

My Pastor, My Encourager

by Lynn DeShazo

I remember very distinctly the day my pastor asked me to take over the worship leading responsibilities for our small fellowship in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The request came as a surprise to me even though I had been a part of our worship team since the inception of the church three years earlier. Our current worship leader, an excellent musician, would soon be leaving and the “mantle” was being passed to me.

I replied, “Well...okay, Mike, but I’d be happy just to play guitar while you lead, if you’d rather do it that way.” Interpretation: “I’m not so sure about this. Wouldn’t you like to be a worship leading pastor?!”

The truth was, I probably would have been quite content just playing along with the worship team, at least for a while. I was quite comfortable in the familiar role of a supporting (i.e. not in charge) team member.

Pastor Mike, however, was undaunted by my hesitation. “Lynn, you’ve got an anointing on your life to lead worship. I know you can do this!” He assured me I was suited for the task and that we would work together as a team until the transition was made successfully. Pastor Mike Caulk and I put our heads together on song lists for worship services and practiced with the rest of the worship team on Saturdays. On Sunday mornings, he’d call the congregation to worship and lead us in heartily sung praise medleys, often interspersed with exhortations. I’d play along, leading the other musicians and helping us all to make the transitions between songs.

We hit our share of snags, of course. Sometimes Mike’s exhortations turned into mini-sermons and we’d lose “the flow”. Sometimes I’d miss his cues to go on to the next song and we sounded like a train wreck. Occasionally, Mike would lean over and whisper, “How do we end this song?” and I’d try to keep from breaking up in laughter.

All in all, our approach worked out pretty well, though. The Lord was praised, we had fun, and my confidence grew. The day eventually came when Mike stepped down from his interim role as worship leader and turned that responsibility completely over to me.

A true pastor wants to see each one of the sheep entrusted to his care grow into a mature believer. He recognizes that God never intended him to do everything himself (even when it seems easier that way), but to train and disciple the church to do the work of ministry with increasing effectiveness.

Perhaps the most important feat accomplished in that transitional period was the growing of my confidence. My pastor prodded me in a direction I needed to step out in and then wisely gave me all the practical support he was capable of until I could lead a worship service on my own. I don't remember that day as clearly as the other one, but I must have done alright because I kept the job for the next five years. Leading God's people in worship continues to be a prime area of ministry for me.

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