



## THE AMAZING INVISIBLE WORSHIP LEADER

by Eric D. Herron

A few years ago after leading a crowd of missionaries in musical worship, I received the best comment I could have received as a worship leader. It wasn't, "I love your voice." Nor was it, "Hey, great guitar licks, man!"

It was, "Today, you were INVISIBLE."

At first, I wasn't sure how to take this. Was it a compliment? Was it criticism? As I engaged in conversation with the person who offered this comment, I began to understand his meaning. He explained that obviously he could literally 'see' the entire worship team up front – the drummer, bassist, guitarists, and singers. But, for much of the twenty minutes of musical praise it was as if we were not there at all. Somehow our team had played, sung, and led in such a way as to 'get out of the way'. We had become 'invisible'.

In this era of 'worship rock-stars' we quickly slip into a mode of leading in which our presence too easily becomes the center of attention. With lights shining, microphones blaring, and stages set, perhaps a few inches too high, it can be a struggle to direct the focus where it should be – on Father, Son, and Spirit - not on us. I am not opposed to these aesthetic extras. It is just that all of these things must be employed in such a way that our gathered worship becomes less of a produced performance for humans and more of a humble presentation of our love for God.

So, how can we practically accomplish 'invisibility' as worship leaders? As I have reflected on those words from that complimentary missionary, I have recognized a few basic principles that guide my team in allowing worshipers to 'see right through us' to the Lord:

**Don't say too much.** Have you ever felt like a musical worship leader has confused her role with that of a preacher? Occasionally, I find that I am tempted to share more words than necessary as I lead musical worship. I gently remind

myself that 'someone else is preaching today' and settle into the idea that I have the special function of pointing people to God, not through my words, but through music. I try to 'let the songs speak' both in their lyrical content and melodic and harmonic content. This avoids unnecessary verbal clutter that distracts and blurs the attention of worshipers.

**Create a flow.** Choosing songs that are woven together musically – in tempo, time signature, key signature, and style – minimizes distraction and allows one song to lead directly into another, avoiding awkward and unintentional silence. Also, choosing songs that connect together lyrically will lead worshipers on a journey to the throne of God that makes logical sense. For instance, it can feel strange singing a song about God, then one to God, and then one about God again. Keep the address and theme of the lyrics moving in the same direction.

**Practice hard – to play well.** It is a simple thing to spend adequate time practicing a particular music set with your team. Yet, we often fail to prepare enough. I have heard the excuse that 'we want to be spontaneous.' To this, I reply, "Those who are most thoroughly prepared are also those who are most able to be successfully spontaneous." And, nothing distracts like a 'train-wreck' of chords and notes in the middle of a sweet song to Jesus. Of course, he can redeem all of our mistakes, but why not avoid them if possible!

**Place and perform solos carefully.** Often, instrumental solos can add beauty to a set of musical worship. However, sometimes guitar solos appear to be offered more to the "crowd" than to God. Avoiding this is a little tricky. I recall one time when my guitar player friend had a big sweater on and just before his solo, he reached his arm up into the air to push his plentiful sweater sleeve farther up on his arm and out of his way. His attitude was humble and his action was pure in heart, but it looked like he was John Travolta on the dance floor! It is best to avoid 'rock star' poses as much as possible. Try to present your body in a way that is natural, humble, and unobtrusive.

**Cultivate an attitude of humility.** Taking an attitude of hu-

mility in imitation of Jesus (Philippians 2) can go a long toward making us 'invisible' leaders before a group of worshipers. Practicing daily spiritual disciplines such as 'submission' and 'silence' can allow the Spirit to build humility into our character. Pride is offensive to God and obvious to people. Approaching your worship leading with a proper perspective on your own place before God will contribute to your invisibility before others.

Truly, it is not the lights and stage that make us performance oriented. I have seen plenty of leaders 'steal the show' with only a single acoustic guitar. Of more importance is our attitude, preparation, and sensitivity in this act of servanthood called "worship leading."

Today, I strive for INVISIBILITY as one who is often placed before large groups. My prayer has become, "Lord, when people see me, instrument in hand and voice raised in song, may they see 'right through me', to You. Amen."