Broadway show. I am simply saying that we are called to do the very best we can with what God has given us. And that means that we have to have an effective worship planning system that empowers us to plan weeks, months and even a year in advance. Far from undermining God, we honor Him by being excellent in His name.



My wife is a Barbara Streisand fan. Back in the day, Babs sang a little song that said, “People who need people are the luckiest people in the world.” Well, count yourself lucky, Worship Pastor, because you definitely need people. We can’t even begin to do what we do alone. To create a thriving worship ministry, we must be constantly about the business of raising volunteers and helping them maximize their commitment to the church, while growing in their faith.

We never outgrow this challenge. Even the biggest churches in America face the People Challenge – that is, the challenge of finding the right people who are gifted to serve, recruiting them, getting them involved and growing in ministry, and, of course, dealing with the inevitable conflicts that always seem to arise. In order to overcome this challenge, we must have a system for bringing new people onto the team, casting vision, setting expectations for those on the team, and providing opportunities for leadership and development to those God is calling to a higher level of service. The system that we have built here at The Journey has enabled us to grow our Worship Arts Team from 2 to 200 fully-engaged volunteers in just a few years. And the greatest part of the story is that God has used this system to help churches around the country achieve similar results.

At one time or another, we all feel like we either have too few or too many volunteers. If you find yourself with too few, move ahead with what you’ve been given, develop a system for recruiting new volunteers and actively pray for God to bring more. Conversely, don’t ever try to put a cap on the number of people who can serve. Let me encourage you to always strive to find a place of service for the people that God sends you. If you ever get to the place where you feel like you have enough people, your vision for ministry is too small. Remember: serving is a pathway to discipleship. If our ultimate goal is to grow disciples of Jesus, then we have to help the people in our churches serve as He served.

***Always strive to find a place of service for the people that God sends you.***





How do we do what God has called us to do with the resources that we have available to us? Isn't that always the big question? We have these visions and goals for what God wants to do through our ministry, but we never seem to have enough money to make those things happen. If you don't have a vision for your ministry that is greater than what you can currently achieve, let me challenge you to expand your vision. God wants to stretch you. He wants you to have a vision for big things, because He can provide all of the resources you need to bring those things to pass. You just have to trust Him and be willing to step forward in faith. I'm a firm believer that all of the resources you need are sitting in your congregation and your community right now. As you work with God to develop disciples, those resources will be brought forward.

While this is a faith issue, it is also a stewardship issue. When you see the bigger picture of God's goals for your church versus the amount of money you currently have, you begin to make decisions differently. You realize that you have a responsibility to spend the resources

***All of the resources you need are sitting in your congregation and your community right now.***

that God has given you in a way that will most impact His kingdom. As Worship Pastors, I know we love toys. I know that sometimes I might be tempted to spend too much money on a piece of amazing audio equipment. But when I look at that purchase through the lens of stewardship – through the lens of being as faithful as possible with what

God has given me while I trust that He will accomplish all of His goals in my ministry – that piece of equipment suddenly looks a lot less enticing. If I spend money unwisely, God won't necessarily keep providing. Since God's plan for my ministry always outpaces the money in my account, I am called to walk wisely with the resources I have.



At The Journey, we define excellence as doing the best you can with what God has given you. Based on that definition, excellence will look different from church to church. As Worship Pastors, one of our biggest challenges is to take that understanding of excellence and turn it into a culture – a culture of excellence, or a culture of professionalism, if you will. Think about this: you drive the culture of your worship ministry. A culture of excellence begins with you. Are you bringing your very best every Sunday? Are you leading the people on your team to the best of your ability? Do you arrive to rehearsal on time and prepared? You define excellence by the way you go about your daily business. You cultivate excellence based on how you treat and what you expect from your team.

***A culture of excellence begins with you. Are you bringing your best every Sunday?***

As you think toward creating a professional environment by striving for excellence in every area, ask yourself this question: what would it take to look like a church twice our size? As I've worked with Worship Pastors across the country, this has always proven to be a "stretching" question. Think about it. If you are a church of 300, what would it take to portray the excellence reflected by a church of 600? I'm not asking you to try to be something you aren't. I'm simply asking you to think ahead. If you had twice as many people on your team, how would your systems have to change? Go ahead and take a couple of steps in that direction. God is always calling us to reach more people, so think toward growth in a practical way as you continue to move forward in excellence.



I want you to think back to the Seven Challenges graphic a few pages back in this report and visualize an iceberg. You know how they work. All you and I can see is the very tip that peaks out above the water. Based on that tip, most icebergs don't look very big or complex, but what's going on beneath the surface is a whole other story. Generally, about ninety percent of an iceberg's mass is under the water, giving it form and holding it in place – but no one sees what goes on in the deep. The work of a Worship Pastor and his or her team resembles the structure of an iceberg: the Sunday service is all that most people ever see. Most of them have no idea what it takes for the beauty of that production to emerge. But in order for our “tip” to even exist, we have to consistently overcome the previous six challenges.

Let me give you a mantra to hold on to: Sunday matters. That's simple enough, right? The most important thing we do every week is the Sunday service. We only get 52 chances a year to stand before people and lead them to a place of worship. We can't leave anything to chance. The second most important thing we do every week is everything that goes into getting ready for Sunday – that is, everything associated with overcoming the Personal

***We only get 52 chances a year to stand before people and lead them to a place of worship.***

Challenge, the Pastor Challenge, the Planning Challenge, the People Challenge, the Provision Challenge and the Professionalism Challenge. Those six areas of our work are our iceberg's base. Mastering them, through the implementation of proven systems, makes it possible for us to achieve success in the Production Challenge of making Sunday – the tip that represents us to the world – the best that it can be.

John F. Kennedy once said, “The poet and the politician have this in common: their greatness depends on the courage with which they face the challenges of life.” I would add Pastors and Worship Pastors to his phrase. There's just one slight difference – the way we face the challenges of our lives and our work doesn't just determine our personal “greatness,” it also reflects and carries forth the greatness of our God.



## TAKE YOUR LEADERSHIP TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN A WORSHIP PASTOR TELE-COACHING NETWORK

# Worship Pastor Coaching Network

*with Jason Hatley*

*Nothing can accelerate your growth or the growth of your worship ministry like being in a coaching network!*

*That's why I want to invite you to prayerfully consider joining my next Worship Pastor Tele-Coaching Network. This network is a group of worship pastors that meet together monthly via telephone and web for personalized training on how to overcome the Seven Challenges of a Worship Pastor. See below to learn more!*

### What you receive:

As a member of the Tele-Coaching Network you will receive all of these benefits:

- Monthly hands-on coaching from Jason Hatley
- A proven coaching process that leads to growth and health
- Over \$1,419.00 in free resources from Worship Leader Insights
- Unlimited email access to Jason Hatley and the Worship Leader insights (WLI) team
- A monthly small group environment where everyone is focused on a Kingdom agenda
- MP3s of each session for your review. *(Even if you miss the exact date, you can still listen to the network)*
- Private "call-in" times with Jason Hatley to have your specific questions answered in more detail.
- The chance to grow and take your worship ministry to the next level
- A Private Weekend meeting with Jason Hatley in sunny South Florida, exclusively for tele-coaching members where you will get to go behind the scenes at a Journey service - a \$1500 value!
- Plus much, much more

**For more information on the Worship Pastor  
Coaching Network with Jason Hatley,  
call 800-264-5129, or visit  
[www.WorshipLeaderInsights.com/Coaching](http://www.WorshipLeaderInsights.com/Coaching)**

*"The effects this network has had on my ministry are countless! The network gave me hope for the future to get over some huge roadblocks personally and in ministry."*

*- Lee, Worship Arts Pastor  
Northstar Church, Panama City, FL*

*"Thanks for a great experience and for sharing ideas and thoughts. Kingdom work becomes more rewarding when we know we have others to challenge and walk with us."*

*- David, Worship Director  
Liquid Church, New Jersey*

*"It pushed me and challenged me to be a better leader, stretch myself more, take risks, read more, value my role and refocus on the mission!"*

*- Jesse, Creative Arts and Worship Pastor  
Life Point Church, Homestead, FL*

*"Our worship ministry grew from 17 to 78 people through the principles and processes I learned in the coaching network."*

*- Cher, Worship Arts Pastor  
Discover Life Church, Melbourne, FL*

*"I truly believe that Jason has a sincere desire to help other worship leaders be the very best they can be."*

*- Mark, Worship Arts Pastor  
Believers Church, Chesapeake, VA*