

# Excellence in Contemporary Worship – Towards Principles

The principles that constitute excellence in contemporary worship will not all be the same everywhere, just as all Christians do not need to worship like north Germans or black Americans. Some principles are of course universal, but even then, the way they are applied may differ from place to place.

**We need to work at our principles so that all those involved with leading worship in the congregation are operating on the basis of the same values.**

What follows are some thought-starters. I am sure they will also be discussion-starters. They are not in a strict order. A lot of them owe a deal to the Willow Creek materials.

## 1 **Servanthood**

We are all servants, only the Lord is the Lord  
We use our gifts to serve God and our congregation  
Amy Grant and Willow Creek

## 2 **Excellence**

We value excellence in our services  
We want to do the best with the gifts we have been given, honouring God and helping other

## 3 **Giftedness**

People should serve in areas for which God has given them appropriate gifts  
Our purpose is not to “give everyone a chance to do everything they want to”  
but to help people recognise God’s call on their lives and so find their place in the body of Christ

## 4 **Growth**

Everyone is “in training”, all are learning and growing.

## 5 **Peer Review**

No-one gets it right all the time.  
We need feedback from others who do the same service

## 6 **Stay out of God’s way!**

He is at work, the Worship Leader is just there to help the congregation follow what God is doing  
and to help them respond appropriately.

## 7 **God commands that his people be blessed, not just wished well**

We declare God’s blessing on his people, we don’t just pray for it

## 8 **God wants to minister to the spirit/soul, not just the mind**

Both mind and emotions are involved in worship

## 9 **There is a difference between a small group or a conference and public worship**

Not everything that is appropriate in a small group or a conference is appropriate in public worship  
For example small group prayer is not a “public worship” activity

## 10 **Dignified Informality**

We are relaxed and informal in a dignified sort of way

## 11 **Seeker Sensitive not Seeker Targeted**

We try to be sensitive to the needs of new-comers, while recognizing that worship is for Christians

**12 Flow and Transitions**

We want our services to flow smoothly

Worship leaders help the congregation to move with the service by the way they introduce things and provide “bridges” between parts of the service

We avoid useless fill-in comments – always ask, “Why am I saying this?”

**13 Don't violate the moment**

Inappropriate humour

Sloppiness

Lack of sensitivity to what the Spirit is doing at this point in the service

**14 The called pastor normally “presides” at worship services**

He has been trained and set apart for this ministry

The pastor has “oversight” of the worship of the congregation

This doesn't mean the pastor decides it all, or does it all – or even most of it

Within this framework there is lots of room for others to be involved.

**15 We have Freedom within the Forms**

All worship is liturgical

All worship has a structure

Spontaneity requires careful planning! Or lots of experience. Or both!

Freedom comes on the other side of hard work, not before you do the hard work!

**16 We bring treasures, new and old, out of God's storehouse**

We have much to learn about how the people of God have worshipping down the millennia.

God is bringing much blessing through the creative gifts he has given his people today

This is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. Just to get you thinking. And talking.

**Steen Olsen**  
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