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A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

***Essentials In Worship* is the result of 25 years of interviews, testing, and interaction with many of the most effective worship leaders active around the world today.**

Essentials in Worship was designed to distill and deliver the best of those insights in the 6 areas of 1) worship leading, 2) worship ministry leadership, 3) worship songwriting, 4) worship values, 5) worship theology, and 6) worship history.

There are now thousands of worship leader training resources that exist in the world today. What makes *Essentials In Worship* special is that it has been read (and watched) by thousands of worship leaders over the past decade – and the feedback on its effectiveness has been overwhelming.

Most of that feedback is focused on how *Essentials* summarizes the big ideas in each of the six vital areas of worship ministry leadership – saving much needed time for busy people.

One “session” in each of the areas can be read in 15 minutes or less. The discussion videos that are part of the full *Essentials* experience are between 4-12 minutes maximum.

In short, *Essentials* aims to touch a few of the best ideas in each area of ministry in order to deliver just the *essentials* that can help you move forward.

Leaders have also responded strongly to the practical ideas and tools given in *Essentials*. These ideas and tools are intended to make immediate application of the material easy for you the next time you have the opportunity to put them into practice.

In my experience, when a worship leader is positively impacted by an effective resource a church is positively impacted for the long-term.

I’m confident that reading *Essentials in Worship*, and applying its principles, will have that kind of payoff for your church as it has for so many other churches.

THE STORY BEHIND ESSENTIALS IN WORSHIP

Essentials in Worship was created when, after 20+ years of leading worship and leading worship ministries, I set out to distill the foundational ideas and skills information about worship (practical, philosophical, and theological) I believed every worship leader needed to grasp.

In fact, I needed to better understand many things about the complex world of worship leadership myself.

My story at the time was like that of many worship leaders I knew. I’d been serving for many years as a worship pastor, worship trainer, resource developer, senior pastor, recording songwriter (Vineyard Worship), and worship arts university professor — all the while leading contemporary worship in my local church.

I learned in the school of hard knocks how to, for example, relate to my pastor, build an effective worship set, write a song, craft a special service liturgy, nurture a worship community, audition musicians, mentor new worship leaders, and arrange a band.

I similarly learned about the Old and New Testament visions of worship, Trinitarian worship, the history of worship music, architecture, the Eucharist, corporate prayer, baptism and more on the fly, grabbing what I could at conferences or on Sunday mornings.

At conferences and seminars I was attending I also had the unique opportunity to interview some of the most gifted worship leaders and songwriters of our generation. (Much of the material in both *Essentials* and WorshipTraining.com comes from those interviews.)

Hearing voices like Matt Redman and N.T. Wright talk about worship (I had the great privilege of interviewing Wright in his home in Westminster Abbey), I was moved by the practical insights and theological truths flowing freely from the wellspring of their experience and wisdom.

I was reading, too. Voices like the early church fathers and mothers, Celtic Christian writers, spiritual formation authors, the late Robert Webber, Jeremy Begbie, John Wimber, Marva Dawn, Eugene Peterson, Constance Cherry, Jamie Smith, Richard Foster and other thoughtful men and women were helping me forge my philosophical approach to worship leadership and the arts.

Gathering Up The Gold

I often wished those gold nuggets of wisdom I was gathering about worship leading—from the practical skills to the heart behind it — could be forged into a simple, strong training manual that would fuel my local church's worship training.

I had worship leaders and a team to train — and I needed to constantly refresh my own learning as a worship pastor!

As I was struggling to find the right material to train my leaders, I hit a crisis point.

I would have to create a comprehensive, but accessible tool, myself.

I knew that the tool needed to have brief written sections (the attention span of musicians is notoriously short), and supplementary video/audio media to give some helpful teaching beyond the text (for a multimedia, smart phone generation).

Because I was leading a Worship Arts program in a university setting, the material needed to bridge the gap between the “on-the-ground” needs of the local church worship leader, and the more theoretical focus of the academic world.

I gathered up those few decades of insights from so many respected leaders, coupled them with vital ideas from the university world (practical theology, biblical studies, arts, aesthetics, and history), and wove them together into the *Essentials In Worship* material you have in your hands.

A Vision Realized

The plan was to first test the material through a digital enrichment experience aimed at training worship leaders I had come to know through national and international events.

Then, once the material was tested, I would modify it based on the feedback from those who took the early courses. We used Facebook as our classroom, and iTunes U as our video delivery mechanism. Adding in live Webinars and online events, we kept refining the training.

Eventually I founded *WorshipTraining.com* (now over 35K members strong and growing at the time of this writing) to be the mechanism that delivered that material.

Working with Sonreign Media, we made the choice to couple the *Essentials* material (the core training of WorshipTraining.com) with a wide range of popular worship resources from respected leaders across the church spectrum.

The rest is, as they say, history.

Worship leaders and pastors from many streams of the church, working out their worship approaches in both academic and local church settings, began to access the *Essentials* material.

Thousands of Worship Leaders and Teams, Learning Together

Since those early days, literally thousands of worship leaders and musicians have now used *Essentials in Worship* to up their game. Because *Essentials* is *principle-based*, and has an academic leaning, it does not date quickly in the way that many “how-to” worship leader materials do.

The goal of *Essentials* was straightforward. We wanted to provide an easy to use, accessible, time saving training tool for worship leaders – one that delivered core ideas about worship to their doorstep as they worked in their homes, jobs, and churches.

The last few years have proven that goal has been reached! I get emails every week telling me how *Essentials* is shaping the worship experience of churches Sunday after Sunday, on many continents.

Essentials was simply the kind of tool I needed to train my worship community – and I trust *Essentials* will be a tool that serves you for years to come.

No Church Left Behind

To reach every local church on planet earth (seriously, we want to serve *every church that could use this tool*), the price of *Essentials* has always been kept lower than the cost of sending one person to one conference this year.

As well, a portion of all proceeds from the sale of *Essentials In Worship* goes toward helping children escape poverty. We’re committed to expressing holistic worship in the way we care for the poor as we further the reach of these core ideas.

On a personal level, I don't want any church to be without *Essentials* because they can't afford it. For that reason, I've always had a policy that if any church or individual can't afford the sale price, they can email me and we'll find a way to get this tool into their hands.

So, if you know of a church (or churches), or a worship leader (or worship leaders), that could use the tool that is *Essentials in Worship*, please let me know by emailing danwiltresources@gmail.com. We'll make sure they get it.

Essentials is also being translated into Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese, just for starters, so keep your eyes open at DanWilt.com for those versions to be announced.

Let's Keep In Touch

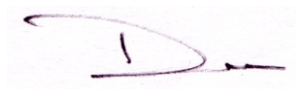
I also want to personally invite you to join me at my worship equipping blog, DanWilt.com, for weekly training tools you can email to your teams and leaders.

It's an added support to *Essentials*, and I expand on ideas from *Essentials* regularly. There are also a few thousand fellow worship leaders there in conversation who can encourage you.

Sign up for the email list for free downloads, and my weekly tools will go right into your inbox. You can then easily forward them on to others you think would benefit from them.

I trust *Essentials in Worship* will encourage you, inspire you, and renew you in your understanding of worship and its leadership in the 21st century.

Cheers to us growing forward as lead worshippers in our generation.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to be 'Dan Wilt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Wilt, M.Min.
Creator, *Essentials In Worship*
Franklin, TN

www.DanWilt.com
www.WorshipTraining.com

HOW TO USE ESSENTIALS IN WORSHIP

Essentials in Worship is a local church worship training series that targets worship leaders of **every experience level**. It is designed to train you, the worship leader, in core ideas and skills within the philosophy of leading worship.

In addition to this, *Essentials* also provides unique training sections intended to reach your entire team, enriching *everyone* in your worship ministry.

Ultimately, *Essentials in Worship* is less about you being trained and more about putting **tools** in your hands that will stir reflection, start discussion, and deposit life-changing ideas in your worship ministry community.

Accessible “Mini-Studies” Format

Essentials in Worship aims at laying foundations through **quick, accessible mini-studies** that are within the time and energy reach of the local church worship volunteer.

While worship leaders should read all of the material, and everyone can learn something from all the sections, some sections are more particularly tailored to **unique groups** in your worship team like worship leaders, songwriters, musicians, techs, and worship arts overseers. **Pastors** will also find helpful ideas on worship in the values, theology, and history sections.

The list below identifies which sections of this book are best suited to which members of your worship ministry.

Who Should Do Which Essentials Sections?

Essentials in Worship is made up of **6 Sections** in this manual—each with **4-session ‘mini-studies’** on a key topic.

Worship leaders can do all of these Sections. However, musicians, techs, pastors, and others can also read some of the Sections as well.

The following sections make up the Essentials experience:

- 1. Essentials in Worship Leading**
Designed for worship leaders in all areas of your church, including those serving in main sessions, youth groups, small groups, men’s and women’s groups, and children’s ministry.
- 2. Essentials in Worship Ministry**
Designed for worship leaders, worship pastors, and worship arts pastors — anyone who oversees a worship leadership ministry in a local church.
- 3. Essentials in Worship Songwriting**
Designed for worship leaders, songwriters, musicians, and congregants — anyone who would like to write a song and learn the basics of the

process.

4. **Essentials in Worship Values**

Designed for worship leaders, musicians, techs, arts leaders, and pastors — anyone who cares about the primary values that reveal why we lead worship.

5. **Essentials in Worship Theology**

Designed for worship leaders, musicians, techs, arts leaders, and pastors — anyone who would like to begin to explore big ideas about God, people, and worship.

6. **Essentials in Worship History**

Designed for worship leaders, musicians, techs, arts leaders, and pastors — anyone interested in exploring how the Church has worshipped across time.

Two Ways To Use Essentials

This study experience is designed to work well either as an **individual** learning guide or for a **group** learning experience.

Essentials is also designed to sit at the core of your “required learning” for *anyone* wanting to be involved in church worship ministry, and/or for the training of new members of your team.

Use Essentials as a personal study.

For individual study, we recommend doing one Section at a time in *Essentials in Worship*. Feel free to spread the Sections out over time and complete them at your pace.

When starting a Section, we encourage you to:

7. **Read** just one session in each Section per day, or spread it out even longer if you wish. (Rushing through without extended time for reflection can limit the return on the training experience).
8. **Watch** the short video for that week.
9. **Write** your answers to the Study Questions at the end of each session as a helpful way to process the ideas. Even find someone with whom you can share your insights over coffee along the way.

Use Essentials as a group study.

Essentials in Worship is also designed to be experienced in a group setting if that is preferable.

When doing one of the Sections:

1. **Gather** your group.
2. **Read** the session for that week (see below).
3. **Watch** the video for that week.
4. **Discuss** the content with the Study Questions for that week.

It's that simple to do a Section and to grow together.

More Thoughts on Doing Essentials as a Group

For the reading part, I would encourage you to have your group pre-read the material before gathering together. This way each of you will have reflected on it a bit before meeting.

Another option is to take turns reading the session for that meeting aloud together, with each person reading a paragraph at a time. This engages both the hearing and reading parts of our brains, and encourages both retention and fresh thoughts about the material as you experience it together.

Viewing the brief video should then follow, which reviews some of the ideas while offering a few added stories and sound bites from my experience.

Feel free to modify the discussion time, including adding in any relevant materials and questions you would like to bring to the learning experience from your own tradition.

A Special Note on the Songwriting Section Group Experience

In the Songwriting section, you'll be sharing songs as a part of your gathering time. The *How to Start a Songwriting Circle* video is designed to help you get started, so plan for more time to meet and have people do their reading and song prep beforehand.

Why Are Words in Bold in the Book?

Essentials in Worship is intended to be a powerful tool for your entire worship ministry to get a handle on some **essential** ideas about worship. For that reason, we often highlight **key words and phrases in bold** we want you to notice, reflect on, and retain.

Highlighting these **words** and **phrases** will go a long way toward helping you, and your leaders and teams, absorb big ideas about worship for years to come.

When we remember words and phrases, hearing them can help the rest of the content or idea they represent come rushing back to us. Use the phrases in bold to talk about worship in your church.

Video Links

The links to the corresponding teaching videos at the beginning of each session are provided for the streaming access of All Access members of WorshipTraining.com (free accounts can only view 30 seconds of content).

For those who purchased by download, the videos are on your hard drive from when you downloaded the course. They can be viewed from there.

Want to Go Even Deeper into an Area?

Essentials in Worship is designed so anyone can give an **hour or two a week** to grow in their worship leader development.

You may want to, however, go deeper still. To further maximize your study, we suggest a supplementary book or media piece that will bring even more fresh ideas to the surface.

Again, this book or media is simply **supplemental**—you will get enough out of the manual if you don't choose to read/view this material.

The recommended “extra book or media” for each section is noted below.

Supplemental Books & Media for Deeper Study

Each of the *Essentials* sections can be **enhanced** by reading another book that will greatly amplify what you get out of the manual.

While many other books (both popular and academic) could be referenced, these books below were chosen to help directly explore some aspect of the *Essentials* material.

Essentials in Worship Leading

Extra Book: *How to Lead Worship without Being a Rock Star* by Dan Wilt

Essentials in Worship Ministry

Extra Book: *To Know You More* by Andy Park

Essentials in Worship Songwriting

Extra DVD: *Worship Songwriting* (10 hr. DVD series) by Brian Doerksen

Essentials in Worship Values

Extra Book: *Perspectives on Worship: Five Views* by various authors

Essentials in Worship Theology

Extra Book: *Surprised By Hope* by N.T. Wright

Essentials in Worship History

Extra Book: *Ancient Future Time* by Robert E. Webber

Want even more training courses, retreat materials, and media? Then see this next item.

WorshipTraining.com is the Gold Mine for Team Skills Resources.

Essentials In Worship is also available in streaming and download formats at WorshipTraining.com.

In addition to *Essentials In Worship*, you can also access *thousands* of other courses, videos, audios, articles, ebooks, and team tools by becoming an All Access Member (individually or with your church).

For example, see the [Essentials Toolkit Series](#) for ebook covering many practical aspects of worship leadership. See my [Whiteboard Worship Training videos](#) that cover sound, vocal, songwriting and many other topics (over 50 practical topics for teams via whiteboard lessons).

3000+ training tools are right at your fingertips coming from across the body of Christ and from major publishers.

All are online and ready for download.

Visit www.worshiptraining.com for a free membership for all your leaders and team members and to find out more.



Ready, Set, Grow.

No matter how you choose to grow with us, we trust *Essentials In Worship* will encourage you, inspire you, and renew you in your understanding of worship and its leadership in the 21st century.

ESSENTIALS IN WORSHIP LEADING AN INTRODUCTION

Leading worship is a high calling. Learn foundational principles of worship leadership as you explore the heart attitudes of the effective musical worship leader, and skills such as arranging a band, building a set, rehearsing, and mentoring others.

Videos for This Session:

- [Introduction: A Dangerous Mission](#) (2:22)

A Dangerous Mission

Having been a worship leader for over 25 years now, I have spent most of that time continuing to learn and grow by watching others – younger or older – who are especially effective as worship leaders.

I've spent much of that quarter of a century studying the particular **habits** and **skills** that define those men and women as some of the most effective contemporary worship leaders of our generation.

This section is built on those insights, and I pray they help you to become the unique worship leader that God intended you to be.

Who Are We to Lead Worship?

Every week a man or woman steps up behind a microphone in a church service, straps on a guitar on a Wednesday night in a small group, or gets behind a keyboard in a youth gathering – to **lead** *people in worship*.

Who are we to lead anyone in worship? If you're like me, I often think to myself, "What am I doing here? If they only knew me, they wouldn't let me lead this congregation anywhere!" But God knows better.

Who are we to lead worship?

We are followers of Jesus who are able to sing and/or play an instrument and who have a calling from God to create musical **spaces** in which people can enter into a conversation with the Lord of their lives.

In some cases, we are particularly gifted to fulfill certain functions of that role. We may be natural musicians, or born organizers. In other cases, we need others to gather around us to cover us in our areas of weakness.

And we are not alone in our leadership mandate; our role as worship leaders does not exist in a vacuum. We work in tandem with other leaders that shape the spiritual life of a community, like one harmony weaving among many.

The pastor, children's leader, small group leader, musician, artist, tech, and usher each have a part to play in creating a space in which people can **interact** with the Lord of our worship.

And that is the goal of worship – to narrate God's Story in our community, through the musical expression assigned to us, and to create environments in which the people of God can truly engage with the ever present Spirit of God in intimate communion.

A worshipping church is an empowered church, and we have a humble role to play in seeing our church (and the broader Church) become all she was designed by God to become.

Our Lives Lead the Worship

In a culture that idolizes musicians and elevates emotions, we stand in front of people, behind a microphone and up on a stage, **discipling** the people of God. We are training them with our words, our actions, our musical choices, and our worship sets to *be like Jesus*.

In this environment, we must always remember that our lives sing louder than our musical instruments, and our pastoral leadership in worship shapes people in ways we never before thought possible.

*Excitement and danger—that is the **privilege** of worship leading.*

Becoming an Effective Worship Leader

Serving, loving, and leading in a local church is where the rubber meets the road of leadership. The worship leadership stage is where we learn to be givers in this life instead of takers.

Stages and microphones do funny things to people; we hold our ground and lead worship as **spiritual leaders**, and not just as creative people looking for an opportunity to express our gifting.

As 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” In other words, we are given gifts and callings not for the service of our own personal sense of well-being or fulfillment—we are given the gifts we have *to serve others around us, while experiencing the gift of being energized by that service*.

Welcome then, to the humbling, exciting, transforming, enlightening, shocking, challenging, artful world of worship leading.

Welcome to Essentials in Worship Leading

This section has been designed to help you along in your quest to live your life in the presence of God as a worshipper, to serve your church community with your heart to lead worship, and to grow in the skills that make a *functional song leader* into an *effective lead worshipper*.

We will look at 4 areas of worship leadership as our building blocks for learning how to become more **effective** worship leaders. No matter your level of experience, there is something here for you.

I look forward to the journey with you. Welcome to *Essentials in Worship Leading*.

Session 1: Three Reasons We Lead Worship

Videos for This Session:

- [Session 1: Three Reasons We Lead Worship](#) (6:03)

Why do you lead worship? This is a very important question, and many worship leaders never take the time to answer it. Your answer might be, “Because I like it.” Your answer might be, “I was asked to do it.” You might say it’s your job, your passion, your duty, or even your calling.

If you answered in any of the ways above, as I often have, you will find that we both may have missed the point!

All of these answers have to do with us, as if the reason we lead worship has everything to do with our preferences, job, passion, or even calling.

A Reason Bigger than Us

Worship is much, much bigger than you or I leading a set on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night. The reason we lead worship, ultimately, is found in 1 John 4:19.

“We love Him, *because He first loved us.*”

God has loved us by giving us life and inviting into His Grand Story for the cosmos. Your life and my life are a part of His design to love the world back to Himself. He will do this by forming us through His Story, as told in the Scriptures, and by encountering us with His Spirit time and time again through our lives to form us into Christ.

God loves us, and we **respond**. God loves us, and so we tell His Story again and again, through music, prayer, Scripture reading, and all the activities of worship, until that Story gets inside of us and leads our thinking and feeling.

This is the ultimate **reason** we worship. We are responding to God, time and time again. Worship is a big idea in the heart of God, and it involves everything that happens in life as well as everything that happens in a worship service. Ultimately, however, the **act** of worship has to do with people responding in love to the One who first loved them.

And this is a good starting place for us. A worship leader helps people *respond* to God. We use songs, music, lyrics, bands, sound systems, and visuals — and so much more — to help people respond to the God we worship.

Worship leading is *responsive*. Jesus is the One who invites us to worship by love, and we help people respond as we join in alongside them.

How? We’ll get into that in a bit. For now, rest in knowing that being a worship leader is actually a biblical idea that we see in the Psalms.

The great songwriters and worship leaders David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun are examples of those who facilitated the mechanics of gathered worship. Yet, the kind of

worship leaders we are today, who use **music** as a **primary** tool to engage people with God, is a 20th century phenomenon.

But let's not follow that thread just yet. Why is it so important to understand **why** we lead worship? Why is it so important to understand that worship is primarily a response to God?

Sandwiches, Weddings, and Worship

Pretend that you have been asked by someone to make a sandwich. You have no further direction than to construct that sandwich, giving you no sense of why you are making it. So, you begin to make it for yourself.

Dagwood, step aside.

A wide variety of meats, cheeses, sliced vegetables, breads, and sauces are laid out in front of you. With no further direction, you begin to bring together all of the culinary elements to make your sandwich the most delicious it can be.

Then, just as you are putting the finishing touches on your edible masterpiece, someone stops you. "By the way, the sandwich you were to make isn't for *you*," the person says. "It's for the guy sitting over in the corner."

Someone told you *what* to do, but they never told you *why* to do it. And when we don't know why we're doing what we doing, we tend to make it about – you guessed it – *us*.

Why we do *what* we do is very important. In the sandwich analogy, without being given any context, you and I would tend to make the sandwich above according to our own purposes and tastes. Our own goals and preferences would take priority.

However, the preferences, needs, desires, tastes, and even allergies that we think about when we know *why* we're making the sandwich — in this case, for another person — will guide us to make a very different kind of sandwich than we would make if left to ourselves.

Let's bring this home. If worship is about people responding to God, then worship is about retelling God's Story of love toward humanity, and helping the people who we are leading in worship engage **intimately** with the God who is **present** within that Story.

We are like the Best Man or Maid of Honor at a wedding. We are helping the Bride connect with the Groom who has pursued her to this moment of shared commitment.

How strange it would be to see the Best Man making eyes at the Bride, when his job is to keep her **love** focused and tender toward her Groom!

Songs can be a place to which people go to meet with God, encounter His love, and reaffirm His story in their lives. Worship leaders lead people in those songs, all the while understanding the why behind the what that we do.

And a song doesn't just stay within the four walls of a church. A song is a sonic sanctuary people can take with them, anywhere, finding encouragement and renewal as they learn to use songs as a tool facilitating their worship any time, in any place.