I can’t remember all the details now, but I was probably at my desk, pushing papers, when the phone rang. Because I oversee the chapel ministry at a Christian university, I occasionally get calls from booking agents hoping their up-and-coming bands can lead worship in one of our chapels. This was one such call, so I knew what to expect. Except this time I didn’t.

“You’ve got to bring this band to campus,” the agent bleated. “They lead killer worship!”

Excuse me? Okay, I know what he meant, and I’m sure you do, too—but the fact that we all know what he meant is indicative of one of the real dangers of 21st-century contemporary worship music, especially where congregational singing is concerned.

**KEY INGREDIENTS**

What he didn’t mean was that these were young people after God’s own heart, seeking to pursue worship as a lifestyle, in the spirit of Romans 12. And he didn’t mean that they were studying the biblical foundations and historical precedents of Christian worship, engaging in rigorous academic exercise that was informing their theological convictions, which in turn were guiding their worship-leading decisions, not to mention demonstrating their desire to love God with all their mind (Mt 22:37).

No. He meant that they rocked, that this band had jaw-dropping musical talent on display across the entire stage. And he equated excellent musicianship with excellent worship-leading capability.

**TOO MUCH EXCELLENCE**

We should, of course, offer our first fruits to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and this includes our musicianship. But where the display of musical talent is concerned, let’s acknowledge that the enemy wants to distract us in any way he can in the midst of our worship. For many of us, nothing distracts like awesome displays of musical prowess. Hence, we need to be aware that our excellent musicianship has the very real potential of getting in the way of the corporate worship we endeavor to lead.

It’s for this reason that Matt Redman, in the Vineyard training DVD Leading Worship, points out that while the Psalms encourage us—in one passage (33:3)—to play skillfully, in all the rest of Scripture, God time and again focuses on our hearts, not our hands or voices. “I’ve heard too much about excellence in worship,” Redman concludes.

**DARING REMEDIES**

So what’s the solution? Should we play poorly to keep our weaker musical brother from stumbling? Of course not. But how about considering some of these counterintuitive ideas if you sense that the musicianship of your band is too prominently displayed every Sunday?

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