

THE AUTHENTIC LEADER

Welcome

Thanks for downloading the Speakers' Notes for the Worship Central Course.

In this final session, we've outlined the structure and key points for the talk, and left space for you to add your own examples. Feel free to personalise the examples and make it your own, but we'd please ask that you keep the core material the same, as we want people to be able to experience the same course wherever they are.

We pray this course will be a great blessing to you and your worship team, and we stand with you as you seek to encounter God, equip the worshipper and empower your local church.

Tim Hughes & Al Gordon

Introduction

Welcome to the Worship Central Course. In this session we are going to look at authentic leadership.

When we look at the world around us, leadership seems to be in crisis. So often we hear tragic stories of leaders falling from grace; depressing tales of abuse, deception, greed and hypocrisy. There are many consequences to these failings, one being that we begin to feel afraid of stepping up to lead, for fear of getting it wrong. Yet if you're involved in the creative worship life of your community, you *are* a leader. So, as we get used to that thought, it is vital to consider: How can we be the kind of leaders that are authentic and fit to serve the communities we find ourselves in?

Much has been written on leadership: theories on turning businesses around, biographies of military commanders or stories behind sporting legends. We are fascinated and intrigued by inside-tips on how to lead well. There are courses, DVDs and any number of leadership master classes all competing for our attention.

However, there is one leader who has had more impact on the world than any other: Jesus. So it is to Jesus that we must turn if we are to understand authentic leadership.

Jesus' life is totally unique and towers over history. His leadership is utterly radical, revolutionary and counter-cultural. Napoleon Bonaparte once wrote:

‘Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires, but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force! Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for him.’

To help us stay in tune as leaders, we are going to explore six leadership principles from the life of Jesus, using the six strings of the guitar to guide us. Just as a guitarist will spend time ensuring that each of their six strings is properly tuned, we need to make sure we are constantly checking that the key components of our lives are right where they need to be.

E String // Examine your heart

In Mark 12:30 Jesus says, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

The human heart is an amazing thing. An individual’s heart is typically the same size as their fist, yet even when we’re resting, it exerts twice the relative strength as the leg muscles do when sprinting. In an average day, the heart beats one hundred thousand times. That’s an awesome two and a half billion times in a typical lifetime.

God uses the physical picture of the heart to talk about the importance of our inner spiritual motivation. The common understanding in both the Old and New Testaments was that the ‘heart’ was the control centre of a person’s being: all our

ideas, thoughts, motives and decisions flowed from the heart. Throughout the Bible we see that it is with our hearts that we:

Look for God (Deuteronomy 4:29)

Love God (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Serve God (Joshua 22:5)

Meditate on him (Psalm 19:14)

Hold onto the word (Psalm 119:11)

Trust in him (Proverbs 3:5)

Do the will of God (Ephesians 6:6)

Love others (1 Peter 1:22)

Pour out our worship to God (Psalm 62:8)

To God, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. If we are to learn to lead worship authentically, we must start with asking God to teach us to worship with our hearts.

In Christ, our hearts become our main instrument for worshipping God. When we're worshipping together it's almost as if Jesus walks among us, listening not to the sound and melodies coming from our lips, but rather to each of our hearts. What's more, Jesus doesn't turn away and stop listening when the worship finishes on a Sunday. He's listening to the sound of our heart, at work on Tuesday morning, or when we're out with our friends on a Friday night.

Authenticity works from the inside out. It can't be an act. Jesus was brutal with the Pharisees who disregarded the inward component of worship, 'Woe to you,' he said to them, '... you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.' (Matthew 23:27).

To respond to the greatest commandment, that we would love the Lord with all our hearts, we need to learn what it means to examine our hearts: to prayerfully look within asking those deep and private questions. In allowing God to search our hearts and test our anxious thoughts we begin to journey towards holiness. One great habit that can be helpful is to carve out a little time in the week to sit down, alone, with a journal, and reflect prayerfully on the successes, failures and lessons learned in the past week.

By dedicating time each week to remind ourselves of the highs and lows, we find space to get in touch with our emotions. Rather than running away from all that we find deep inside us, we create an opportunity to engage with it and make sensible decisions to move forward. This way we are much less likely to hurt other people by constantly operating out of brokenness and pain.

We can ask the big questions that govern whether we are leading effectively: Is my calling sure? Is my passion hot? Is my pride subdued? Am I growing in patience and self-control? Is my pace sustainable or are personal issues hindering my call as a

leader? Only then should we feel properly equipped to move forward and lead in a way that is healthy and manageable for the long run.

So that's the E string, for Examine the heart.

A String // Advance humbly

Jesus says, 'For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.' (Luke 14:11).

Jesus didn't spend a huge amount of time speaking about leadership. Instead, he spent a lot of time talking about service. To Jesus, real leadership equals humble service. God is looking for servants not stars. Authentic leaders, by definition, are those who dedicate themselves to serving others and, instead of pushing themselves forward, they advance humbly.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, we are encouraged to walk humbly. The apostle Peter challenges us all, '... clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ' (1 Peter 5:5). Sometimes we have to learn these things the hard way.

Insert Story

Insert a story about you being humbled as a worship leader. Perhaps you were asking for it, or maybe it was one of those lessons that simply come along without seeming to prompt it: either way, be honest with people as you retell the events.

Al tells a story about a time when someone asked him for his autograph, but it turned out that they had mistaken him for Tim Hughes. You can use Al's story below to help you prepare, or if you can't think of a personal example, retell Al's story.

Example story

Al: 'Let's admit it – we all love a bit of encouragement, especially when it comes in the form of flattery.'

I remember one time at church, a lady approached me at the end of the worship time and said: "I'm from Korea and every time I fly through London I come to this church just to hear you lead worship. You are my favourite worship leader."

She went on to explain how God had met with her during the worship time.

My head was getting bigger and bigger and I started to call the band over, so the guys could witness the moment. The band gathered in to listen as she spoke of a difficult time in her life and how my songs had really spoken to her. She would just play my album on non-stop repeat.

Then she said: "It would be an enormous privilege if you would sign a copy of your CD for me."

So I did what I had been waiting years for. I ran over to get the special pen that I had kept in my guitar case. I had dreamt all my life that somebody, someday might ask me for my autograph.

I took the top off the pen and she handed me the CD. And when I looked down, to my horror, it wasn't my CD. It was Tim Hughes' CD! She got me mixed up. She thought I was Tim!

By this time I was in too deep. It was too late to backtrack, so I just quickly signed "Tim Hughes" and handed the CD back to her.

The Lord taught me a very important lesson that day.'

We are not called to a celebrity culture, but a humility culture. Humility does not come easy. Andrew Murray wrote that 'humility is not a thing that will come on its own. It must be made the object of special desire, prayer, faith and practice.' So, where do we begin? Perhaps the best way to grow in humility is to follow Jesus' example and teaching.

D String // Deny yourself

Jesus said, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.' (Matthew 16:24–25, TNIV).

We live in the midst of a culture obsessed with self-promotion, self-indulgence and self-sufficiency – and against it the message of Jesus is utterly radical. To deny ourselves goes against everything the world would have us believe. In the film *The Matrix* the character 'Mouse' says, 'To deny our impulses is to deny that which makes us human.' What a lie that is. The truth is that freedom isn't being able to have everything we desire and crave; true freedom comes when we stop being a prisoner to these desires.

Jesus *chose* to deny himself; we are called to do the same. The authentic leader is living for something greater than financial success and personal fulfilment. As Jesus said, 'What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?' (Matthew 16:26). It begs the fundamental question, who are we living for? Is our greatest desire to be celebrated and adored, or are we willing to pay any cost to see the name of Jesus glorified?

There's a story of a now well-known worship leader in the USA who as a young man felt called to lead worship full-time. He approached his pastor to tell him of his availability to lead at the church. His pastor graciously informed him that there were no positions available at the moment for a worship leader, but that they were looking

for a janitor to help look after the building. Thinking this would be a short-term post before stepping up to become the worship leader, he took on the job. For weeks and then months, this man spent his days stacking chairs, cleaning toilets and locking up last thing at night.

As time went on he became more and more bitter and frustrated. Why was he wasting his time on menial tasks that anyone could do? One morning, whilst mopping the floor, he had a revelation that what he was doing, was worship. Every chair stacked, every light bulb repaired, every contribution made to help others – if done to the glory of God – was a precious offering of worship. It was here that he learnt that humility is the heart of worship.

In *The Message* translation Jesus says in Luke 22, 'Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It's not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant.' (Luke 22:25–26).

It's hard for our motives and ambitions not to get confused at times. We want to see God worshipped throughout the earth, but, if we're honest, we'd love to see ourselves succeed as well. This process of 'denying ourselves' is not a one-off prayer. Every day we need to learn to take up our cross. This involves seeking Christ above all others and it's put into practice as we put others first.

G String // Grow in grace

Jesus calls us to a life of growing in God's grace. He says, 'Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.' (Matthew 11:29, *The Message*)

The worship leader Matt Redman describes a time when he suffered from an acute form of tendinitis that caused his whole arm to swell up, leaving him in agony. After visiting many doctors he eventually saw a top hand specialist who told Matt that he needed complete rest for at least seven weeks.

Matt writes, 'I could hardly do anything, and most frustratingly of all, I couldn't play my guitar. I sat at home with loads of questions buzzing round in my head. Why was this happening? Would my arm ever fully recover? Was it the devil or was it God? I didn't really have any theological answers; but I soon realised that whatever the answers to those questions, God was at work in the situation.

'He started to speak to me: as a servant I was dispensable – servants come and go, and

God can choose any of us to do any job in his kingdom. As a worship leader I was replaceable – God could have used anyone for the events that we'd been privileged to be a part of. But as a child of God, I was indispensable. There could never be another me – a child is irreplaceable.'

God's love for us is not performance-related. It is a radically liberating love: your Father in heaven is pleased with you, regardless of your successes or failures. You may feel like life has left you shipwrecked, that you are a sinner and a fraud, but when the Father looks at you, he sees the same thing he saw in Jesus, and he says, 'You are my child, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.' (see Mark 1:11).

This is what it means to grow in the unforced rhythms of grace: to know more and more of the Father's love so we might become filled to overflowing with love for those around us. The more we know we are loved, the more that love impacts those around us. The more we grasp God's extravagant gift of amazing grace, the more we are empowered to live boldly and freely, bringing life to those around us. Lives that demonstrate, as Paul says in Romans, that where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more (Romans 5:20).

B String // Be obedient

Jesus said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' (Luke 11:28)

Jesus presupposes that in order to obey the word of God we first must *hear* the words of God. Obedience begins with the regular practice of prayerfully listening to

God's voice. The most authentic leaders are the ones who lean most heavily on the words of the Father. But obedience doesn't end there. Hearing must lead to doing.

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'One act of obedience is better than one hundred sermons.' Or you could say one hundred songs! There is a high calling on leaders to live out what they both preach and sing.

This is a sobering challenge that encompasses all of our lives: How can we possibly stay holy in a culture where anything goes?

True holiness begins with receiving God's love and grace. The extraordinary thing about God's love for us is that he has made it possible to change. There is unlimited grace available to us through the cross of Jesus, and incredible power to set us free from the habits and addictions that ruin our relationship with God. As the author Dr Leighton Ford writes, 'God loves us the way we are, but too much to leave us that way.'

Finally, the E string; is for Enjoy the adventure.

E String // Enjoy the adventure

If all of this seems like an overwhelming challenge, then you'll be pleased to hear you're not alone. Those closest to Jesus on earth felt just like you and I do.

In Matthew 19 it says: 'The disciples were staggered. "Then who has any chance at all?" Jesus looked hard at them and said, "No chance at all if you think you can pull it off yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it.' (Matthew 19:25-26, *The Message*).

If you are passionate about the worship life of your local church you have on your heart one of the highest and most incredible callings there is. It's not easy, but God has called you to this privileged position because he knows you are up to the job. Don't be half-hearted about it; if you are going to be a leader, then be prepared to lead.

At the same time, we must not take ourselves too seriously. Over-intensity is not a fruit of the Spirit. We mustn't lose the ability to have fun and laugh at ourselves. A lack of enjoyment and humour in ministry is always a worrying sign. Like the fuel gauge on a car, when it hits the warning sign, you know you need to refuel.

Leading worship at times is exhausting, stressful and involves huge sacrifice. Mixed in with the long hours and the disappointments, there should always be great joy, friends and huge adventure.

So Jesus calls us all to be authentic leaders: to examine our hearts, advance humbly, deny ourselves, grow in grace, be obedient and enjoy the adventure. When all those

six strings are in tune our lives will make the most beautiful and amazing music that will resonate the glory of God to all around us.

Pray

Father, we thank you for this vision you have given us as a community to make the worship of Jesus central in our generation. We pray now that you would come by your Spirit and in your power and give us the strength we need to keep going, and as we go, that you would fill us with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Next

As with the previous sessions, we'd encourage a good time of ministry. There may be a sense of commissioning and confirming what God has been doing with your course over the past seven sessions. After prayer, break into groups and see the notes for the questions for this session.

If appropriate, you may want to gather together at the end for a final time of worship as a way of drawing together everything that you've been looking at on the course in worship. Keep in touch – we'd love to hear how you got on. You can email us at info@worshipcentral.org

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