**Cowboy Church Worship**

The goals for an effective cowboy church worship service can be challenging when you are trying to reach lost and unchurched people at the same time you are providing a true worship experience for believers. Coordinating several people that participate in the service, keeping things culturally relevant and managing a live band can all be stressful.

When you are doing church for the unchurched you have to "disguise" worship. You must provide a true worship experience for believers but it must be done in such a way as to not be a barrier to lost and unchurched folks. This tight rope that bands must walk can be difficult. If a band caters only to the lost you can end up with strictly entertainment with little worshipful impact, on the other hand, if the band focuses to heavily upon praise and worship, traditional music or music that elicits emotion it can be a barrier of lost folks that do not have the holy spirit.

The flow of a worship service should not be minimized. This is very important when doing church for the unchurched. The worship service should start off very informal to make unchurched folks comfortable and as the service progresses it focuses tighter and tighter on Jesus ending up with a message from the Lord. Keeping humor and familiar informality at the beginning of the service will set the congregation at ease, however when these persist throughout the service it can detract from focus on the Lord.

Opening the service with upbeat, culturally relevant band medleys or songs can set the tone. Announcements and congregational greetings should be done very close to the beginning of the service, if you wait until further into the service it will be hard to settle the congregation back down where they will be attentive to worship. The order of worship is key in making a service flow and accomplishing the mission of getting people to focus on Christ. A good order of worship will ensure the service stays on track and provides the right flow.

**Typical Cowboy Church Order of Worship**

* **Intro to Worship** –Band medley. *(Participants 1-5)* The music should start at least five minutes before the posted service start time. If the band really likes to play they can start even earlier than that.
* **Announcements**- *(Participant 6)* This should be done at posted service start time SHARP. No excuses, this is the Lord's hour!
* **Congregational Greeting**- Many churches have one particular up beat song that they play while the congregation gets up and greets each other. This should be done at this time because it is hard to get a congregation settled back down and attentive after they have been visiting.
* **Opening prayer**- *(Participant 7)* This signals worship is beginning, while we do not have rigid formal services this should mark a slight change in tone, banter from the band or congregation after this point can steal focus from the Lord.
* **Band Medley** (usually not over 3 or 4 songs depending on time)
* **Congregational hymn** (It is important that the congregation be able to participate in worship in song, these hymns can be done in a culturally relevant manner, however the songs should not be tricked up or hard to sing. Many times band leaders are not good congregational song leaders if they can't dial back their talent and sing in such a way that average folks can follow along.)
* **Congregational hymn** (There should be at least two congregational songs in a service).
* **Prayer requests**- *(Participant 8)*
* **Testimony** *(Participant 9)* The testimony should be no longer than 5-7 minutes, a good way to not lose control of the service is to have a time keeper that the person giving the testimony can see, this person waves a hat at 5 minutes to let the person know they have a couple of minutes to wrap it up. The testimony should be about what has Christ done for me and the pastor or someone the pastor appoints should screen all testimonies.)
* **Special music** (Possibly participant 10 if someone other than band sings)
* **Message** *(Participant 11)*
* **Closing Prayer** *(Participant 12)*

This order of worship has a flow that moves from informal and loose toward more and more focus on Jesus as the service moves along. It also involves up to a dozen different people in the service. The order of worship should not be so rigid that it can't adjust for unforeseen or special circumstances. The band or worship leader is key in making sure that the service flows properly and they should work hand in hand with the pastor who provides direction from the Lord on how the service should be.