

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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The Worship Service is GOAT

Who is GOAT? Michael or LeBron — **Greatest Of All Time** in basketball? The debate goes on.

But as to **Greatest Of All Time** in the local church, at least in each week's schedule for the local church, we vote the worship service. It is the main billboard for the guests and a strong weekly banquet for the regulars.

We must give it priority, have high goals for all of it, seek excellence by strong attention, care about the details, and dedicate it to the glory of our Lord.

No one can goof off, shrug it off until last minute preps, or neglect to pray about it. And then, we put all our heart into it.

This is the game of the week, but it is no game.

Please consider some of our game plans, especially some of the details.

Feeling privileged,

Knute, for Jeff and Jim

Why is every sermon and service so important?

Jeff Bogue

- Because every sermon and service is tied in one way or another to a divine appointment.
- If we truly believe the church is God's instrument for reaching people, and we have the privilege of serving as His voice during those services, then we must also believe that the people who came to church — to hear from God, through us — are a part of God's plan and that He can work in their lives spiritually. Therefore, we have a divine appointment.
- Whenever we are doing anything for the Lord, we should do it to our utmost ability and with our greatest effort and assume that every week is of critical importance.
 - This may be the week someone's friend finally comes.
 - This may be the week the Holy Spirit speaks to, and convicts, someone in a special way.
 - This may be the week that serves a foundation someone leans into as they go through a difficult time ahead.
 - This may be the week God answers a spiritual question that someone has been wrestling with in his own heart.
- If we are going to serve the Lord, we need to do our very best in all things.
- They are mostly about balance and inclusion. The classic mistake is overworking and feeling like you need to be the driver and definer of the church and therefore you're pulling all of your time and energy away from your family and spouse.
- The antidote to that is balance. Looking and saying, "I'm going to make sure that after I give a lot of time to the church, I correct my schedule and also invest heavily in my family."
- For Heidi and me, what she's asked of me is that her expectations about my schedule are met. This means, if we agree I'm going to be home Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings that I'm actually home Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings. It's not that she wants all my time or demands all my attention; it's that when she is expecting I'll be home, and then I have to change it, it is disruptive to her and the children.
- The other part of that is inclusion. Whatever my spouse wants to be included in, she is, and whenever I receive praise I share that praise with her also.

Jim Brown

- The message could be the very one that enables the hearts of the people to hear God's Word and to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ!
- Because this is the call that God has placed on our lives, it is imperative that we do our very best and not operate from complacency and laziness.
- The service itself is a chance to bring glory to our God and to lift high His name.
- God uses the local church as a gathering to equip and prepare and reach our world with the truths of our faith.
- It is a divine appointment with man and God!
- Because God tells us to gather and not forsake the habit of meeting together!

Knute Larson

- Because God ordained that lives would be saved and changed and He would be glorified by the "foolishness of preaching."
- Because just as we need good food to grow, we need good worship services to grow and stay strong.
- Because the people who worship and hear need to be drawn to Christ, whether they are new or old to the church.
- Because worship is the highest privilege of human beings.
- Because this may be the last time one of the people there or you or everyone gets a chance to worship and hear the Good News.

What helps you prepare spiritually for weekend services?

Jeff Bogue

- A lot of my preparation, spiritually, is done throughout the week. We should never teach a passage until God has impacted our own hearts with it.
- When preparing a passage, or preparing a series of passages to construct a message, I don't believe we are spiritually prepared to preach it until it has soaked into our hearts.

- Now that's very different than having it soak into our minds, because we can quickly understand theology, doctrine, context, etc., and the longer you're in ministry the more instinctual those things become.
- It's the spiritual impact of allowing God's Word to actually change you first, to convict you of sin first, to be inspired to godliness first, and I don't feel like I'm done studying until that process is played out in my life.

Jim Brown

- I let the sermon speak to and through me first. Before I preach it I must let it convict and challenge me.
- I spend time praying and getting alone with God and cleaning my heart before God.
- It is vital that I do my best to make sure relationships are in a good place with my family and leaders before I preach. I do not want to preach from an angry or unforgiving heart.
- I exercise and eat well. It allows my mind to be as sharp as it can be.
- I work hard at getting proper rest and going to bed early on Saturday night. In fact, we rarely do anything on Saturday evening so that we can give our best in worship on Sunday morning. We even encouraged our children to not stay out late so that they could give their best too.

Knute Larson

- The work of study, and all my connection with it to be ready to teach it. That is one reason I have always preferred preparation spread over the week rather than all in one or two days. Usually one or two hours on Monday, two or three on Tuesday, four or five on each of the remaining days.
- Personal prayer as I study, and then private, with "Prayer Partners," church staff, and family. And then finally, early Sunday at the office and pulpit.
- Staying clean with family and friends and the church. Preaching is best with good relationships.
- I like to think of the three hearts of preaching — God's, discovered by our study (and He only meant one thing when He had it written).

My heart is the second one. Does it capture my heart? Am I passionate about and obedient to this text?

The heart of the listener is the third heart of preaching. How do I help the listeners take these truths into their own hearts — to feel them, believe, or do.

What are your practices for before and after worship services?

Jeff Bogue

- Pray, just be with God a little bit.
- Look over my notes again to make sure I have the sequential order of preaching down.
- Do a mic check and connect with my worship leader to make sure we're on the same page.
- Glance at my phone and read the news quickly to make sure nothing has happened in the world that would be on everybody else's mind but not mine.
- Eat and drink so that I have food and hydration for the weekend.
- Check myself in the mirror. 😊 I know that sounds a little bit funny, but making sure there is not a stray hair or a missed button or a zipper down can be really critical. 😊
- Pray a final time. Because of all the busyness of getting ready I want to make sure I'm back connected with God.
- Try to spend at least the last 15 minutes before service out in the lobby saying hi to people. I want to be with people — engage them, embrace them a little bit. I find this helps me dial in before I stand up to teach them.

Jim Brown

- Get up at 4:00 am and read over the message and pray and get my heart ready for the day.
- Sit in the “bullpen” with all the worship and tech teams to talk about details of the service so that everyone is on the same page.
- Drink lots of water and eat protein bars between services so my energy level stays up.
- I do not get into any discussions that pull me away from the message.
- Between services, walk through our building and greet volunteers and people worshipping that morning. I want people to know I am with them and love them.

Knute Larson

- It is the one time the people of the church come to the church building (where we “work”), and we would hide in a prayer huddle or in our studies for last-minute prep? I want to be very ready with both study and prayer so I can meet people, welcome them, get to know new guests, and urge people to try one of the gatherings we have for guests.

- Before: be clean spiritually and as ready as can be for the sermon.
- After: be grateful and learn from mistakes.

What are the pros and cons of “meet and greet” in the service?

Jeff Bogue

- The pros: It gives everyone a chance to say hi and portrays a warm and friendly environment in the service.
- The cons: Generally, people say hi to others they know or normally sit beside. If you are a guest and you are expected to say hi to people you do not know and have never met before, and no one comes to say hi to you, it feels like a double intimidating and double insulting practice.
- If you have a “meet and greet,” it should be extremely short – 35 to 45 seconds! I actually would encourage you not to have a “meet and greet,” but rather have people strategically positioned throughout the church building looking for those who are new or seem new. These special greeters should not have a name tag on; they should just be friendly folks looking to help other people connect.

Jim Brown

- Pro: touching and loving on people and caring for people.
- Con: for the pastor, getting distracted with something that can divide your mind and your preaching.
- Pro: for guests, a chance to feel loved and appreciated; but we make sure to not force people to have to stand and be singled out.
- We use a texting system — they type “welcome to” and they can go to our info desk to pick a gift for first-time guests. That way they go at their own convenience, and we can follow up with them.

Knute Larson

- This “forced” hello time does seem unnatural and corny to some.
- This token of friendliness does show that you encourage people to be friendly and to get to know each other.

- Perhaps a good compromise is to do this on occasion, not every weekend, but also to have “auditorium hosts” in sections of the worship room — people who note who the guests are and try to meet them and help them.

Pastorpedia is a resource provided to you by CE National, a church effectiveness ministry. Please contact us at cenational@cenational.org or 574.267.6622 if we may be of any help to you or your ministry!

Jeff Bogue, of [Grace Church](#), in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio; Jim Brown, of [Grace Community Church](#) in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and [Knute Larson](#), a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by [CE National](#). Visit cenational.org/pastorpedia for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.