

Innovative Worship Style

Innovative Worship Style Crucial to Church Plants

by Bryan Mize

SAN DIEGO (BP)--"Seventy percent of church ministry hinges on Sunday morning worship," said Richard Harris, vice president of church planting for the North American Mission Board. "Innovative worship styles for new church plants is crucial for reaching North America for Christ."

Worship style is largely cultural, Harris told participants at the first combined school of evangelism and church planting sponsored by NAMB. The correct style or form of worship depends on the makeup of the worshipers. "A worship leader can be quite innovative and yet use a traditional pattern of worship," Harris said. "Innovative does not necessarily mean non-traditional."

Likewise, a worship leader can be innovative and use totally non-traditional patterns and ingredients in worship. Worship pattern is not determined by geographical location or congregation size as it is by cultural and religious patterns that have developed over many years. "People can be formally informal and informally formal," he said.

Innovative worship is more than good preaching or good music. "All worship involves the entire person: mind, emotion and will," Harris said. "Innovative worship is allowing God's people to actively participate in declaring that God is worthy of all praise and honor. Real worship is participating in the celebration of God's goodness, power, love, grace, and acknowledgement of his blessings."

Harris outlined **five components to effective worship**: music, prayer, giving, scripture presentation and commitment:



Music -- Planning effective and meaningful music for innovative worship requires a great deal of prayerful preparation. Worship leaders should ask themselves the following questions when planning music for a worship service, Harris said. 1. Is the music scripturally correct; 2. Does it honor Christ; 3. Is it appropriate for the particular focus and theme of this service; 4. Does it reach both toward God and man with universal and individual appeal; 5. Does the music aid in the planned purpose of the service; 6. Does the music get people in touch with God; 7. Is the music appropriate for the worshipers present? "Worship leaders should always remember that every song or piece of music should be selected for its message, style and the effect it will have on the congregation," Harris said.



Prayer -- The second component to any worship service is prayer. "Prayer recognizes the sovereignty and blessings of God. It is coming to him in a spirit of humility and honor," Harris said. Incorporating prayer into innovative worship services can be approached in different ways. Praying in small groups, praying in family units, praying at the front of the worship center or praying for specific age, racial or ethnic groups are all possibilities.

3 Giving -- The third component to worship is giving. "In fact, worship is giving," Harris said. "There can be no worship without giving. We are robbing our people of blessings if we don't teach them about stewardship." Harris suggests using variety during the offering time. "Sometimes it is appropriate for the people to give their gifts in the pew. At other times, you might want them to come forward and place their gifts on the altar," he said. Additionally, special occasion offerings, such as building programs or mission offerings, can utilize special offering receptacles, such as a small replica of the building or a globe.

4 Scripture Presentation -- Meaningful scripture reading and presentation should be used in innovative worship services, Harris said. "It is not enough to lift up the Bible as the Word of God. It is to be used as one of the tools in worship," he said. "The reading of scripture is in itself an act of worship."

5 Commitment -- The fifth component of worship is commitment. "The high point of the worship service is not the solo, choir special or even the message," Harris said. "It is the time of commitment. The high point is the time when God's people respond to what they have heard and experienced." "The key to innovative worship is to use variety and balance in all five components," Harris said. "Worship does not occur simply because we refer to our gatherings as worship services. All planning should be totally dependent on the Holy Spirit and in keeping with the teaching of God's word."

Harris outlined **five considerations to keep in mind when planning for innovative worship**.

1. Keep it personal. Worship is not for spectators but participators.
2. Seek the help and leadership of the Holy Spirit.
3. Think creatively. Each service does not have to begin and end the same way.
4. Allow for spontaneity. Innovative worship will incorporate "planned spontaneity."
5. Prepare spiritually. Most congregations tend to take on the personality, exhibit the same enthusiasm and display the same spiritual depth as the worship leader. "There is no magic bullet in planning and conducting worship, except the power of the Holy Spirit," Harris said. "Don't get caught up in the entertainment -- get caught up in directing people to God."