

# WORSHIP

## Starting a Praise Band

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*Wanting to start a praise band? Here's a detailed article on how to do it.*

## Starting a Praise Band

When I was first starting in the Music Ministry and I had a choir of 16, with a 400.00 yearly budget, the concept of an orchestra or even praise band seemed pretty far-fetched. I did have a strong instrumental background, and I had a passion for instrumental music. But, it just seemed that an orchestra was not feasible. I look back, however, and realize that I did some things right in preparation. Chiefly, I kept myself open to learning about starting an instrumental ensemble. I think that the idea was always kept ever-present by the Holy Spirit.

### PRAISE BAND

Guitar band, 4-6 members. Piano, keyboard at the core.

### INCARNATION

**Pastoral support.** Pray before meeting with your Pastor. You need to have his full support. As it was, the FBC Praise Band came together without a hitch in the plans. But it still met with congregational opposition. Some families moved their membership (not many) because of drums in worship. The pastoral support had to be there. It will be him, not you, that will hear a great deal of the bickering.

**Be thankful for the instrumentalists that you already have.** If you have a good pianist and/or organist don't forget to take time to thank God for them. My pianist was the core of our Praise Band and was my 're-arranger'. It is very important to use your existing instrumentalists, when possible. Your pianist needs to be able to read chords and to improvise at least a little (for transitions)

**Take an objective look at your situation.** In starting our first ensemble at FBC Troy, I did so out of an organism, not organization. We do a lot of P&W choruses. I thought that first of all, we need a praise band to take the leadership instrumental role. **NOTE:** If we were traditional, I would not have gone the praise band route. As it was, we are blended, with a strong love for zesty choruses. This was the perfect setup or organism for praise band to be birthed from. If we were totally traditional, I would have gone the orchestra route first. I tried a praise band before in a church that only did hymns. It was a dismal failure.

**Understand 'charts'.** Your praise band will use 'lead (pron. leed) sheets'. These basically have lyrics, melody notation, and chords. You need to know how to read them, and to lead your group through them. You also need to understand that with guitarists, the more flats the more problems. Favorite keys are G, D,E,A for most rhythm players.

**Have music notation software.** Finale Notepad can be downloaded free from [www.mobaptist.org/worship](http://www.mobaptist.org/worship).

**Supply needs.** I may have some dissention on the topic. But I firmly believe that every rehearsal must be well-prepared with music, order of service, etc. Think of fresh music as food for your hungry group. If you don't keep it fed, it will die. Instrumental musicians appreciate latitude for experimentation, but they do not appreciate a total lack of musical direction. The Rhythm books of the [Baptist Hymnal](#) are good as is the [Celebration Hymnal](#) Rhythm charts, etc .

**Amplification.** Guitarists like their amps. Respect that, but try to consolidate into one good sound system. Also depending on your setup, you will need a monitor system.

**Set consistent weekly rehearsal time.** You need to meet with this group weekly to go over Sunday. Focus especially on starts and stops of songs and transitions.

**+++ VERY IMPORTANT +++ Gel-time.** Initially, do not play for worship for 4-6 weeks. Allow this group to pan out, gel together. Allow first rehearsals to be a relaxed time to see what works. But always keep it well stocked.

**Pray for the 'holes' in your group.** We needed a drummer. My next step was to pray and act on faith. I prayed and bought a basic, solid drum set. The Lord filled the need. Then because of conflict, we needed another bassist. Scott, my pianist, and I were both very burdened. We had lunch at the pizza joint and prayed. That week, the Lord delivered to us a bassist that was of professional-caliber and who was on fire for Jesus!

**KEEPING IT ALIVE!**

**A Physics lesson.** The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that energy goes from order to disorder (Francis version). To start this group and to leave it to its own devices, ("Just be here on Sunday morning, and look over the charts . . .") is a recipe for disaster. Think of the typical garage band. They play together, maybe get a gig or two. But eventually, with little accountability, they fall away. There always needs to be purpose. "To Glorify God" yeah, but how? Worship leading requires discipline.

That being said, wait awhile before featuring the group on anything other than accompaniment. Guitar band folk have fragile egos sometimes. If you go out, first time and betray their trust. You'll be hard-pressed to get them back.

Outside of weekly practice, have some get-togethers at someone's house. Build relationships.

**Finally a word about quality . . .**

I was invited to a church outside my denomination, by their pastor who was a friend of mine, to be probed about why they were having such a problem with worship. There I met a group of folks in diverse age, somewhat cold to me ("whatsa Baptist doin' here tellin' us what to do . . ."), but more cold to one another. After asking some questions, I found out that the biggest problem was about quality. No one in the church was responsible to run rehearsals, so the traditionalists heard unrehearsed musicians playing music that they did not want to hear. Though I felt sorry for the 'rockers' who were quiet and sulking the entire meeting, I told the Pastor in a meeting the next day that I had to side with the older folks.

Here is a big secret. I don't like Southern Gospel. But when it is well done, with a right spirit. It ministers to me beautifully. The biggest problem with local church praise bands is qualitative. As the leader, you have to take responsibility to making the hard taste decisions in your rehearsals.

**IT MUST BE A FIRST CLASS PRODUCT!**

Listen to your drums, are they playing with taste?

Is the system too bassy?

Are the guitars 'clean' (no filtering, fuzz-boxes, etc)

Are they in-time?

Are they in-tune?

Is there too much of one instrument?

. . . and one we too often forget. . .

Does the platform look messy (wires, music laying around, etc.)

**FUTURE PROJECTS:**

- Starting a Praise team, remember the best praise team is potentially your choir.
- Using MIDI
- Adding Latin Percussion
- Starting an orchestra
- Starting an additional praise band for evening service. (Currently we have two, and are starting a third one.)

This is a wonderful opportunity to really glorify Jesus in ministry. This is also a wonderful opportunity to burn bridges and goof up relationships. Take calculated risks, depend on Him, and love the Lord's people.

Last Published: February 10, 2012 12:54 PM