**Musicians Panel**

**Session with:**
Matt Stinton
Mike Pope
Bobby Strand
Joe Volk
David Whitworth
Chris Greely
Luke Hendrickson
Paul McClure
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**Paul and Matt facilitate and ask questions:**

**Mike:** He his the band director, the guitar leader, and he is a guitarist
**Bobby**: Producer and guitarist
**Joe:**Drummer
**David:** Drummer and lead section leader for drummers at Bethel
**Chris:** Producer, leads front of house, guitarist, mixer
**Luke:** Keyboard, mixes for broadcast at Bethel

**Matt:** “What is the funniest thing you’ve seen on stage?”

**Joe:** I was playing at a conference. It was a free culture and I was just playing and an older woman comes on stage with two shofars and she blows two at once. Then she tried to do three at one time and the pastor’s wife got up and shut it down.

**Bobby:**Jeremy was leading and a lady came up and she had a piece of paper that she set at his feet. It said “Could you please play these songs…” I think they were Coldplay songs. It was a mash up of Bethel and Coldplay

**David:**I used to do conferences with Ihop and there was a lady with a shofar and she blew it into my back and it made a funny vibration in my back. I kind of felt the Lord though…

**Mike:**There was a guy that would always scream during soft moments. It bothered Brian and it was an intense quiet moment and the guy screamed and Brian, “went SHHHHH…” In the stream you can hear the guy say, “Ok Brian.”

**Chris:**Holds up iPhone and shows a hilarious video of a horrible (deliberate) sound check.

**Paul:** “What do rehearsals look like and helpful suggestions?”

**Mike:**Rehearsals can be really scattered in the past. It’s easy to just show up and figure stuff out. We have a bit of a formula now. We check drums first in our ears. The we go drums and bass. We add instruments one by one quickly until ears are right. Then we run songs. If it’s a song to arrange, we take time but if they are familiar we just hit the important bullet points in the song.

**Paul:**“What do you look for in a leader for rehearsal?”

**David:**Getting songs quickly. We get songs on Thursday for Sunday. We try to quickly run familiar songs than songs we need to rehearse extra. The more input, the better. Communication to your band a bit ahead of time is better. Give a rough road map.

Chris: Over the course of three years we put in a huge amount of rehearsal. When Bobby moved here he had to learn 53 songs in one week. It is huge to have every band member come to rehearsal knowing his or her stuff perfectly. Everyone work hard to learn the song just so you can feel them instead of thinking about them during rehearsal.

**David:** The more you know parts, the more confidence in the spontaneous. You definitely don’t want to over think things while you are playing. You want to know parts inside and out. That makes an audible from the leader easier.

**Matt:** Rehearsal may slow down but it never stops. You can always grow more as a musician. If you aren’t growing you aren’t moving.

**Matt:**“You have a ton of chemistry, how did that happen?”

**Bobby:** Chemistry is huge. It starts off stage. That’s huge. Doing life together during the week is so important. Being friends is first priority.

**David:**Your outside friendship and life will directly influence. It’s a respect thing. It’s not competitive, it’s an understanding. Joe and I always want to compliment each other. This helps us gel.

**Luke:**Being onstage, it is helpful to have people that are teachable. That softens egos and keeps people from offense.

Mike: Friendship off stage is so important for longevity. Have a vision for what you want to create long term and build it outside the church walls. It’s family.

**Chris:** On the musical side, all of us listen to the same music. Sound check songs are off the records off the records we listen to. It allows you all to be on the same page. There should be no competition. There are no hurt feelings when people give suggestions.

**David:** Respect your sound guy. We trust him.

**Mike:**Treat your sound guy as part of the band. Without Chris’s input, we aren’t nearly as good. We won’t accomplish what we are supposed to accomplish without him.

**Matt:** “How do you support the vision of the leader?”

**Mike:** Communication. What’s the vision? Like the record? Always air on the side of over communication. Watch your worship leader; build that community off stage too. Honor the point. You see the Lord moving on someone, you honor it regardless. I’m here to serve you and to communicate what the Lord has given you.

**Joe:**I think you have to have a servant’s heart.

**Luke:**hand signals are important. Talk through what signal would mean chorus or verse. It allows for everyone to be on the same page.

**David:**Follow your worship leader. If they jump off the cliff go with them. Even if you look dumb, you’re in it together.

**Paul:**“how do you practically mess on stage musical?”

Bobby: Having a guy like Chris out front having the vision in mind. It’s about focusing on other instruments too, not just yours.

**Joe:** Serving the worship leader is big but so is serving your band members. Add to the sound, don’t just play a bunch. Play what translates well not just the part.

**Chris:** Don’t be selfish about your own instrument. That’s not a great position to be in ever. If your tone isn’t fitting into the rest of the band what are you doing?

**Luke:** Learning the record is a great idea. The producer planned parts. Learning parts ahead of time can help the overplaying.

**Paul:** “How do you band lead and is it practical in a smaller church?”

**Mike**: Less is more. I’m a point of communication between the band and the worship leader. Where are they going? Build history. Learn the “ticks” of your worship leaders. Know what their body language means. The band-leader doesn’t always call every chord or every section. The band can start relying solely on that person. That can lead to a band that doesn’t learn parts because the leader can be a crutch. We plan an arrangement and I don’t really remind them their parts. I call more parts during the spontaneous. Having one person in the band that can see what’s going on and has history. Also determining if you need that depends on the skill level of the band. On tour, I don’t really need to lead much. If you have solid players you don’t really need it.

**Joe:** I love Mike’s approach. Having a strong relationship with the Lord. Mike trusts our spirit too.

**Luke:** Micromanaging can make you feel like a robot. I want to play from my heart with some direction.

**Mike:** I’m not the band boss. I’m a communicator. I keep us on the same page.

**Matt:** It is really nice to have Pope in my ears because he may say “I don’t know where you are going,” which can really help the leader help connect vision and practical for a set.

**Mike:** I never want to worship leader to feel that I am overriding them.

**Chris:** Mike will go out of the way to try to get songs from leaders to try to make sure we are prepared.

**Matt:** “Talk about how each of you approach spontaneous moments.”

**Bobby**: It’s important to know your leader and their style. Where do they typically go? Be super creative. Sometimes it can be uncomfortable to step out but it can be really rewarding.

David: In those moments we have to know your leader but also know what’s happening in the room. Read the room for yourself. What is Holy Spirit telling me?
There was a moment in South Africa where the congregation was singing a really anointed bridge and that is what led us back into the song.

**Joe:**Being bold is huge and that might come with some trial and error. Sometimes you read a moment wrong.

**Chris:** Front of house it seems like the Holy Spirit is a stream of consciousness. I know when leaders are going somewhere. Even sound people can be in that flow. They have to be prepared too.

**Bobby:** You have to lead yourself into worship before you can lead people. Don’t zone out on stage. Be engaged on stage.

**Mike:**I have a few practical tips too. Know when to play but more importantly know when not to play. Use good musical judgment to create moments. Some leaders want the musicians to create a feel and some want to create it for themselves. Also know when to come back in give moment’s time to breath. Give yourself time to settle on a part and if you hear another member play on something the Lord is moving on, compliment it. Same with the leader. If there is a good vocal melody, I’ll play it on my guitar too. DO this appropriately.

**Paul:**“Luke how do you approach spontaneous moments on keys?”

**Luke:**A good thought is to repeat the previous progression. Generally this will create a springboard. Create a safe place for musicians. We have great leaders that will cover you here. Encourage a place of boldness while covering them when they are great or not so great.

Mike: In creating that safe place, learn to live with and move on from mistakes. We are all in a learning process. There is no faster way to stress out and burn out if you focus on missing it after a set. There’s nothing wrong with being a perfectionist, but don’t think you are loud enough to mess up the Lord in the room. Learning to laugh at yourself.

Chris: The bass is one of the most powerful instruments in spontaneous moments. You can change so much by coming in too late or too early. You can change a mood so much.

**Bobby:** It’s important to encourage and affirm your team. Go out of your way to compliment and support each other.

**David:** Affirmation on stage from your worship leader is huge. Encourage your musicians by smiling and nodding, it goes a long way.

**Paul:**“Loops and click. Talk about it.”

**David:** Drums and keys both have click channels. If there are track heavy songs, Luke runs the click. I will run it in other songs. Click is you best friend. Everyone can gel together when a click is present.

**Luke:**Click doesn’t restrict you, it empowers you. You can play with so much more confidence. There are great clicks you can get on your phone. We run our click through Ableton live. If there is a song happening, click is on all the time. Spontaneous moments, click is usually on half the time. Talk ahead of time.

**Joe:** If you feel like your leader is going a different direction, treat a click as you would an instrument.

**Matt:**If people say “click kills spontaneity,” I would have to say “when did excellence stop the holy spirit?”

**Luke:**If you want to play tracks, Ableton live is the best option for you. Ableton allows you to split up tracks so you can repeat parts.

**Joe:**The cheaper versions are nice, but you should probably go with the Standard. It is $400.

**Matt:** “If people are running on a limited budget, what are their first steps to improve tone?”

**Mike:**Guitars, Practice. Gear won’t make you sound better. If you could buy one piece of gear, get a solid amp. You could have a solid guitar but it’ll sound bad through an amp.

**Bobby:**In-ears are huge. Not having stage bleed is so important. Avioms aren’t that expensive, it’s so important.

**Chris:** These guys have amazing tone.. they way David hits the snare is so solid. Joe’s strike is more aggressive, but man. Knowing how to tune your drums is so important. Bobby’s guitar tone is amazing. It’s about getting the exact same tone on any gear. A lot of it is in his fingers. There are great budget options. Vox ac15, fender deluxe, ac30s.

**David:** tuning is massive. Get new heads on a junk set and tuning it right and get you a great sound. Great sticks help. You don’t have to buy all new stuff, just lock in.

**Joe:**Know what pairs well. You could have the right stuff but you could put the wrong heads on it.

**Luke:** Nords are great keyboards ($3000), get reason ($300) and a midi keyboard ($300). You could spend a lot less. It will take time but you can get great sounds.

**Matt:**Keyboardists love you play what is in front of them. We don’t like to buy new stuff like guitarists. Time, effort and finances put value on it.

**Mike:**Be happy with what you have. Take time to know what you have. Know everything to make sure you really know what is working. Know what your gear can accomplish!