

## How to Plan a Worship Service

Here's our six-step planning process for worship services.

### 1. Select the series

We outline the entire year in blocks, usually from 3 to 6 weeks for each topical series of worship services. Each series has a topic, theme, and agenda. That helps members invite their friends. Your people can tell friends, "We're starting a new series on family (or marriage or finances or parenting or sex)."

Often, the pattern in church is to build up to holidays. But we launch a new series on big holidays, when everyone is here, and say, "Come next week so you can see Part 2." Then we give people a postcard for the important, engaging topic that will be continued the next week.

### 2. Pay attention to the titles

About six or eight weeks before we launch a series, our senior leaders brainstorm specific titles for each week's worship service.

The Arts Team takes what we come up with, and they hold a similar brainstorming meeting without us. They're just as excited as the senior leaders to present Jesus Christ in a relevant way for those who don't go to church. The Arts Team should share the mission, vision, and values of the senior leaders.

### 3. Promote the series

Four weeks before the series starts, a Communications Team designs and produces postcards. The details of the series are featured on our website, our newsletter, and a press release. We mail the cards to neighbors one week in advance. Our congregation receives the cards in the bulletin, and they invite other people. (**Related PDF File:** [Postcard for the "Lost" series](#))

The media team begins to create video elements, including short teasers on the topic that we promote in the service weeks ahead of time.

In your church are high-capacity, talented, and committed people who do things you cannot: create logos, video, media, postcards. If you let people know what you're trying to do, let them use their time and talents for the cause, and give them enough lead time, they can do it.

### 4. Build and rehearse

Two weeks ahead, we build and rehearse. We build stage sets and rehearse the dramas. The band and vocalists start practicing. We try to keep any set designs covered until the weekend of the event.

Finding elements for the set can be challenging. Our "Lost" series stage design featured a plane crashed on our platform. Someone found a plane, then our stage designer made a trailer to haul the aircraft from Atlanta.

For another series, based on the movie *Signs*, we transformed the auditorium into a cornfield. The room filled with fog. We bought the movie soundtrack, and positioned lights to penetrate the darkness.

Every week doesn't have to be a huge production, though. Between series, we address specific topics that need only one week, and we rest and build relationships.

### 5. Launch the series

We emphasize the first week to start strong. When people come, they must feel the series is helpful and that it's more than entertainment. We want to capture and hold people's attention so we can offer people Christ.

I've learned to hand the ball to people. Give them parameters and get out of their way. You don't want under-challenged leaders. If you let them serve without you, you'll be amazed how far they can go.

### **Start where you are**

If you've never had a planning process for your worship services, you can't immediately install a one-year planning process. But start where you are. Take steps in the direction that God is calling you, by building teams and processes to leverage the talents and abilities of God's people. Maximize every gathering, not just to have a great moment or wow experience, but so that people can meet Jesus.

When you lift up Jesus, people will be drawn to him and want to help because they love him. Oswald Chambers explains this in the title of his famous devotional, *My Utmost for His Highest*. We can't give a little bit of love and devotion to the loftiest mission in the world. We have to live all-out for God because we have only a limited time on earth.