

7 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR PLANNING CREATIVE WORSHIP

A Weekly Design Checklist

by Len Wilson

Use this list of questions, which are based on my book, cowritten with Jason Moore, titled Taking Flight with Creativity: Worship Design Teams That Work, to direct your next worship / sermon planning session. They're easy to identify and helpful to name every time you plan on your own or gather with a team to design a sermon series or service.

STEP 1 – THE TEXT

- This is the pericope, or the passage of Scripture that drives the sermon and the whole service.
- Is there a single, primary text?
- Is it part of a set, or series?

STEP 2 – THE MAIN IDEA

- This is the central theme that drives the concept for every element in the worship order.
- Can you summarize it in a sentence or two?
- If part of a sermon series, does it further the narrative sequence of the series?
- Do you find yourself struggling to connect several, dissimilar programmatic elements into the main idea? (This doesn't work; it confuses people.)

STEP 3 – THE HUMAN CONDITION

- This is a common, specific and practical life struggle that people experience.
- What part of our brokenness does this word from God address?
- Does your main idea address a known need among your church community? Your community at large?
- Does it pass the 'so what' test?

STEP 4 – THE GOAL

- This is a next step that you'd want people to take in their faith life as a result of the service.
- What next step, next conversation, ministry, or program will help people further explore the idea?
- Is this outcome for the service explicitly stated, providing a path to faith development?

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STEP 5 – THE TITLE

- Put down your theologian hat and think like a copywriter: The title is both descriptive and intriguing.
- Is it a double entendre, with both theological and cultural meaning?
- Is it neutral or positive, describing the solution, and not negative, describing the problem?
- Is it redemptive? Does it hint at redemptive ideas?
- Would you want to use it in an advertising campaign to the community?

STEP 6 – THE METAPHOR

- The metaphor is the primary visual image that captures the essence of the main idea. It is the first and most accessible means for your community to understand the main idea's meaning.
- What is a commonly understood image that serves to communicate the big idea?
- What image from scripture, nature, culture, or your community can capture the main idea?

STEP 7 – THE FEATURED STORY

- The story embodies the main idea and gives your community a picture of what it looks like when faith is put into action.
- What is a life change that you would like to see people make as a result of the theme?
- What ministry captures this action / life change?
- Can you name a person whose life has been changed by the work of the ministry you've identified?

FINAL CHECKS

- Is there a planned order to the service?
- Does every element provide insight to the main idea and flow to the goal?
- Are there more creative ideas for presenting the theme?
- Has someone captured all brainstorming into a single document?
- Is there a point person / next step for producing every element?



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For more information on these ideas, on creative worship planning, and on the book *Taking Flight*, read the whole post: lenwilson.us/the-complete-checklist-for-designing-creative-worship-in-60-minutes/