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Leading worship offers Johnson opportunity to share struggles, victories

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GRAPEVINE—Any given week, Jeff Johnson can be found leading worship at Bible studies in several North Texas churches, sandwiched between DiscipleNow weekends, camps, conferences and retreats.

Sunday nights, he leads worship for a college Bible study at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Monday nights, he leads worship for Dallas Metro Bible study at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano. Twice a month, he leads Sunday morning worship at Fellowship of Stonebridge, a new church in McKinney. And that doesn't even include serving at his home church, 121 Community Church in Grapevine.

Jeff Johnson

He also has led worship for Baptist General Convention of Texas student missions gatherings and a fall retreat for the student ministries of the Baptist Convention of New York, as well as participating in a mission trip to southern Australia, where he led worship for a chapel being started on the ski slopes.

While leading worship, Johnson shares his life experiences in hopes of connecting students to Christ.

“I have found that when I share my life struggles, it is more powerful than any textbook wisdom that I could ever share,” he explained.

“Sometimes it's a hard thing to do, but it allows people to relate to something real so they can connect with someone who is even more real-Jesus.”

Johnson was reared in a Lutheran church, but when he was at Texas Tech University, he began attending Indiana Avenue Baptist Church in Lubbock and the Paradigm Bible study for students. He believes God used those influences—along with the Passion conference for students—to change his life.

At Passion '98, Johnson realized that while he had been taught about God all of his life and attended church, he didn't have a personal relationship with Christ.

“Christy Nockels (of Watermark) was singing a song called 'Knowing You,' and it was the words of the song that impacted me,” he said. “I knew so much about God growing up in church, but I did not actually know Christ as my Savior. Through this song, I was also inspired to be on stage—singing about him and proclaiming who he is.”

At the Passion event, Johnson also learned worship is more than music; it is a lifestyle that glorifies God through a daily walk with Christ. That idea has

become the central theme of his message as a worship leader.

“The most important thing when talking of worship and music is to understand that worship is not just music ... although music can speak directly to people when nothing else can,” he said. “Music is a powerful form of communication, and it is often a way for people to remember words and messages. It is a way for us to be ushered into God's throne room and to allow us to respond to what God is doing in our lives.”

After graduating from Texas Tech, Johnson was ready to enter a business career. But when he went for a job interview, he became convinced God had other plans.

“I applied for a position at a bank and interviewed with a man named Michael Moss,” he explained. “After seeing my resume and noting that I was on a church praise team (at Indiana Avenue), Michael mentioned that he was helping to start a church in the Dallas area and asked if I would want to help with the music side. After talking for an hour about the church start and nothing about the job at the bank, I felt God calling me to Dallas to be a part of 121 Community Church.”

Johnson moved to the Dallas area to lead worship part-time at 121 Community Church while beginning a career with a computer programming company. The church began in 1999 with 49 people meeting in small groups in area homes. Today, 121 Community Church in Grapevine has three Sunday morning services.

After three years of working full-time in the corporate world and leading worship only on the weekends, Johnson prayed for God's direction as he felt called to begin an itinerant ministry.

“It was a huge step of faith,” he said. “I left the company I was working for in November 2002, and I began walking in God's will. If there is one word to proclaim what God has been throughout the course of my life, it is

'faithful.' God rewards his children greatly for listening to him and following his will and not our own. He will always provide, and that has been amazing to experience.”

As God continued opening doors for Johnson, it led to the production of a worship CD, “Shaken.” Johnson wrote the title song as an expression of his desire that people become so shaken by God's love they can't help but be moved to the next step in their walk with him.

“My prayer is wherever God leads, I would be able to look back and say that he used my life to make his name known,” Johnson said. “I am thankful every day for where God has brought me and for the opportunities to lead worship. I pray that the music I make promotes the kingdom, changes lives and leads people to a deeper love of our Creator and our Savior.”

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