



The Community-Formed Worship Leader

Competency: To understand the importance of and to actively participate in the primary domains of community formation.

Assignments

1. Read Acts 2:42–47, 1 Timothy 3:1–13, Matthew 9:9–13, Hebrews 10:24–25 and answer the questions.
2. Read the article *Community Domains of the Worship Artist* and answer the questions.
3. Over the next week, initiate a time of family worship at least 3 times (even if it lasts only 5 minutes).
4. Actively seek out a missional community if you are not currently involved in one. Or consider launching one.
5. Begin to brainstorm about how you could use your artistic gifting in your local community. List at least three ways.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
6. Visit a local sports event, pub, restaurant, or coffee shop. Observe the different expressions of and “longings” for community that people have. Write down what you observed.

Read Acts 2:42–47, 1 Timothy 3:1–13, Matthew 9:9–13, Hebrews 10:24–25

1. What challenged you most from the passages?

2. Of the characteristics of the early church gatherings in Acts, which do you need more focus on? What does your MC or ministry team need to focus on?



3. Of the characteristics of elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3, which do you need more work in?

4. What was Jesus' model of cultural engagement? What do you learn from His model?

COMMUNITY DOMAINS OF THE WORSHIP ARTIST

At Seven Marks, we talk a lot about growing in community. One of our slogans for many years has been, "We believe you grow best in the context of community." For artists, the importance of community is no different. We have the great privilege of serving together on a ministry team that requires close chemistry, emotional connection, spiritual vitality, and vulnerability among other things. So, as far as community goes, in many ways we have an upper hand compared to many. However, there is always the real risk that we never open ourselves up to deep and genuine relationships. Because of our artistic bent we can often drift toward reclusiveness, passivity, and inward retreating. Maybe even depression. The truth is, however, we were made for community. The community of the Godhead is a clear illustration.

Before time began, God was in perfect community with Himself. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit experienced the beauty and glory of community. If God demonstrated community for us, it must be important. There is much that could be said here on this issue, but for worship artists there are at least four primary domains of community that each of us must work hard at cultivating.

1. FAMILY
2. MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES/MINISTRY TEAMS
3. TRIAD/DNA
4. THE LOST WORLD

FAMILY

There is perhaps no greater realm of community under constant attack of the enemy than the family. We've all seen it. The breakdown of the family in our nation is at



epidemic proportions. In fact, according to Barna research, there is virtually no difference in the divorce rate of believers compared to that of non-believers.¹ For worship artists, the threat is very real. For whatever reason, the enemy seems to attack pastors and worship leaders at a greater level. My guess is because we are constantly on the frontlines of spiritual warfare, waging war for the souls of people on a daily or weekly basis. So, we have to cultivate a home where God is central, where the enemy is constantly rebuked, and where our children thrive under the care of Spirit-filled moms and dads.

The qualifications for both elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 include family discipleship. Paul says, “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity...” (v. 4). I think it’s incredibly wise and necessary to apply this same standard to worship artists—those responsible for leading the people of God in corporate worship. Here are some ways we can manage our homes well.

- A. **Love and Lead Your Wife** – Be selfless. Be a servant leader. Lead her well. Don’t be passive. Pray with her. Read Scripture with her. Love her. Laugh together. (side note: Men, your wife will have no problem submitting to your leadership when you are walking in the Spirit.)
- B. **Disciple your children** – There is no secret formula for this. Just be intentional. Keep it short and sweet, but be consistent. Set aside specific times throughout the week where you read the Bible, pray, and sing together. Yes, sing together. I love what the old puritan Matthew Henry said, “They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all.”²
- C. **Open your home to outsiders** – The best accountability to maintaining a family that loves Jesus is by having people in your home regularly. Believers and non-believers both. Let them see how you lead your family. Let them see how you speak to your kids. Let them see how you pray together.

MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES/MINISTRY TEAMS

As a community of artists, we need to be connected to a group of people who are on the same mission together. This happens naturally through serving together on a worship team. Though we, as a leadership at Seven Marks, desire every worship team member to find and invest in a missional community (MC), ideally we want our worship team to also function as an MC.

We define an MC as *“a family of missionary servants sent by Jesus to be disciples*

¹<https://www.barna.org/barna-update/family-kids/42-new-marriage-and-divorce-statistics-released#.V6TVemUSBuY>

² Matthew Henry, quoted in Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 75.



who make disciples.” A missional community shares in three rhythms together—UP, IN, and OUT.

UP Rhythm – We help each other to grow spiritually.

Loving God and bringing all of life under the Lordship of Jesus, praising Him and responding to Him.

IN Rhythm - We serve and support one another

Love one another and embrace the missional community as a family, applying Grace + Truth + Time.

OUT Rhythm – We go where the Chief Shepherd wants us to go.

Love the lost and identify where your missional community can meet and serve them where they live, work, study, play, & shop.

For musician types, let’s think about UP, IN, and OUT using musical language. The three primary elements of music are Rhythm, Melody, and Harmony.

Rhythm – Rhythm represents UP because without rhythm you can’t have music. You can actually have music without melody and harmony. But you can’t have music without rhythm. Rhythm is the pulse. The tempo. The rate at which music is produced in time. Our upward relationship with God is non-negotiable. It is foundational to our lives. Rhythm asks the question: What is the rate at which I am pursuing Jesus? Am I following in step to the cadence of the Spirit?

Harmony – Harmony represents IN because it requires notes to be played simultaneously. Harmony is built on layers of community. It’s the verticalization of pitch built on triads (1-3-5). Just like communities of believers, harmony has either consonance (smooth-sounding harmonic combination) or dissonance (harsh-sounding harmonic combination). Dissonance among a community of believers is inevitable because discipleship is messy. However, when believers commit to doing the hard work of fighting for each other, eventually that harsh-sounding dissonance finds resolution. The resulting consonance brings a sweet-sounding musical resolution to the community. So, harmony asks the question: Does my life contribute to the smooth-sounding harmony of our community? Do we function together as a community of notes being played, not only simultaneously, but also beautifully for the glory of God?

Melody – Melody represents OUT because it is the “hook” that grabs the listener. Melody is the linear presentation of pitch. It’s the primary theme being produced. Melody is the missional impulse because we carry a certain pitch and “hook” with us as



we engage the world around us. Melody has either conjunct (easy to follow, smooth) or disjunct (ragged or jumpy, hard to follow). So melody asks the question: Does the melody of my life clearly and attractively point people to Jesus? Do I “hook” people with an incarnational expression of the gospel? Am I a believable representation of Christ to a lost world?

TRIADS/DNA

Musically speaking, chords are built on triads. In regards to community, the best accountability and spiritual growth happens in the context of 3–4 individuals (men with men, women with women) meeting together on a regular basis to encourage, rebuke, shepherd, and “spur each other on” (Heb 10:24). At Seven Marks, we call these environments DNA groups, which stands for Discover, Nurture, Act.³ Essentially, a DNA group meets together to discover truths from God’s Word, to nurture and direct each other’s hearts toward God, and finally to commit to act in obedience to the Holy Spirit’s voice.

THE LOST WORLD

Finally, relationships with unbelievers are essential for worship artists for at least three reasons:

- A. **Jesus modeled it** – He hung out with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes on a regular basis, indiscriminately and without conditions (Matthew 9:9–13, Luke 7:36–40). In fact, twice in the Gospels He is called a “friend of sinners” (Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34). He made parties spectacular by bringing the best wine (John 2), and He forgave a woman caught in adultery (John 8). Somehow in all of these profound redemptive acts, He was able to love the surrounding culture while still impacting it with truth. And that is the ultimate goal for us as artists.
- B. **We are positioned as artists to be culture shapers** – There’s something about music and the arts that can impact a society like nothing else can. Jeremy Begbie, musician and theologian at Duke University, says this about the importance of redeeming the arts: “As the western Churches face the enormous challenge of how the faith ‘once delivered’ is going to be redelivered in a society increasingly ignorant about the Christian faith, to neglect the arts’ potential would be curious, perhaps even irresponsible.”⁴
So, what if we, as redeemed artists, chose to use our specialized skills, crafts, and unique giftings to produce beautiful pieces of art for our local communities? What if we decided to take our skills outside of the four walls of Seven Marks Church and to bless our communities with artistic beauty unique to each of us? What if we spoke into the emptiness of society with the life-giving fullness of

³ We borrowed this terminology from Soma. <http://wearesoma.com/resources/dna-groups/>

⁴ Jeremy Begbie, *Beholding the Glory*; quoted in Bruce Ashford, *Every Square Inch: An Introduction to Cultural Engagement for Christians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 73.



God-sized artistry and creativity? Imagine what we could do to impact culture with the gospel.

- C. **It's where we spend most of our time** – If we take an honest look at how we spend the hours of our week, most of us are already in close proximity to lost people all the time. So, we must intentionally harness those opportunities to build genuine relationships. Not as a bait-and-switch routine, but for the sake of genuine relationship. Theologian Bruce Ashford says, “When we view our workplaces as ‘callings’ from God, we recognize that they are amazing opportunities for witness and obedience.”⁵

So let's commit together to continue to pursue growth in all four of these community domains. And let's resist the passive drift toward isolation, because we need each other.

Questions from the Article:

1. What challenged you the most from the article?
2. What questions did the article raise for you?
3. What strengths did the article affirm in you?
4. In which of the four domains of community do you need to place more focus over the next three months? Explain.

⁵ Bruce Ashford, *Every Square Inch*, 43.



5. List 3 specific action steps you will take to pursue deeper levels of community.

6. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge that worship teams face in fostering a culture of deep community, trust, and vulnerability?