



WORSHIP BAND

FROM START TO FINISH

HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WORSHIP BAND

JASON CARSON
WITH DOUG FIELDS

DEDICATED TO THE LORD AND HIS PURPOSES

*“God, this is Your sanctuary, and I’m here to worship! May Your church
worship You in Spirit and in Truth.”*

SPECIAL THANKS:

To my family: You are my heart. Thank you for all the support and encouragement while I was working on this. I love you!

To Doug, Nadim, Andy, and all of Simply Youth Ministry: Thank you SO much for this opportunity.

To Julia Schmaltz: Thank you for being the greatest assistant in the world and for making the 2nd half of this book possible.

To all the worshippers and worship team members of the Everyday Youth Group: You made this book easy to write.

To you: The fact that you’re reading this means you’re ready for a big move of God in your group! Hallelujah!

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LETTER FROM JASON

If you're reading this, then you're probably passionate about seeing your youth ministry's worship experience reach a whole new level. Wouldn't it be great to have Spirit-filled, anointed, passionate, relevant, exciting, fresh, deep worship define your youth ministry? Wouldn't you love to see student-led worship teams growing together and using their gifts and talents to honor God? And wouldn't it be amazing if the worship planning, practice, and service were seamless? If you're committed to the process, I believe this resource will help you get there.

This resource is written for youth leaders, worship leaders, and worship team members. Every youth group is different. The ideas and tips in this resource are based on my specific experiences and conversations with other youth pastors and worship leaders. Your church and context are unique and different. But regardless of your youth ministry's size, demographic, or available resources, these tools will be helpful as you build and expand your worship ministry. The goal is that worship in your youth group effectively connects with students so that they passionately encounter God's presence.

Jason Carson

Jason Carson is the Youth Pastor of the Everyday Youth Group at Mission Hills Community Church. He loves his family more than anything on the planet! He and his wife were married in 1998, and came to the church on October 22, 2000. They have two beautiful young daughters—Halley and Lucy. Jason is passionate about God, worship, family, seeing young people on fire for Jesus, friends, USC football, the Lakers, Frisbee golf, and Mountain Dew Baja Blast—available only at Taco Bell.

LETTER FROM DOUG

One of my greatest joys in ministry is watching teenagers serve! I don't care what they do or if it's serving off stage or on stage—I just love seeing them serve God in any way. But, when I'm really honest, there is something triggered in my soul when I watch teenagers lead their peers through music and worship. Every week I get to watch teenagers (who are obviously in love with Jesus) leading others... wow... I get a little teared up (but just a little... and don't tell them).

I'm convinced that a healthy, vibrant, student-led ministry team can have a transforming power within your youth ministry. Students doing the ministry while caring adults help, coach, and guide. That image fires me up. I've watched teenagers willingly get into student-led opportunities when they are made available.

Leading others to worship God through music is one of those unique opportunities that many churches will reserve for adults rather than teenagers. I understand both sides of that argument, but I'm much more likely to lean towards kids leading kids... even if it dips a little in quality (at first). I've observed firsthand that by allowing teenagers the opportunity to use their musical (and not so musical) gifts, something special can happen. I've watched non-involved teenagers turn into ministers simply by giving them a chance to get out of their chairs and get on the stage. It's amazing!

I so wish I was the type of youth worker who had musical gifts and could help every kid experience this unique way of serving and leading... but I don't. During my years as a youth pastor I have encouraged kids to get involved and I've relied heavily on other talented individuals to help me build student-led music teams. I don't have much to offer with this book other than bringing a “real pro” to the writing table and asking him to share everything he knows.

I've asked my friend Jason Carson to help us with his years of wisdom and experience in organizing and leading student-led worship bands. Jason is a neighboring youth pastor (about 5 miles away from me at Saddleback Church) and musical leader at a small Christian school. But Jason isn't just a normal youth pastor with average musical ability (even I can play the chords D, Em, G on my guitar—if I could find it)... he was one of the founding members of an incredibly popular Christian bands—the O.C. Supertones—where he toured the world as a drummer and played to packed stadiums. But more impressive than Jason's resume is his heart for kids and getting them to lead others.

LETTER FROM DOUG

My own son (Cody) was an average drummer until he met Jason. Cody went to the junior high school where Jason works and rubbing shoulders with Jason changed Cody. Jason not only taught him to lead in music, but helped him understand worship, and challenged him to fall deeper in love with Jesus. Jason's official title is Youth Pastor at Mission Hills Community Church. I can't say enough about his character and his heart to see students' lives change for Jesus.

The materials and the training in this book were formed from years of experience, failures, and victories and written to help make your worship band ministry a success. Yes, you will read some ideas and think, "I can't do that." Well, you might not be able to do it now, but when Jason started he didn't begin with anything other than a heart for God and a love for music. Start where you are and grow and learn.

Thank you for being willing to risk with teenagers. My prayer is that you and they will never be the same. Blessings!

Doug Fields

Doug Fields has been in youth ministry since 1979 and is currently a pastor at Saddleback Church in Southern California. He is the author and co-author of 50 books, including the best-selling *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry* and the founder of Simply Youth Ministry. Doug can't clap on beat but he can play "Humble Thyself" on his guitar.



IDENTIFYING STUDENTS

BUILDING LEADERS

I love the story of Matt Redman. He didn't plan to pursue a music career—he just loved to worship God. He was one of those youth group kids who came to church ready to worship. He was a shy 15-year-old who always stood at the back worshipping his heart out. Matt was such an inspiration to everyone that his pastor, Mike Pilavachi, invited him to become a worship leader. It was going to be a long process because Matt barely knew three chords on the guitar. Talk about being unprepared and feeling inadequate!

But sure enough, his youth pastor saw something special in him and mentored him to become one of the pioneers of modern worship today. Pilavachi and Redman met each week, just the two of them, to worship together for about three hours each time. These humble beginnings birthed the Soul Survivor meetings in Britain, and Matt now leads millions worldwide in amazing times of worship. And it all started because of who he was on the inside; his lifestyle displayed worship.

We'll talk more about this principle later in the book, but it's worth stating now: When it comes to worship teams, I'm convinced God honors availability more than musical ability. Many frustrated youth pastors around the world mistakenly think talent alone can solve their problems. While talent is a huge blessing, it's just a tool.

You see, if you want your ministry's worship to be real, the worship leader has to be real. Students need to be led by people who are genuine and authentic. Worship is not something we can artificially create or manufacture. Worship is rooted in a heart that loves and honors and adores God. His blessings, favor, and anointing will flow more freely when our priorities are in the right order, with Him at the center of every part of our lives.

How does authentic worship happen in a youth ministry? It begins when we look for students who are ready and willing. Find students who are open and teachable. Seek students who live a lifestyle of worship. After all, you want them to be worship leaders. You want other students to “look” like them when they are worshipping.

TIP

If you're a team member and not one of the key leaders in your group, this will still become a valuable resource for you. One day you probably WILL be a key leader, so learning and applying these principles today will make you more effective down the road.

TIP

A gifted songwriter, Matt Redman's songs have become mainstays in today's worship repertoire and have impacted audiences across the world. Six of Matt's songs, including *Heart of Worship*, *Better Is One Day*, *Let My Words Be Few*, and *Once Again* are among CCLI's Top 500, and have appeared on numerous worship recordings.

TIP

Take a moment right now to actually write down the names of your students who are leaders when it comes to worshipping God.

So who is your Matt Redman? Maybe you've been looking in the wrong places. Just because one of your kids is the best guitar player doesn't necessarily mean that he should become your worship leader. Even as you read this, does a certain student come to mind that could rise up to lead your group in worship? God isn't looking for ability; He's looking for availability. The Bible is filled with stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, all because of a radical submission to the Lord.

Look for worshippers! Look for the students who care when it's time to worship God through music. Look for students who display desire, hunger, and passion. Identify students who are available and willing, who are filled with potential.

Maybe you're surrounded by teens who aren't right on; they aren't making the right choices and they don't seem to have a heart for honoring God. Can God use them? Absolutely! Many of them are the ones who will benefit most from this process of identifying, challenging, and encouraging.



CHALLENGING STUDENTS

BUILDING LEADERS

I was my youth group's Matt Redman. My youth pastor challenged me when I was 17 years old. Like Redman, I barely knew three chords and my singing sounded like a pack of wolves on a moonlit night. Even though I was raised in church, I had only recently made a serious commitment to the Lord. My pastor saw something in me that I couldn't see in myself. God used him to challenge me to step out in faith. I was complaining about how weak the worship was (how's that for the heart of worship?), so he challenged me to do something about it. "Well, Jason, you can be one of two kinds of people: You can either do nothing, complain about it, and add to the problem, or you can take the bull by the horns, and help by being a solution to the problem."

Those words have stayed with me over the last 15 years of ministry. For some students, that approach may be a little harsh. For me, it was just what I needed. My pastor wasn't musically talented, yet he was constantly encouraging me to step up and step out. He challenged me to learn guitar and to practice so that I could be a part of the solution. He challenged me to have a strong work ethic. He challenged me to be an open vessel for God to use. He gave me a clear vision for ministry and worship that got me excited.

If it wasn't for my youth pastor, who saw more in me than anyone else did, it's unlikely that you'd be reading this right now. His challenge helped set me on a path that eventually led to being part of the O.C. Supertones, a Christian band that God used to minister to people around the world. Then God opened the door for me to step into full-time ministry. And it all began with my youth pastor's challenge.

You can do the same, wherever you're serving today. Meet your students on their level. Some of them may only need a gentle nudge, while others – like me – might need a good kick in the pants. But no matter what the case, let the Lord use you to challenge them.

TIP

If you're an adult leader with limited musical skills, it's okay. If you have a heart for worshipping God, then He will bring along the right leaders to help you build this team.

My favorite movie line of all time comes from the third film in the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy. In one scene, the elf leader Elrond challenges Aragorn, the rightful heir to the throne, with these words: “Become who you were born to be!” Imagine if we challenged all of our students to become all that God has created them to be. If we don’t believe in them, who will?

Identify students who have a heart for worshipping God. Challenge them to see themselves the way God sees them and to embrace a vision of ministering to others. And then continue this process by encouraging these students to turn that vision into reality in your youth ministry.