

## SHOULD “non-Christians” lead worship?

Define “lead” - Serve? Participate? Belong? - “believers” who live a worse moral life than an un believer?

What does a “fully” devoted follower look like?

1. singer?
2. musician?
3. leader?
4. sound?
5. Lights?

I know this is an unpopular opinion, but I know more than a couple musicians that are believers now because someone asked them to play in their church band.

I have a drummer that’s not a Christian. Love the moments where I see him listening to the message or singing along with the songs. Huge opportunity to show Gods love. The only hard line I draw is with singers (proclaiming/leading the words with the congregation is an issue to me)

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Regardless, in this group, there will be a very big split down the middle on this topic. Some think it’s great outreach, others say it shouldn’t be allowed. I have no problem worshipping my God alongside a non-Christians instrument.

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I love this!! THIS is exactly our philosophy. Belong then believe.

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I will prayerfully consider anyone to be part of the team but to LEAD one must be a mature believer.

If someone comes forward interested in playing and is on the journey as a seeker I am open to that.

To me leading worship holds similar weight to preaching of which nature believers are required. You can’t lead someone to somewhere you have never been. I don’t equate playing on the worship team to leading worship

That said other forms of serving in the church (such as playing an instrument) should be open to people on all parts of the journey.

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So much I want to say to so many comments so if anyone is reading down this far it pertains to several responses. First of all, not everyone leading worship or singing is in a pastoral role. Many times the DNA of the church or the setting determines that. Secondly, how many people in each of OUR churches are supposedly "Christian" put are more toxic than an unbeliever with great skill and talent??

Churches should shepherd people in any capacity and avenue possible. Yes, I said, "any." If they are hearing and singing the message of what faith is, what are "we" guarding? It is God who saves. It is God who redeems. It is God who sanctifies. I know of a few instances where they only had non-believers in the band and singing and lives were changed.

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I became a Christian last year. A lot of it was just the experience of hanging out with Christians and realizing they can be fun people, too. Now I’m on worship team and help lead worship by playing bass and harmonizing. I’m learning a lot and have found that I enjoy the wholesome experience I get with them. I’ve got a whole new circle of friends, and a church family.

Should I have been preaching two years ago? Absolutely not. But by getting me involved they were able to break down some of the walls I put up out of fear.

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No... then again God has been known to use donkeys, inanimate objects, flaming shrubbery, and even mythical giant fish to get his point across. God would have to make sure I understood it was Him telling me to allow the non Christian to lead worship. And since I am hard headed see previous statements to find out things that would convince me it was God.

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I wouldn't put them on the front line in a pastoral role (how could they pastor anyone?), but I can't tell you how many folks I've seen come to know the Lord just by being around us. These people have gone on to become central figures and pillars of our ministry and ministries in other organizations. This is God at work. The Desiring God folks can keep drawing 'us' and 'them' lines (Piper is always so grumpy, what's his deal?) but I'm not buying it. [Tandy](#) as usual is spot on.

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This is like me leading a yoga class. How can you lead something you don't believe in/enjoy/subscribe to?

I'm 100% in favor of "belong before you believe", but I'm not trusting the the example of worship to someone who doesn't believe in worship.

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look at the greek on "comes" in this out of context verse.. then take a look at the story of the leper who comes to "worship" Jesus in Matt 8:2- Jesus is much much bigger than the box so many try to nail around him and his word. "We can't even begin to know God, until God gives us Grace. Grace precedes faith, Grace precedes belief. Unbelieving people can receive Grace. Is the reception of God's grace a form of worship? I believe yes!" The very word sung by this non believer in the song below is "God be PRAISED"...an utterance of the word "hallelujah" as an expression of worship or rejoicing.

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We have had this discussion MANY times here. I will simply say we hold to a Belong then Believe philosophy for volunteers in our church. LEADING worship, or LEADING a Bible study are different positions than someone playing drums for us. If we can plug people into our ministries and give us a right to speak truth to them, to be in relationship with them, to show them Jesus, we will do it every time.

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"Is it possible to worship without us doing anything, while God does everything? I believe the answer is yes. I believe that God meets unbelievers in worship services all the time, and "meets them where they are," and actually does something metaphysical in their hearts and minds and souls." Its 1:21 am, I gotta go to sleep and work in the morning. Rock on Sister. ps. I think "Rick Warren's 12 Insights On Worship" are not that insightful.. especially his wrong statement that "Only believers can truly worship." I hope you werent quoting him, he's got some skewed ideas that are too black and white. IMO peace,tv

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I find it interesting that many consider non-vocal/non-speaking roles to \*not\* be leading worship. I've always considered that anyone that has been elevated to the platform is a worship leader, as we have been given a position to influence others in their worship experience of our God.

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\_It's unusual, but it's part of my story. I was asked to lead worship before I was a believer. I think the pastor just assumed I was. The Holy Spirit did awesome things in the congregation and, over time, in me. God is so much bigger than my being lost

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For me Worship leadership is more about spiritual authority than it is influence.

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One of my bassists is an atheist.

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He joined one of the teams last year.

His wife attends our church and is in my small group.

He is actually one of the nicest guys I've ever met. I am challenged by seeing the (what I identify as) spiritual fruit he displays. He just does not believe.

So, here are the facts.

1. He plays once a month.
2. This has built relationships to the point that he will NOW attend with his wife.
3. I send him our music each week, and his wife says he plays it ALL THE TIME!
4. This has led to discussions of faith, that once were closed topics, to be a regular occurrence at their home.
5. With tears in her eyes, his wife talked about watching him a couple weeks ago, contemplating the message of (brace yourselves for a side convo) “Reckless Love”.

It is such a privilege to be watching this journey unfold in front of me.

How music was a vehicle to relationships, that are now allowing for conversations and questions, that has brought about an openness for the spirit to do the real life changing work in this man.

Is this a case by case basis? Absolutely.

However, I am thankful to serve under a Pastor that understands the value of leaving the 99 to chase down that 1.

Please pray for Mark and his family. God is working

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### **ARTICLE FROM JOHN PIPER’S MUSIC MINISTER...**

It’s an old dilemma: a church music ministry has a need, and a local unbelieving musician is available. But is this a match made in heaven, or a manifestation of . . . somewhere else?

At first, the biblical answer seems obvious. Growing up in church, I was startled by the stories of God killing people — Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10), and of course Uzzah (2 Samuel 6). It startled me to discover that many of the individuals whom the Lord put to death were executed for improper worship. While parts of the story confused me, one thing seemed clear: God’s love was a *holy* love. He would not allow his presence to be violated.

“Excellence in music can be a fine value for worship, but it ought not to be a church’s highest value.”

At some point, things obviously became less obvious. I read church leadership books that argued that churches should allow non-believers to participate in worship services. Non-Christians, they argued, who begin by *belonging* to a Christian community often move to *believing* in the Christian faith. From this perspective, allowing unbelieving musicians to lead worship is a powerful form of evangelism.

This argument once convinced me, but now I’ve changed my mind. And it has become much clearer to me as I’ve considered the issue from three different perspectives.

## **Perspective 1: The Church Leader**

First, when we approve a non-Christian leading worship, *church leaders confuse evangelism and excellence*. At first, it seems noble that church leaders want to evangelize unbelievers, but evangelism ought not to be the central goal of a church’s gathering. And while it is assumed that only believers ought to represent the church by leading its gathering, it is especially true of corporate worship.

Consider just how confusing this situation could become. These scenarios usually involve excellent musicians who play an instrument rather than a marginal musician who does something many others could. It’s easy to imagine a church’s enthusiasm to welcome the unbelieving hotshot drummer who works in a recording studio. But why? Would the leadership of a church feel the same burden to evangelize if the unbeliever was a mediocre

female vocalist who could not harmonize? If not, we ought to admit that the actual highest value on display is here is not evangelism, but musical excellence.

Excellence in music can be a fine value for worship, but it ought not to be a church's highest value. And it certainly ought not to be smuggled into the church's practice under the guise of evangelism.

Of course, some people have come to faith after participating in a church's worship ministry. Praise the Lord! Every conversion deserves celebration. But stories about musicians coming to faith while leading worship are like stories of people surviving a car crash while not wearing seat belts — we are glad they are alive, but we ought not to build a policy around that experience.

“Worship is a believing heart's response to the work of the Holy Spirit, not an emotional response to the quality of the music.”

Because church membership is “a covenant between believers whereby they affirm one another's professions of faith,” ([Leeman](#), 34) church leaders have a serious responsibility. Church leaders affirm the profession of another person's faith when they allow that person to have a public, leading role during the church gathering.

And that affirmation is easily misunderstood, especially by unbelievers.

## Perspective 2: The Unbeliever

Second, having non-Christians lead worship *confuses unbelievers about the nature of salvation*. In general, non-Christians rely on their good works to impress God and earn them his favor. This, however, is the opposite of the gospel.

Even when we try to explain the gospel's distinction between faith and works, the confusion is hardwired into the unbelieving heart. Every sincere evangelistic effort ought to clarify this distinction rather than muddy it. But allowing a non-Christian to serve on a worship team ratifies and calcifies this misunderstanding of works-righteousness.

Imagine, in the spirit of [Matthew 7:21–23](#), the tragedy of the unbelieving musician standing before the Lord on the last day. Imagine hearing him say, “But Lord, I played music for the church.” It may not feel pleasant to explain to a non-Christian musician why they cannot play their instrument for the worship service, but it is a pure kindness to help them avoid hearing those final words of condemnation.

## Perspective 3: The Church Attender

Third, having non-Christians lead worship *confuses the congregation about the nature of worship*. A wise worship leader serves their congregation by carefully distinguishing between music and worship. When a church attendee complains about a musical style or aesthetic preference, a loving worship pastor might turn the conversation to the goals of the worship service. “We are leading worship,” he might say, “not performing a concert.”

Worship is a believing heart's response to the work of the Holy Spirit, not an emotional response to the quality of the music.

But this crucial distinction is muddied when one or more of the platform participants actually performs a concert rather than worships the living God. A congregation cannot be blamed for being confused when the church leadership and the platform participants are sending confusing signals.

“A wise worship leader serves the congregation by carefully distinguishing between music and worship.”

Imagine the mother of a bass-playing teenager. Eager to find a mentor for her child, she approaches the church’s bassist after the service to talk to her son. The boy sheepishly follows his mother only to discover that the man, instead of loving the Lord, performs at the church only to earn some money. There’s the danger: placing unbelievers on the platform undermines an opportunity to give the congregation spiritual as well as musical leaders to emulate in their fight for faith.

So, let us consider the good of both unbelievers and believers alike. Let us warmly welcome all people, believers and unbelievers alike, in our church gatherings ([1 Corinthians 14:22–25](#)). But let us clarify that the church belongs to Christ and not the world ([2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1](#)).

And let us use our church gatherings to show the world that the sanctuary is not a concert hall. It is the place where “the redeemed of the Lord say so” ([Psalm 107:2](#)).