

# The Brave Perseverance of a Visionary

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Most worship leaders I speak to have discovered the need for 'brave perseverance'! Many worship ministries experience seasons where the congregation are week by week throwing themselves into the worship, and we're journeying on as a church in our expressions of adoration to God. But for most of us there are also seasons of plain old-fashioned perseverance, where a good deal of endurance and 'clinging to the vision' is called for. And for some brave perseverers, that season may even last for years.

It all starts with a vision. A sense that God has you on a journey, and that He plans to move you from 'A' to 'B' in terms of your congregational worship journey. I don't think I've ever met a worship leader who is forever content with where they and their church are on this journey. Most of us have seen that God has more for us; He has given us a vision of somewhere new to venture to in worship - and how to get there. Perhaps God is leading us to a new freedom of expression in our gathered times. Or perhaps we're aiming for a greater degree of spontaneity, and contributions that are initiated by anyone in the congregation, not just those up the front. Whatever it is, when it comes to local church worship, most of us find ourselves on a journey - God imparts a vision, and that vision burns in our hearts, week by week, as we long to see the people of God move on in the worship of God.

Let me say it even more plainly - the very fact you are a worship leader means that you have signed up for some serious frustration! That is the reality of leadership - God plants the vision in our hearts first, and it burns in our hearts until that dream is realized. If everyone received the vision at the same time, there would be no need for a leader! (... and we would all be out of a job!!). As part of your entrustment, the Holy Spirit gives you a glimpse of the 'destination', and begins to unfold the route and pace by which He would have the congregation arrive at that place. Some vision takes years to realize, other vision is achieved within weeks. I once heard a great piece of advice:

"Never over-estimate what you can achieve in two weeks. Never under-estimate what you can achieve in two years."

That is a really healthy and helpful perspective to have. Another way I've heard this expressed is the analogy of 'boiling a frog'. (Not that I've ever done this, or used any other culinary method to prepare a frog-related meal!) But apparently if you were to put a frog straight into hot water, it would simply jump straight out, shocked by the change in temperature, and figuring that something unusual is afoot. However, if you were to place the frog into tepid water, and slowly heat up that water, you will achieve your vision of a boiled frog. That's sometime how it works with leadership. It can take time for people to catch a vision. As leaders we need to develop patience and perseverance.

The interesting thing is, even when you arrive at one destination point, you'll soon find yourself yearning once again to move on as a congregation to an even deeper place. Leadership is a constant process of unfolding vision.

Gerald Coates once commented that, "Maturity is living with the actual whilst aiming for the ideal." Immature leaders aim for the ideal and along the way get bitter about the actual, or even worse, bitter with the people they are leading. Anyone who's ever led worship regularly in a local church setting knows the temptation to get angry with the congregation: "Why aren't they worshipping like I do?", "Don't these miserable people know how important these musical worship times are?"... and other such comments. I only know because I've been there. At times the temptation to self-righteousness is immense. Again, it's in these times we need reminding that the only reason we see 'more' is because we are the leader. And we must learn to 'live with the actual', whilst never giving up on the dream of the 'ideal'.

One key to living with the actual is to find people who will carry the vision with you. If it all possible, don't journey alone - good leaders build team. Find other people who you can enthuse with your vision for musical worship ministry at your church. Begin to pray together, dream together and stand together. This is an invaluable thing to do. You will both sustain and entertain each other

through the hard seasons. No leader who is in it for the long haul should journey alone.

Worship leading is not always an easy journey. At times it involves a whole lot of brave perseverance. But perseverance is not a dead-end street. As well as building character in us as leaders, it also becomes the road to some very exciting places in worship. So, build a team, find God's pace for the journey, and, at all costs, keep loving the people of God. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. Be encouraged!