

THE SONGS WE SING

CHOOSING SONGS THAT ARE BIBLICALLY RICH,
SINGABLE, AND SERVE YOUR CHURCH WELL

CBU WORSHIP SUMMIT 2026
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THE SONGS WE SING

WORSHIP LEADERS AND THEIR HATS

What kinds of things do we do?



THE SONGS WE SING

PRIMARY ROLES



SHEPHERD



SERVANT



FARMER



EPHESIANS 4:11-16

WORSHIP PASTOR AS SHEPHERD

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.



JOHN 13:12-16

WORSHIP PASTOR AS SERVANT

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.



1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9

WORSHIP PASTOR AS FARMER

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

THE SONGS WE SING

TWENTY-YEAR RULE

If someone grows up in our church for 20 years, how well will they know God from what we sing?





WHY DO WE SING?

God commands it
(Psalm 96:1-2, Colossians 3:16)

Singing teaches and instructs us in truth
(Colossians 3:16)

Singing unites us as the body of Christ

Singing expresses our emotions to God in healthy ways

Singing gives voice to our worship and adoration

Singing proclaims the gospel to one another and to the world

Singing connects us to the global and historical church

THE SONGS WE SING

DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

You need something to help you make decisions that is not dependent on personal preferences or popularity.



THE SONGS WE SING

FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

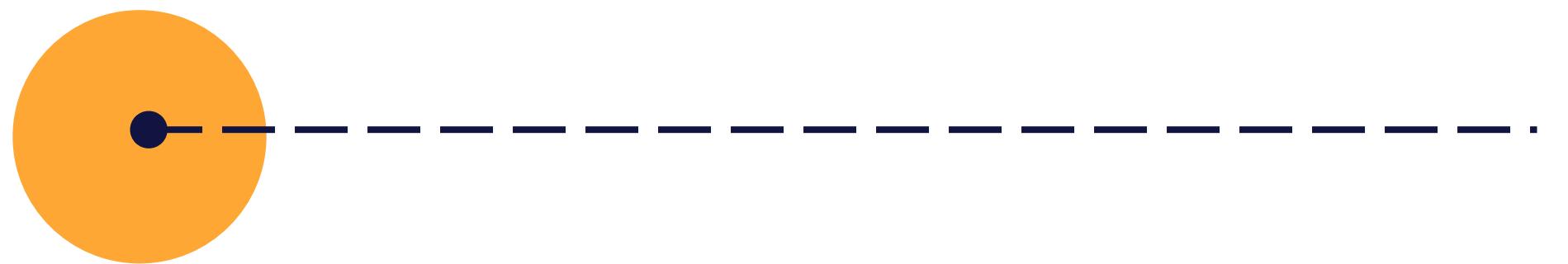
Non-negotiable element

Is there anything in the text that contradicts the Scripture?

How well do the lyrics communicate the truth?

Are there lyrics that are questionable?

Can you adapt a lyric if you need to do so?

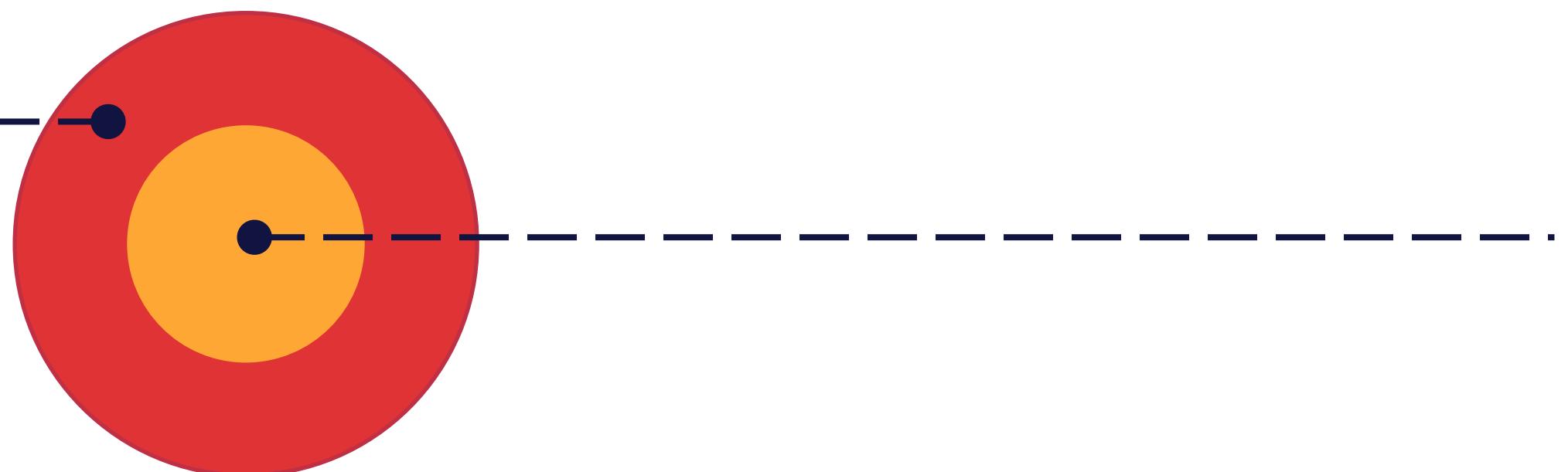


THE SONGS WE SING

FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

**Objective/
Subjective**

Is the song communicating
information or expressing
feelings?

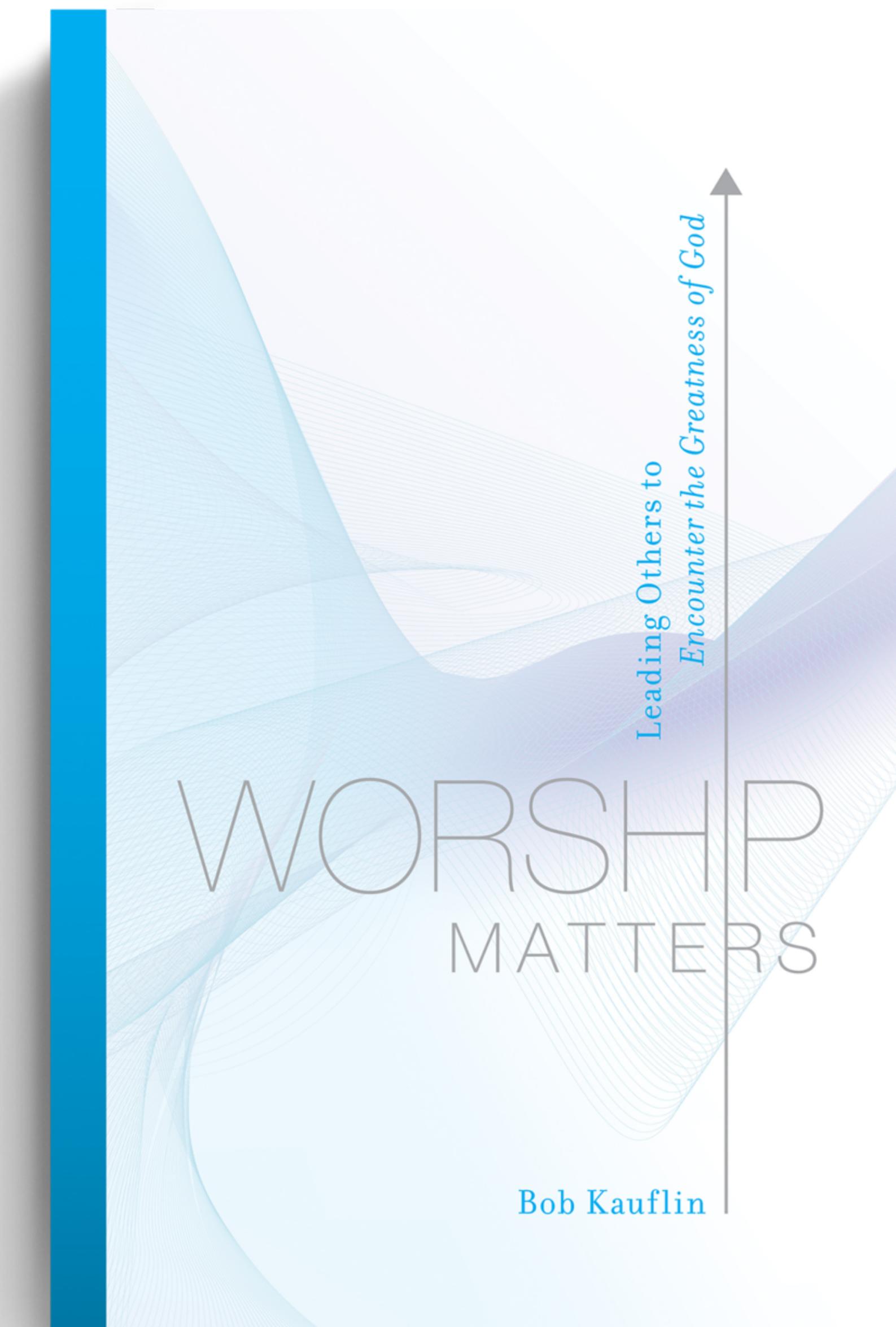


Is it True?

THE SONGS WE SING

LYRICAL CATEGORIES

- ◆ **Objective lyrics** - tell us something true about God that helps us know him better
- ◆ **Subjective lyrics** - express responses to God such as love, longing, conviction, or adoration
- ◆ Both are modeled in Scripture.
(Psalm 86)

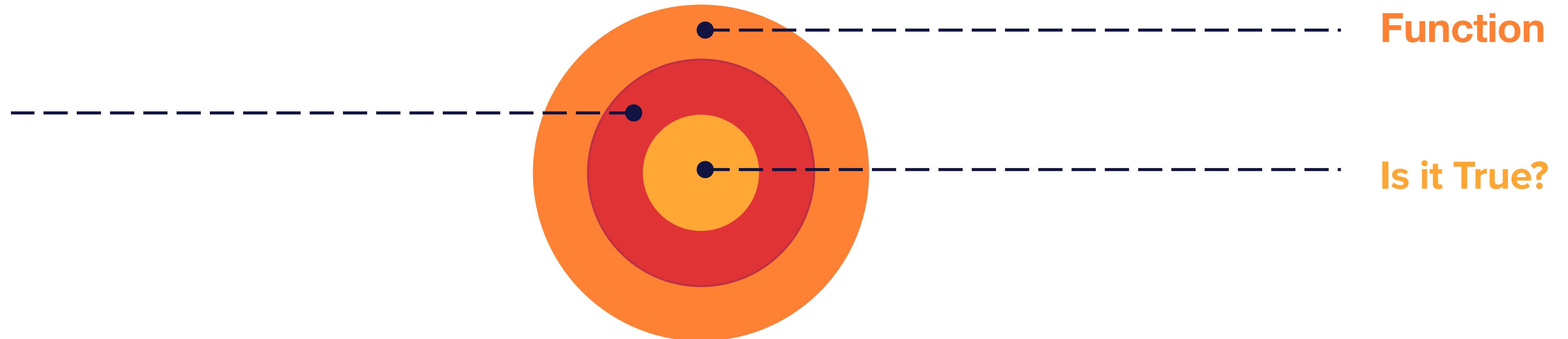


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FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

What is the song “doing” in
the worship service?

Objective/
Subjective



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FUNCTIONS OF WORSHIP ELEMENTS

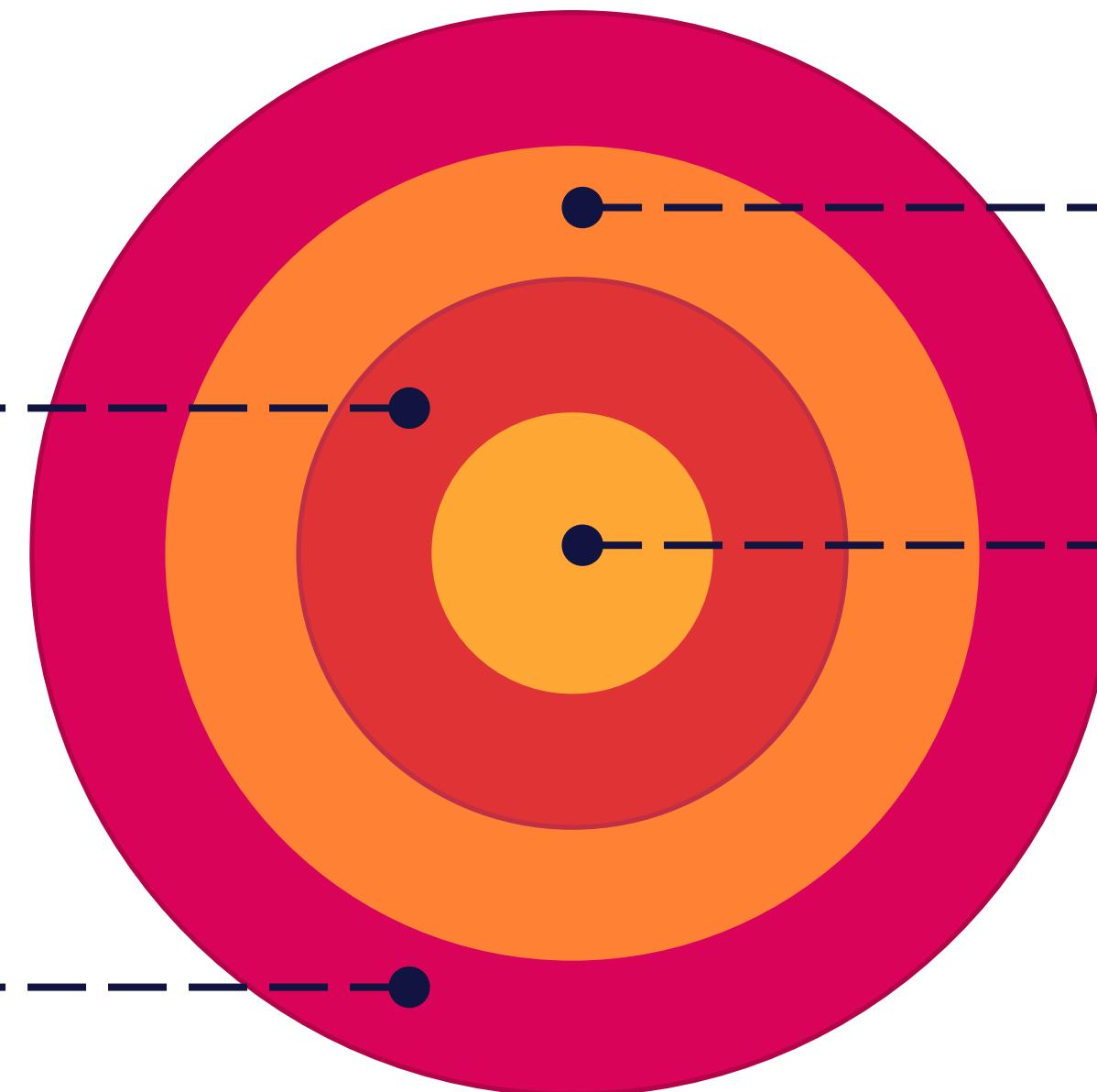
- ◆ Gathering
- ◆ Proclamation
- ◆ Adoration
- ◆ Confession of Sin
- ◆ Expiation
- ◆ Confessions of Faith
- ◆ Instruction
- ◆ Dedication
- ◆ Commission
- ◆ Prayer
- ◆ Accompanying the Ordinances

THE SONGS WE SING

FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

Objective/
Subjective

Is it
Congregational?



Function

Is it True?

Does it encourage people to
participate or to observe?



WORSHIP IS CORPORATE IN NATURE

Corporate worship is not just a collection of individuals who happen to be worshiping God in the same room.

We gather together as the Body to celebrate what God has done in our lives throughout the week and to glorify Christ who is the Head of the Body.

This is patterned in the Old and New Testaments.

THE SONGS WE SING

FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

Is this the right song
for **your church?**

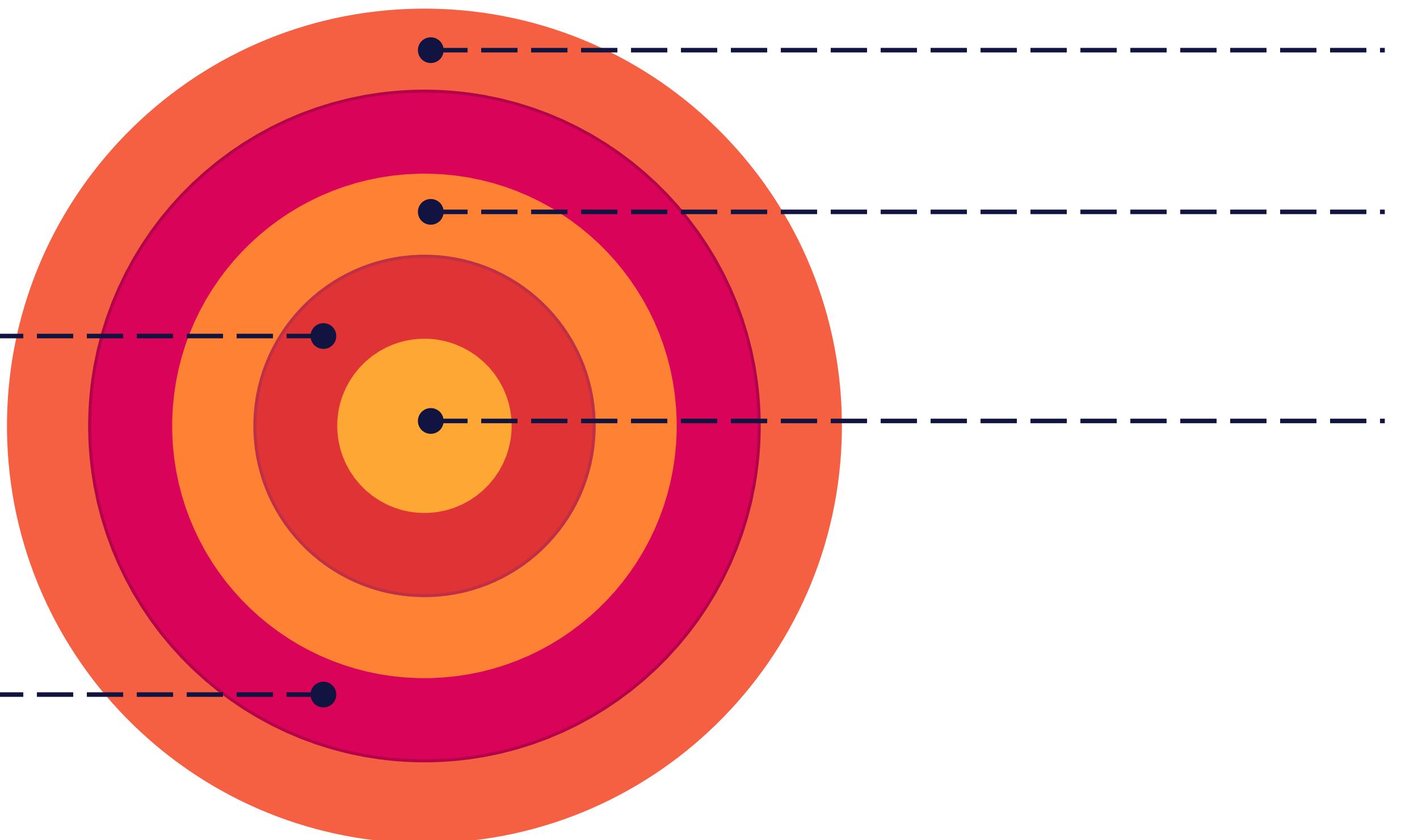
**Objective/
Subjective**

**Is it
Congregational?**

**Is it a
Fit?**

Function

Is it True?



THINK LIKE A MUTUAL FUND

Allocation of resources across different types of investments to minimize risk and maximize return

You need to become an expert in your congregation. Who are they? Where have they come from?

The music you sing should reflect who the people are.

On a regular basis, you should take some time to examine if the makeup of the congregation has changed over time.

If so, time to rebalance.



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FRAMEWORK FOR MUSIC SELECTION

Pick the
Arrangement

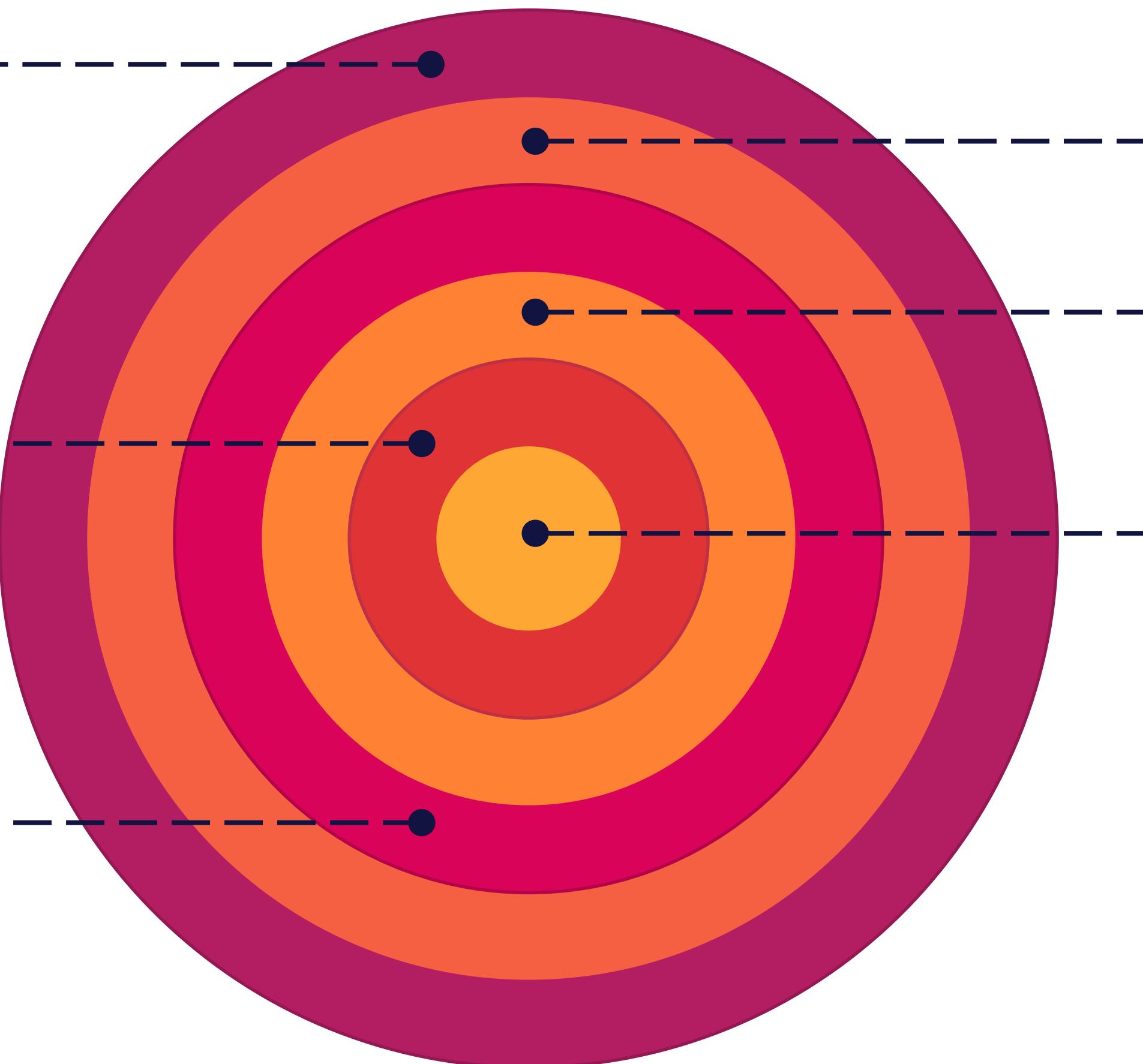
Objective/
Subjective

Is it
Congregational?

Is it a
Fit?

Function

Is it True?



Find the **best** arrangement
for your context.

THE SONGS WE SING

ARRANGEMENT ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

- ◆ **Range:** One-octave range is best for congregational songs
- ◆ **Melody:** Step-wise motion and predictable patterns are best
- ◆ **Rhythm:** Natural word stress and syncopation
- ◆ Key for the instrumentalists
- ◆ How close to the original?
- ◆ What is the quality of the arrangement? Does it enhance the original song, or is it diminished?
- ◆ Does it facilitate congregational participation, or does it highlight the skills of the leader/band/vocal team?
- ◆ What resources are provided? (Vocal and Instrumental parts, tracks, rehearsal guides, etc.)



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USE MORE CRAYONS!

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BEST PRACTICES FOR SONG SELECTION

- ◆ Build a core repertoire
- ◆ Balance old and new
- ◆ Repeat as needed
- ◆ Get feedback
- ◆ Discover new (and old) songs



THE SONGS WE SING

**The songs we sing today become the
theology our people carry tomorrow.
Choose wisely, sing deeply, and watch
God's truth take root.**