

Leading Visual Worship

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the worship***VJ**

VJ, (short for) “Video Jockey” (meaning) :: One who creatively captures and effectively communicates a specific message using a wide range of still and moving imagery.

Worship VJ-ing can be approached a few ways:

- scripting out various images for parts of a song, teaching, or any kind of ministry moment and executing those images in a live worship setting.
- “free-styling” still & moving imagery during a worship gathering; many times pre-scripted playlists are the starting point for free-style VJ-ing.
 - this can lead to various realtime effects and visual manipulations, like manual cross-dissolving, color adjustments, play rate speeds, transition speeds, tiling, & grid-mapping across multiple projection surfaces.

Tools for the Worship VJ:

- Computer (Apple products recommended), external hard drive, TripleHead2Go, visual mixers (EDIROL products recommended)
- stand-alone presentation software, like ProPresenter, SongScreen Liquid, or MediaShout.
- *true* VJ software that can compliment your presentation program; ex. ProVideoPlayer (renewedvision.com)
- an ever-growing library of visual media content.

Becoming a more effective VJ:

- know your visual content. familiarize yourself with what you already have, and with what content is out there that you don’t have.
- manage and categorize your content in a way that makes sense to you and your team. Label folders and file names so that it’s easily recognizable, and structure your files/folders in a way that is easy & fast to locate content on-the-fly.
- create playlists and scripts in your presentation &/or VJ software that is always at your fingertips for when the Holy Spirit leads.

Resources for the worship VJ:

worshipVJ.com - a blog for visual worship leaders & VJs.

visualworshiper.com - Environmental Projection & thoughts on visual worship

creativeworshiptour.com - a community of creative worshipers

worshiphousemedia.com - visual media for worship

renewedvision.com - visual media presentation software

- **curated playlist of media = playlist.worshipVJ.com**

A Conversation on Visual Worship

What is WORSHIP?

- it's our life's **RESPONSE** to a **REVELATION** from God...a revelation of Who He is, what He's done, what He has promised to do, and where He is working in the world today. so....
 - visual media can help *echo* our response to Him...
 - visual media can bring us a **REVELATION**.
 - by telling God's story
 - by serving as a window into the world outside our community

Worship is three-dimensional:

UP (Godward)

ACROSS (community)

OUT (action)

- how does your visual media reflect this?

What is a "worship leader"?

Worship is supposed to be a lifestyle, one that we take on when we enter into relationship with God.

"'Missions' exists because worship doesn't." - John Piper from "Let the Nations Be Glad"

Could it be that missionaries are the true worship leaders? ...Leading people to worship God who aren't already.

Then the guy with the guitar (or piano, laptop, etc) is more like a "worship guide"....guiding people in their worship (through songs to God, to each other, and calling us to put our worship into motion.)

The Role of the Worship Curator

- see Mark Pierson's blog at

<http://www.creativeworshiptour.com/profile/MarkPierson>

Why use visual media in a church? Each user must know the answer to this question if he/she is to use visual media correctly & effectively.

So often we focus on "what" we are doing and lose sight of "why" we are doing it in the first place.

This is less about determining IF we need to use it, but more on HOW we should use it.

What should you focus more time, energy, and money on - technology or talent? Why?

Is your visual media INFORMATIONAL with artistic value, OR ART with informational value?

The shift from functional use of video to artistic (and therefore theological) use is under way. So WHO is producing the visual elements for worship?

Do you approach your role as a “media tech” or as a “visual worship leader”?

Pastoral leadership and involvement is KEY. Often, young media whizzes have the skills, but lack wisdom & guidance.

Reasons to use Visual Media in Worship:

- it makes learning faster
- it makes the experience more permanent & memorable
- it can make the experience more enjoyable
- it compliments and enriches other methods of leading worship
- it effects change in the lives of your congregation

- “By the use of color film any church, whether it is large or small, can have worship experiences with many of the wonders of art and nature which at one time were sheltered by the walls of museums and enjoyed by only a few privileged people. Many famous paintings of the old masters have been reproduced in color slides making it possible for everyone to share to some extent the blessing for which people travel across continents. Other visual aids have been produced specifically for worship, and still many more can be easily adapted for use in a worship experience.”
- Earl Waldrup, “Using Visual Aids in a Church”, 1949

- “You really are enhancing the worshipper’s propensity to worship with focus and devotion and emotion. NEVER underestimate the power and place of this.”
- Beth Moore

Negative Approaches to Using Visual Media for Worship:

- as a substitute for other methods (think about all the senses)
- *solely* for entertainment (understand that entertainment is not bad itself and CAN be used as a tool when the timing/context is right)
- visual media is not a crowd-getter or a cure-all
- visual media is not a substitute for preparation
- visual media is not for the personal satisfaction of the visual enthusiast

Other Reasons to NOT Use Visual Media/Technology During Worship:

- to keep the “young people” interested in worship.
- “it’s time to boost our congregational singing.”
- to change with the culture b/c we might lose church members to another church.
- we have to create more powerful worship experiences (visual media won’t create it)
- we want outsiders/visitors to know that we are a first-rate/”cutting edge” church (keeping up with the Joneses)
- Without using the latest technology, we won’t be able to increase the size of our congregation.
- Presentational technologies will allow us to grow and expand. (only the church can do CHURCH. Technology will not secure that a congregation will act as/be the Church.

- **Exercise:** Sit down in your sanctuary (and also visualize your worship service) and write out whatever you see (design, architecture, staging, what images are on the screen, etc) that speaks to you about worshipping God.

If an image is worth a thousand words, what words would your congregation use to describe the visual media at your church?

Our culture has become IMAGE-SATURATED, but not IMAGE-SAVVY.

Visual Philosophy

A few elements that help form a visual philosophy:

1) The History of Visual Worship ::

Understand & educate yourself on the history of images used in the Church. Read about the Reformation. Who were the “visual worship leaders” before us? What worked for them? What didn’t? Did they make any mistakes? How did it shape the way our worship spaces are designed today?

2) Your Local Church’s Theology ::

Have consistent conversations with your pastors about theology, and what theological/doctrinal beliefs guide them in leading your church. How do visuals relate to this and reflect this? Strive for *Biblical authenticity* in your imagery. The main point here is to stay in alignment with correct theology and to not contradict the Word of God or the doctrinal beliefs of your local church.

3) Local Culture ::

Be sensitive to your congregation’s culture. Words and images can carry baggage, but they can also carry life. One image can be a distraction to a farm town, while the same image can be an enhancement in a big city. Seek pastoral guidance, but also have regular conversations with various people in your church. Get their feedback. What you might see other churches/conferences doing might not work for your local church. And just because you want to see it done a certain way, doesn’t necessarily mean it should be done. Ultimately it’s about pleasing God, not pleasing people. And know that there’s never a point where everybody is pleased.

4) The Balance of DESIGN & CONTENT (or FORM & FUNCTION)

Exercising good visual worship means striving for a balance between good DESIGN and good CONTENT (or MESSAGE). So often, a media clip has a good message/content, but the design factor lacks, and it ends up not being effective (aka, a “cheesy Christian clip”). On the flip side, don’t always use visual media that has good DESIGN but lacks a message; now it’s ok to use generic “CG” loops from time to time, as textures/moods/etc, but don’t miss out on moments where media-with-a-message could speak louder than a “cool effect”.

5) The Heart of the Visual Worshiper

Your relationship with God is everything. The latest technology and the greatest, most experienced talent in the world will not make a visual worship leader effective. The core of visual worship leading is your relationship with the Creator of everything visual. Make more time for prayer and meditating on the Word of God, and less time focusing on all the details of the technology/art. Be prepared, but make room for the Holy Spirit to lead you in the midst of the corporate worship time.
He effects EVERYTHING.

Forming your visual philosophy will lead you to “being relevant” ::

“Relevant” is a term thrown around a lot today. It doesn’t mean keeping up with the latest/greatest technology and methods, nor does it look like turning your worship service into an MTV-style program.

Be relevant to your congregation...not to outsiders.

Worship is not outreach. Bottom-line: Know your congregation.

“VISUAL SILENCE”

More often than not, “less is always more”.

Sometimes a black screen is the most powerful visual. Have times of corporate worship with little to NO technology at all, reminding yourself and your congregation that worship isn't about singing or what we're seeing with our eyes, but a position of the heart.

- The Story of Soul Survivor in the UK (Matt Redman, Mike Pilavachi, “The Heart of Worship”)

Take a corporate fast from visuals & technology, where everything is stripped down and simple.

An acoustic worship time can compliment this.

Take a personal fast from technology from time to time, to keep your heart, your eyes, and your relationships healthy.

VISUAL DYNAMICS

- creating a balance (a dynamic range) of “highs” and “lows”, just like notes in music.
- it's the spaces between the notes that makes the music; it's the same with visual media & environment.
- **“if everything is BOLD, then nothing is bold.”**

VISUAL WORSHIP IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH

Go overseas whenever you get the chance. Put yourself out of your comfort zone and see how other peoples worship and what “church” looks like for them. Get out of the four walls of your church building!

Watch “Visual Worship in China” with Biscuet - worshipVJ.com

“WHO'S ON THE ‘WORSHIP TEAM’?”

It's made up of people both ON and OFF the stage.

However, there tends to be a disconnect between the people on the platform and the people on the “tech team”.

Focus on RELATIONSHIPS & UNITY between all members.

(see Nate Griffin's notes, “We Worship”.)

Resources:

“Using Visual Aids in a Church” by Earl Waldrup (published 1949) - Amazon.com
BuildingChurchLeaders.com - “building visual media into your ministry”

“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.” - Galatians 1:10