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**Worship in Modern-Day Society: Evaluating Music of Corporate Worship**

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Background

Church services today incorporate a wide variety of worship music, stylistically and lyrically, depending on the congregation. Some churches place great importance on the gospel being included in the songs, while others focus more on the emotions felt during the songs. While there are churches that maintain an eclectic mix of the two, other churches have a significant imbalance in the worship songs they choose to sing each week. Matt Boswell says, “Every worship experience, in its order and content, is an expression of the congregation’s liturgy. It communicates something about your church, your doctrine, and the order of your priorities.”<sup>1</sup> As the local church gathers, there must be a clearer knowledge of why mankind has been created to worship as well as God’s design for worship both corporately and individually. The church gathers to worship vertically, personally, and horizontally.

### Statement of the Purpose

There has been much deliberation on what songs are best for worship within the church. Over the last few decades, personal preference, and not the Word of God, seems to motivate song selection. Scott Connell warns that song choice should not be based upon “popularity, preference or pressure.”<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this research paper is to explore God’s design for worship songs within the local church and provide detailed biblical guidance on worship with God. Scholarly wisdom, the Word of God, and church service evaluations are the primary sources for this paper. Response to God through song is evident throughout Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt Boswell, *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 70.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Scott Connell, “Why We Sing” (video lecture in WRSP 635 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2023).

Psalm 57 declares, “I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations” (Psalm 57:9, English Standard Version). God’s Word gives believers guidance on praising God in ways that are pleasing and acceptable to Him. To equip the church family with worship God’s way, worship leaders and pastors must be diligent in telling and retelling the story of Jesus Christ in creative ways.

### **Research Questions**

Various ways to apply these discoveries will be discussed in detail to assist the church in worshiping God on His terms. Specific research questions include: 1) What does the Bible say about worshiping God’s way? 2) How can the church equip their people better with more biblical worship? What is working? What needs to change? As these questions are explored, the specific focus will be lyrics of hymns and praise songs in general within the church setting. A focused study on Keith and Kristyn Getty’s lives, music writing, and ministry is included in the biblical worship research, as their music is primarily used for the recital portion of this project.

### **Research and Recital Plans**

The recital will include selections from the Gettys library of music and a few additional songs that fit the model of a five-component worship song assessment. These components include 1) A high view of God, 2) Jesus, the gospel story, 3) My story and personal reflection, 4) Call to Respond, and lastly, 5) The commission. The recital will follow these guidelines.

## Chapter Two: Biblical and Literature Review

### Biblical Review: Worship According to God's Word

The Word of God provides ample insight into all things related to holy worship. First, mankind has been created for worship and relationship with God. As Hannah prayed in the first book of Samuel, "There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God" (1 Samuel 2:2). A.W. Tozer writes, "God created man in His own image, and out of that flowed the marvelous dynamic of worship. Adam and Eve's unique purpose in the garden was to bring pleasure, joy, and fellowship to God, which is the foundation of all genuine worship."<sup>1</sup> Everyone worships something. However, not all have eyes and hearts fixed on the One who truly deserves all the praise. Through His Word, God calls mankind to worship the Father and His Son, Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit. The book of Revelation says, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will, they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). The book of Romans says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). Tozer expounds,

When a man falls on his knees and stretches his hands heavenward, he is doing the most natural thing in the world. Something deep within compels him to seek someone or something outside of himself to worship and adore. In his unredeemed condition, man has lost the way and cannot clearly define the object of his wistful adoration, and so his search takes him far from God. When he does not find God, man will fill the void in his heart with anything he can find. That which is not God can never satiate the heart exclusively created for God's presence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Tozer, *Purpose of a Man*, 31-32.

Many choose to worship worldly, temporary things and do not consider the eternal implications of this choice. However, the truest kind of worship comes from a relationship with God. Bob Kauflin explains, “Better than having all the power, wealth, talent, intelligence, or pleasure you could ever imagine is being a worshiper of God forever.”<sup>3</sup>

Second, Christ followers find strength through corporate communion and worship with the heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus. Scripture says,

No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).

No person or thing can transform a man like the gift of a relationship with God. In its purest form, worship exists to be a conversation between God and the people He loves. Rory Noland suggests, “The fact that God initiates worship completely changes the dynamics of a church service. On Sundays, we’re not simply attending a church service; we’re going, by divine invitation, to meet with God and his people. Gathered worship is more than a teaching time, more than a Christian sing-along; it is a divine invitation to encounter and experience God.”<sup>4</sup> This daily walk and journey with God empower the believer to face hardship and trials. Vaughan Roberts shares, “On our own, we are weak and frightened, but with the Spirit’s help, we can have the courage to stand up for Christ in a hostile world.”<sup>5</sup> The Psalmist Asaph writes, “For behold, those who are far from You shall perish; You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to

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<sup>3</sup> Bob Kauflin, *True Worshipers: Seeking What Matters to God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Rory Noland, *Transforming Worship: Planning and Leading Sunday Services As If Spiritual Formation Mattered* (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 136.



You. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works” (Psalm 73:27-28).

When a body of believers gather to worship, they desire to honor God, receive personal guidance from the Word, remember the sacrifice and whole story of Jesus, and encourage one another. Believers in the New Testament church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The purpose of corporate worship includes praise to God, teaching, and equipping the body with the power of the Spirit through His Word. Scripture also specifies for the church to meet, “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-21). Communion with God and fellow believers is meant to enrich, encourage and build one another up. Vernon Whaley says, “Friendship with a comrade is built on mutual trust, fellowship, communion, time together, and genuine, unreserved love. The Lord is this kind of friend.”<sup>6</sup> A gathering of believers follows this example and demonstrates this kind of friendship with one another.

In addition, free access to worshipping God only comes through belief and commitment to His Son, Jesus, the lead worshiper who is interceding for all Christians. Through the blood of Jesus, God gives followers a new covenant and direct access to His throne room, the holy of holies. Zac Hicks explains,

In the New Testament era, the people of God experienced an overhaul in their theology of worship with the revelation of Jesus Christ. All the practices and duties of the past were now

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<sup>6</sup> Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 76.

seen in light of His work, to such an extent that the book of Hebrews could call Him the ‘liturgist of the sanctuary,’ the one true Worship Leader who alone is worthy to usher us into God’s presence.”<sup>7</sup> The only reason believers worship freely now is because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Ephesians 1:7-10).

In a well-known story in God’s Word, Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman at a well. He clearly describes what the Father would do soon when it comes to worship with His people. Jesus says in John, “But the hour is coming, and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). James Hamilton explains, “Jesus is now building a new temple, not a building but believers. We are God’s temple, and God’s Spirit dwells in us.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus remains now and forever the only path that leads to an eternity with God.

Lastly, worship music must equip believers with a strong theology of the Bible as the songs tell the complete story of love, sacrifice, death, resurrection, and freedom in Jesus. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians,

He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. 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

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<sup>7</sup> Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 15.

<sup>8</sup> James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?: A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 55.

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 (Ephesians 4:10-16).

The church's corporate worship makes a significant difference in how the church family understands and relates to the Father. Matt Boswell explains, "We don't sing corporately because it was our idea. We sing because it was God's idea for His people. Since it is God who has commanded us to sing, it is God who will also determine what kind of songs we will sing."<sup>9</sup> A deeper understanding of who God is during worship services equips the congregants to live a life fully devoted to God's calling. Keith Getty says in his book, *Sing*, "We are cut from the same elements of faith, united in one Lord, filled by one Spirit, brought into one Church, to offer our praise to Him. We are being chiseled and refined through our singing, just as we are through every aspect of our lives. We are forged together through our singing together."<sup>10</sup> The chiseling and refining happen when God's Word penetrates the heart through conviction, repentance, and restoration. Peter, an apostle of Jesus, writes, "In this, you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:6-7).

Regrettably, a significant sampling of worship songs available to churches today leaves the congregants missing the opportunity to worship vertically, personally, and horizontally.

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<sup>9</sup> Boswell, *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2017), 6.

Sometimes the lyrics and music only focus on what God can do for His followers or how the worshiper feels or wants to feel, which places the focus on the human experience rather than the God of the Bible. Rory Noland expands on this thought,

I've heard numerous pastors proudly proclaim that their church's heavily music-driven worship services are designed to usher people "into the holy of holies" or take them on a "journey to God." Though such comments are well-intentioned, it is theologically incorrect to intimate that music leads us into God's presence. The writer of Hebrews clarifies that we enter "the Most Holy Place" only by the blood of Christ and that Jesus is the one who opens up for us the way to God (Hebrews 10:19-20). A certain song may cause someone to feel close to God, but it is through Jesus, and only Jesus, that we are truly drawn into fellowship with the Father."<sup>11</sup>

Songs lacking biblical substance do a disservice to the church body as they do not strengthen the individual theologies being shaped and formed during worship. In a class lecture on singing scripture, Connell explains that this practice can "store away scriptures in the memory for a hard day, so we ought to store away things that matter."<sup>12</sup> It is vital that worship leaders know the Word of God and use it weekly as the church unites to worship. Writer Kevin Navarro calls the worship leader to "fall in love with the Scriptures and the author of the Scriptures. Pray and sing over the Scriptures. Get the Word of God deep in your soul. Then articulate with clarity the hope that is within you. This is what it means to worship the Lord with accuracy."<sup>13</sup> The call to lead worship is multifaceted. However, God's Word remains central when called by the Lord to this type of ministry.

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<sup>11</sup> Rory Noland, *Transforming Worship*, 80.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Scott Connell, "Priority of Singing" (video lecture in WRSP 635 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2023).

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 43.

## Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Hymns

Singing songs corporately to the Lord exhibits a response to the call to worship from Creator God. The Gettys explain, “The Church has been, is, and always should be and can be a joyfully singing Church. In a sense, singing is part of what we exist to do.”<sup>14</sup> Ephesians five gives great clarity on the call for Christians to sing to the Lord as one unified body. Connell clarifies this passage as he explains that worship music can be “broad and have great diversity to unify generations and build one another up.”<sup>15</sup> Many hymns provide a great example to current songwriters as to how to include the Word in church songs that are written and sung together in worship. The Gettys write, “In congregational singing, there is no one-style-fits-all template. The more we interact with churches around the world, the more we are amazed at the beauty and colors and splendor of God’s creativity reflected in people singing His praise.”<sup>16</sup>

The book of Psalms overflows with examples of the church singing praise to God. For example, one Psalmist cries out, “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being” (Psalm 146:1-2).

Another passage declares,

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing! Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name! For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 100).

The New Testament Church would sing the Word of God to equip and encourage the body.

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<sup>14</sup> Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing*, xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Scott Connell, “Priority of Singing” (video lecture in WRSP 635 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing*, xv-xvi.

In an article on church singing, Matt Bowell writes, “The good news of the gospel builds us up, so we should sing to each other about it. That’s how we help one another grow as Christians.”<sup>17</sup> Vernon Whaley describes the Psalms as “an entire book of the Bible devoted to expressing truth through melody” and “a collection of poems – prayers really – that were set to music.”<sup>18</sup> He continues, “For centuries, men and women have uttered Psalms for comfort”<sup>19</sup> and encourages believers to “use the psalms as a model, praying through a fitting passage as though its words of thanksgiving were composed by you.”<sup>20</sup> Believers sing the Psalms regardless of circumstance because the truths of old still ring true today. The Gettys discuss the guidance the Psalms give on singing to the Lord at all times,

We sing as the Psalms train us to help us bring all of our lives, failures, successes, losses, gains, dreams, and ambitions into gospel perspective. Our singing can prepare us for every season of life and sustain us through every season of life. We don’t need a musical escape from our lives; we need to gaze on the Savior of our lives— our refuge and help and comfort.<sup>21</sup>

Spiritual growth within the fellowship of the church is biblical. In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he says, “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9-10). Traditional hymns provide a strong setting for learning and growing in Christ. In her thesis on hymns and spiritual gifts, Nina

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<sup>17</sup> Matt Boswell, “Sing to One Another,” *How to Build Up Your Church: A Guidebook for Members*, 2021. <https://www.9marks.org/journal/how-to-build-up-your-church-a-guidebook-for-members/>

<sup>18</sup> Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 152.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>21</sup> Getty, *Sing*, 40-41.

Tedeschi remarks, “The fact that hymns have survived the test of time demonstrates their value within both personal and corporate worship experience, and affirms the position of this research that hymns reflecting spiritual gifts are valuable in spiritual formation and growth.”<sup>22</sup> From the beginning of the New Testament church, spiritual growth has been encouraged each time the church has gathered to worship. Tozer reflects,

The Church is not some impersonal abstract floating around in space. Rather, the Church is comprised of individuals who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The health of the Church is in direct proportion to the health of each individual Christian. If the Church is to grow and be healthy, the individual Christians comprising the Church must grow spiritually.<sup>23</sup>

Generations of worshipers treasure the traditional hymns as a deep well of biblical lyrics laced with memorable, beautiful, singable melodies. Hymns of old remind all generations of times past and promises kept by a faithful God. The Gettys add, “A good hymn is an organic whole where all parts connect to one another in a thoughtful, coherent, and poetic way.”<sup>24</sup> Many believers lean towards hymns over current worship songs because the lyrical content of the hymns is so clearly related to the Word of God. Worship leaders should take time to learn and study traditional hymns both for use in service and as inspiration while choosing and writing new worship songs for congregational use. Webber says, “Paul’s teaching about worship had to do with content” and “does not give us an order of service.”<sup>25</sup> Content is key!

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<sup>22</sup> Nina Marie Tedeschi, "An Exploration of Musical Influences Throughout Worship: Enhancing Worship Experiences via Hymns Encompassing Spiritual Gifts" (2019). Doctoral Dissertations and Projects. 2061. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/2061>

<sup>23</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Crucified Life: How to Live Out a Deeper Christian Experience*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 13.

<sup>24</sup> Getty, *Sing*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 47.

Lastly, the church worships through spiritual songs. In a class Zoom call, Connell described this type of worship could be “spontaneous and from the heart.”<sup>26</sup> Not all worship to the Lord must be planned out or part of some sort of outline. Worship leader Tad Daniels writes, “While psalms are the perfect inspired word of God, and hymns are used to recite doctrinal truth, spiritual songs offer believers the opportunity to express their personal responses to God.”<sup>27</sup> Whether in the car pick up line, or during house chores, spiritual songs can overflow from the heart at any moment. Daniels goes on to explain, “The beauty of a spiritual song, much like the raw and authentic examples from the Bible, is that we are able to bring our individual and collective experiences to God. That includes our questions and fears, but also our hopes, stories of rescue, and joys.”<sup>28</sup> This represents praise that is “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). On these three types of praise Clinton Arnold writes, “For Christians, it is not the musical form that is important, it is the object of worship. Christians worship the one true God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Application: Five Components in Church Song Planning**

In the book *Rhythms of Grace*, Mike Cospers writes extensively about the importance of liturgy within church services. Cospers defines liturgy as “what the congregation is gathering to do.”<sup>30</sup> When gathered, the church is called to specific, biblical actions. He goes on to explain that

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<sup>26</sup> Connell, Class Zoom Call.

<sup>27</sup> Tad Daniels, “Sing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs,” The Worship Initiative, March 2023, <https://theworshipinitiative.com/blog/singing-psalms-hymns-and-spiritual-songs>.

<sup>28</sup> Daniels, “Sing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs.”

<sup>29</sup> Clinton Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 332.

<sup>30</sup> Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 117.



“in a fundamental sense, worship language, like all of worship, is *formative*” and “as we’re singing and praying, we’re incorporating the truths of these songs and prayers in our hearts. Truth is simultaneously taught and put into action.”<sup>31</sup> There are several themes he encourages the worship leader to include in the liturgy of worship services. Cospers encourages the church to include the holiness of God (adoration), confession, the redemption we have in Jesus (the gospel), and the charge from God into how we worship through song and other elements each week.

These components are vital to how the church meets to worship. Connell describes corporate worship as a “dialogical encounter in which God and humanity engage through Jesus.”<sup>32</sup> When the church gathers, the goal is to tell and retell the whole story of God through the corporate songs of worship. In doing this, the church body grows in knowledge and understanding of the Lord, and this equips each individual to worship Him in a deeper, more authentic way. Connell insists, “Worship should have an imprint of the gospel message (and worship leaders) should make their way to the cross”<sup>33</sup> in worship every time the church meets. To tell the full story of God’s love and grace for His people through song, five components are used to assess if the full story of God’s love and grace for His people is being told through song. These five components are: 1) A high view of God, 2) Jesus, the gospel story, 3) My story and personal reflection, 4) Call to respond, and 5) The commission.

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<sup>31</sup> Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 118.

<sup>32</sup> Scott Connell, “Why Study Theology of Worship” (video lecture in WRSP 635 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2023).

<sup>33</sup> Scott Connell, “Singing Toward and from the Sermon” (video lecture in WRSP 635 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2023).

First, songs used in worship should have a high view of God. He is worthy of the highest praise; worship songs should lift His name High and acknowledge His greatness. The church is inspired to stand in awe and reverence in response to the love of God, Creator of the universe. In the first chapter of his book *True Worshipers*, Bob Kauflin suggests that worship begins with God's grace and God is the center of worship. He goes on to explain it takes God to worship God.<sup>34</sup> In the book of Acts, Luke reminds the church,

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him (Acts 17:24-27).

God's holiness, strength, and power hold great weight as the church worships and meets with Him.

Second, corporate worship songs should tell the story of Jesus, including His birth, life, death, and resurrection. Jesus' sacrifice makes way for access to the throne of God, and without Him interceding for believers, there would be no direct communication or worship with God. On the sacrifice of Jesus, Whaley writes, "Through Him, we have been given a whole new reason to worship: eternal life through the salvation that He purchased for us *with His own blood*. Because of His substitutionary work on the cross, we are privileged to enjoy worship, free from the bondage of the law."<sup>35</sup> Because Jesus died and rose again to make a way for believers, His story should be at the forefront of corporate worship. John reminds followers of Jesus, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved

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<sup>34</sup> Kauflin, *True Worshipers*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 233.

through him” (John 3:17). Jesus exists as the Way Maker for all who put their trust in Him. Navarro writes, “Through faith in Jesus, our worship is made acceptable to the Father.”<sup>36</sup> The story of Jesus is the gospel.

Next, when the church family gathers to worship, there should be songs devoted to personal worship and reflection. This worship can include conviction, wrestling with hard times, thanksgiving, and personal conversation with God. Singing songs of praise can be very personal as it “releases an inner, nonrational part of our being that mere words cannot set free to utter praise.”<sup>37</sup> Roberts continues his thoughts on personal praise and writes, “Music elicits from deep within a person the sense of awe and mystery that accompanies a meeting with God.”<sup>38</sup>

Although much of worship is about the corporate joining together, it is also a time when church congregants meet with God one on one to express a song of lament, sorrow, pain, and joy. This can also be a time when the church can encourage those who are suffering and mourn with them in their pain. David declares to God, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies” (Psalms 22:2-4). If the church is not careful, there can be an imbalance of too much individual, personalized worship and not enough focus on God or Jesus’ story. Worshiping together provides experiences that often lead to a response.

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<sup>36</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 38.

<sup>37</sup> Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 195.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

As the church meets and encounters God, the experiences demand a response. Often this occurs through confession and repentance. Cospers expounds on this important aspect of song, “As Christians acknowledge their failures together, they testify to the world that the plausibility of the gospel is rooted not in their performance, but in the faithful mercy of God.”<sup>39</sup> Gathered worship reveals an ever-present need for forgiveness and a Savior. The church must make space for the body to sing about her brokenness and frailty without Christ. The third chapter of Hebrews explains that Christ is the High Priest of our confession and is the bridge that connects us to the Father. One verse declares, “But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope” (Hebrews 3:6).

Finally, worshipping through song includes a call for the church to action. Jesus commissions the disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). A clear call from God to share Jesus with the world is made evident as the church sings worship songs together. The church then stands equipped and ready to declare Jesus as King and Savior when leaving the Sunday service to begin another week in the world.

A balance of each of these five components is necessary when the church gathers. However, some churches place a heavier value on certain components over others. Many congregations focus heavily on the “my story” component and do not put a lot of attention on the others. In the research findings chapter of this paper, an evaluation of song selections from two separate church services is made to better understand the value of including all five components in weekly worship.

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<sup>39</sup> Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 131.

### Literature Review: Keith and Kristyn Getty

Just like Jesus sang and worshiped, believers today are called to do the same. The Gettys write about the worship of Jesus,

As He walked toward His arrest, Jesus sang. In the depths and heights of His passion, Jesus sang. Imagining the Lord Jesus singing with His followers a few short hours before the agony of the cross is an incredible and humbling thought. Even as he approached the darkest hour, our Savior was singing and leading these men in singing. Even on the cross itself, He famously quoted from a song, a psalm, that He would have grown up knowing. The songs He was trained in as a child sustained Him and, we might say, shaped Him through His most anguished moment of suffering.<sup>40</sup>

The Getty's lives and music are an inspiration for this recital's liturgical shape, story, and song outline. Their conviction in preaching Jesus through every song they sing has assisted the selection and final decisions for this performance. The Gettys find clarity in worship songs that include His truths,

As we digest the Word set in song and respond with thankfulness in our hearts to God, we are guided into His path of peace. That peace is Him. Singing, as with all these outward expressions of our worship, will never save us. But singing will help lead us to the One who will. The command to sing leads us to Christ with joy, to praise and follow Him. How kind of God to command us to do something so wonderful!<sup>41</sup>

Keith and Kristyn Getty are from Northern Ireland and have dedicated a large portion of their time to writing, recording songs, and worshiping God vocationally, as well as responding to the call of the King to sing His praise. The Gettys are most well-known for writing songs that remind churchgoers of hymns of old.

“In Christ Alone” was Keith's first hymn to be released, way back in 2001, co-written with Stuart Townend. It grew first out of an excitement to write hymns that would help twenty-first-century Christians sing, know, and embrace the incredible truths of the Lord

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<sup>40</sup> Getty, *Sing*, 3-4.

<sup>41</sup> Getty, *Sing*, 4.

in fresh language and second out of a frustration with the lack of depth in the songs that were being sung in many churches.<sup>42</sup>

The songwriting couple has seen a great desire and need for worship songs that represent God's Word. The planning of this recital has been influenced by the ministry and leadership of the Gettys.

### **Song Selections**

A High View of God is emphasized through worship. The recital begins with an acapella version of the song entitled "Hear O Israel," written by the Gettys and Stuart Townend. This song invites God's people to remember His place on the throne, to love Him with mind, strength, and soul (Matthew 22:37), and to come close to Jesus, who saves and redeems. Following this song is a newer arrangement of the song, "Holy, Holy, Holy," written by Reginald Heber in 1826 and arranged by Shane and Shane. This historic song reminds believers of God's holiness and is a call to Christ followers to always praise Him (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

The next section of songs focuses on Our Story and personal reflection in worship. The song "Speak O Lord," written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, convicts the worshiper of personal obedience, purity, and holiness before the Lord. The song set continues with two songs about the faithfulness of God to His followers. As attendees spend one on one time with God, asking Him to move and work in their hearts, they are reminded of His faithfulness in every season. "Promises" (2020) by Maverick City Worship will also be used during this personal time of worship and reflection.

At this point in the recital, the attention turns to Jesus' Story as the song "Gethsemane" by the Gettys is used to remember Jesus and the sacrifice He made on the cross. Following this

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Getty, *Sing*, 6.

song is a powerful worship song called “In Christ Alone,” written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. This song exemplifies the full life of Jesus and the Call of Response to life change as believers remember the gift and eternal freedom in Jesus. Following this moment will be the song “Still I Rise,” written by Percy Bady and performed by Yolanda Adams. This song encourages listeners to press on no matter the situation. The victory has already been won through Jesus.

The recital ends with the song “Commission Hymn” by Keith, Kristyn Getty, and Stuart Townend. The church is reminded of The Commission on God’s daily call on the church to share Jesus with those who do not know Him. The recital ends with a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s goodness, the gift of Jesus, and the new life found in Him.

## Chapter Three: Methodology of the Recital

### Introduction

The methodology of this recital lies in applying the five components of worship to all aspects of the performance. Corporate worship focuses on God, and the hope of Jesus is central to each gathering. Navarro writes,

The gospel is all about once-broken worship being restored by Jesus. We worship the Father with and through the Son by the power of His Spirit. The gospel transforms all of life into sacred space because Christ dwells in us, and we dwell in him, and this frees us from expecting too much from the gathering and yet compels us to gather and encourage one another.<sup>1</sup>

### Methodology

The central goal of this recital lies in representing God's Word through all worship and song and encouraging attendees in their walk with the Lord. Writer Tish Warren reminds believers, "The new life into which we are baptized is lived out in days, hours, and minutes. God is forming us into new people. And the pace of that formation is in the small moments of today."<sup>2</sup> Worship leaders have a great responsibility to teach and speak the name of Jesus as they lead. Navarro writes, "The body of Christ is never more unified than when it is praying together, singing together, exhorting each other, studying together, and partaking sacraments together. A worship leader, through prayer and planning, must make sure that the church to which he or she has been called is worshipping in unity week after week."<sup>3</sup> The corporate gathering of worshipers encourages and prepares believers by focusing on God's love and Jesus' sacrifice.

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<sup>1</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 90.

<sup>2</sup> Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 2016), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 145.



However, many current worship services are not Jesus-centered. Mike Cospers explains, “Celebrity pastors and worship leaders are everywhere, leading services that seem more about spectacle than substance.”<sup>4</sup> Christians must beware of the temptation to self-centralize worship and the church service. Nathan Myrick shares his thoughts on this type of celebrity worship model and expresses a few warnings to churches leaning toward this leadership style. Myrick writes, “American society seems infatuated with those who rise above the throng, and our worship of celebrity remains a powerful challenge to Christian monotheistic commitment.”<sup>5</sup> Scripture is clear that only one God sits on the throne to be worshiped and adored. The book of Isaiah says, “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god” (Isaiah 44:6).

Consumerism in a worship service tends to support this celebrity model. Myrick goes on to explain, “Many who engage in the Celebrity Model and attain a measure of success find themselves in constant contact with forces that seek to deify them; indeed, in a consumeristic culture, the desire to deify often becomes a desire to consume.”<sup>6</sup> King Solomon seeks after countless worldly pleasures in search of value and meaning apart from God. In the end, he declares, “Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 12:8). The tides are turning, and churches realize these models are not sustainable as they do not give the church body lasting nourishment. Myrick ends this article by acknowledging lifestyle worship and pastoral worship leaders are the antidotes for healing needed from celebrity worship. He

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<sup>4</sup> Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Nathan Myrick, “The Celebrity Model of Music Ministry: Characteristics and Considerations,” *The Hymn*, 69, no. 3, (2018): 25-28.  
<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/celebrity-model-music-ministry-characteristics/docview/2289418136/se-2>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-28.

explains, “Pastoral leadership in Modern Worship may indeed be a means of transforming the lifestyles of those who so identify.”<sup>7</sup>

Although there can be moments for personal reflection and testimony during worship, the overarching focus should be Jesus. Cospers defines worship as “a rhythm of life, forming our identity as a gospel-shaped people. It’s a gospel rhythm, reminding us of our dependence and Christ’s sufficiency. It’s a rhythm of grace, spurring us on to live in the life-giving outpouring of love and mercy from the God of the universe.”<sup>8</sup> Songs cannot be completely self-centered focused only on personal feelings and emotions. Sunday gatherings are purposed for remembering Jesus’ sacrifice and being encouraged by His gift to believers. Writers of *Biblical Worship* explain,

Worship is not simply a feeling experienced during a song, nor is it double-mindedly believing the right things about God while ignoring his revealed Word. Spiritual worship is not spiritual because it carries us away from this world but because the Holy Spirit is breaking into this present world and transforming the created minds, wills, affections, and actions of those united with Christ by faith.<sup>9</sup>

The Spirit of God is living and active, working in every moment as the church meets in spirit and truth.

During this recital's planning, the program's liturgy has been processed carefully. As the music is performed, the main goal is that God’s love and the gospel take center stage through the lyrics and scripture within each song. On gathering together in worship, Robert Webber explains,

Worship expresses the tension between Christ’s resurrection and His return. Although we celebrate the triumph of Jesus over the powers of sin and death, we acknowledge that the powers have not yet been put under the feet of Jesus completely. Therefore, in worship,

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<sup>7</sup> Myrick, “The Celebrity Model of Music Ministry: Characteristics and Considerations,” 25-28.

<sup>8</sup> Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin K. Forrest, Walter C. Kaiser Jr, and Vernon M. Whaley. *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory*. Biblical Theology for the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2021).

we raise a prophetic voice against the powers and express our hope in the future completion of Jesus' triumph over sin and death. This anticipatory note of worship is expressed in Word and sacrament. The songs begin by praising God and recognizing His authority.<sup>10</sup>

Acknowledging God's character, power, and the gift of Jesus are all essential parts of worship every time believers meet.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 69-70.

## Chapter Four: Research Findings

### Introduction

Two church worship service songs have been evaluated based on the five-component assessment discussed above. One service outline from each church and descriptions are provided below, with the original writers of the song lyrics noted.

#### First Baptist Church, Florida

“Living Hope.” Original words and music by Brian Johnson and Phil Wickham. © 2018

“Jesus Shall Reign.” Original words by Isaac Watts © 1719

“It Is Well With My Soul.” Original words and music by Philip Bliss © 1876

“My Soul Will Wait.” Original words and music by Bob Kauflin and Keaton Bunting © 2022

“My Jesus.” Original words and music by Matthew West, Jeff Pardo, and Anne Wilson © 2021

“O Church Arise.” Original words and music by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend © 2005

Each of these songs plays a significant part in the church’s worship service. According to the diagram below, this specific service incorporates all five components of balanced, biblical worship time with God.

**Table 1. Church Service 1**

A High View of God	“Jesus Shall Reign”	Father, kingdom, proclamation
	“My Soul Will Wait”	Solid Rock, steadfast, mercy, refuge
Jesus, the Gospel Story	“Living Hope”	Death, resurrection, Christ, victory
Our Story/ Personal Reflection	“My Soul Will Wait”	Waiting, faith
	“My Jesus”	Personal Savior, healing, redemption
Call to Respond	“It is Well with my Soul”	Assurance, trial, trust, commitment

Commission	“O Church Arise”	Nations, church, strength
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### River Hills Christian Church, Ohio

“Rattle.” Original words and music by Chris Brown, Steven Furtick, and Brandon Lake © 2020

“Never Lost.” Original words and music by Chris Brown, Steven Furtick, and Tiffany Hammer © 2019

“Build my Life.” Original words and music by Brett Younker, Karl Martin, Kirby Kaple, and Matt Redman © 2017

“Available.” Original words and music by Matt Redman, Ben Fielding, Jason Ingram, Chris Brown, and Steven Furtick © 2020

“I Surrender All.” Original words by Judson W. Van De Venter and music by Weeden © 1896

**Table 2. Church Service 2**

A High View of God		
Jesus, the Gospel Story	“Rattle”	Resurrection
Our Story/ Personal Reflection	“Rattle” “Never Lost”	Personal healing, power, and victory Personal miracles, power and victory
Call to Respond	“Available” “Build my Life” “I Surrender All”	Surrender, obedience, commitment Guidance, surrender, worship Trust, dedication, surrender
Commission		

Although these songs may be utilized within worship services at large, the first and last components of the worship song assessment are lacking. A High View of God (1) and (5) Commission are both weak in this service. A few of the songs touch on God’s power, but it is

brief and quickly shifts to Our story/Personal reflection (3). Specifically, this worship service should put more focus on a high view of God and sending the church out into the world to do His Kingdom work.

## Chapter Five: Discussion – The Heart of Worship

True worship is found when each individual heart responds sacrificially and honestly to the love of God. Scripture says, “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Each person must choose whom they will bow down to and worship. The Bible reminds readers that God’s character is holy, just, mighty, righteous, and full of love. God desires the hearts of His people. He calls mankind to praise Him and spend time with Him, but there is not one specific way to praise Him. God desires praise that glorifies His Son, Jesus, honors Him and invites His Spirit to move as He desires. God is interested in inward devotion, as reflected in David’s pursuit of God’s own heart. One verse explains, “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). King David used his whole being to praise and pursue God. Author Michael Youssef writes, “If King David were here today, he’d shout to every believer, “Clap your hands! Make a joyful noise with musical instruments! Shout praises to the Most High, the Almighty God!”<sup>1</sup> Hymns of old, the Psalms, spiritual songs, and melodies written today can all glorify God in magnificent, holy ways. Writers of *Biblical Worship* explain this beautifully,

The New Testament does not even come close to mandating a one-size-fits-all model for Christian worship. The key is the acclamation of God in Christ as the only Master of the Universe worthy of all praise, trust, and service. Even if we do not literally fall on our faces in church or kneel when we pray, our hearts and attitudes should recognize Jesus as so far superior to us in love and justice that the only proper response is unswerving allegiance to him. He has graciously gifted us beyond anything we could ever deserve; out of stupendous gratitude, we serve him and his church with those gifts for the sake of others. Corporate worship should include prayer and praise, often accompanied by music and singing. Financial offerings are appropriate, even as are other mechanisms for

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Youssef, *Empowered by Praise: Experiencing God's Presence and Power When You Give Him Glory* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2021), 6.

sharing with the poor—a key part of what “fellowship” connotes. Biblically-based preaching and teaching, the sacraments (or ordinances) of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and prayers of many different kinds should all recur regularly. After this, there is freedom for countless variations as people in many different cultures seek to implement and to contextualize these laments of worship in ways that will prove most meaningful to their cultures while preserving the purposes for which they were created.<sup>2</sup>

Churches across the country are implored to learn what God’s desires are for worship.

Eugene Peterson says, “Worship of the living and true God is essentially an engagement with him on the terms that He proposes and in the way that He alone makes possible.”<sup>3</sup> Christianity is not about being comfortable, feeling good, or being *enough*. The prophet Isaiah explains, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away” (Isaiah 64:6). Jesus came to save mankind who could never be enough, and He is worthy of all praise. The book of Romans clarifies, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith” (Romans 3:23-25). Worship leaders must be careful to build worship services that preach Jesus. Tony Costa defines New Testament worship discussed in the book of Philippians “as divinely sanctioned by God himself and willed by God as necessary to bring about the ultimate glory of God.”<sup>4</sup>

There are aspects of worship that are deeply emotional. Hicks shares,

When God summarized the central duty of humanity as loving Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37), He was saying that being human is a holistic

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin K. Forrest, Walter C. Kaiser Jr, and Vernon M. Whaley. *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory*. Biblical Theology for the Church.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 55.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Costa, *Worship and the Risen Jesus in the Pauline Letters* (Peter Lang AG International Academic Publishers, 2013), 246.



endeavor. God wants all of us, including our emotions. If God's plan is to redeem and restore us as humans, then His best for us includes a good, healthy emotional life.<sup>5</sup>

God created humans as emotional beings. However, genuine worship is so much more than a spiritual high of emotional feelings. Worship must begin with acknowledging God as sovereign and Jesus as Lord over all. Selfish worship cannot glorify God. The book of James says, "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice" (James 3:16). Jesus gave His life to save humanity, and in return, believers live a lifestyle of worship. Scripture explains, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 16:19-20).

Instead of meeting each week to experience an emotional high, believers must refocus on meeting corporately to give all worship to the glory of God and to experience His presence. Worship leaders must dedicate time each week to building services that clearly tell the story of God's design for worship, His love for people, Jesus' gift for humanity, and the freedom found in Him when He is made the Lord of all. Kauflin explains,

Worship matters. It matters to God because He is the one ultimately worthy of all worship. It matters to us because worshiping God is the reason for which we were created. And it matters to every worship leader because we have no greater privilege than others to encounter the greatness of God. That's why it's important to think carefully about what we do and why we do it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 144.

<sup>6</sup> Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 25-26.

Worship leaders must answer the call from God to lead His church biblically in every aspect of worship. A high view of God, remembering Jesus, personal reflection, confession, and the commission are all vital to the corporate worshiping church as she gathers to sing as one.

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## Appendix A: Recital Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bjart6ExM7g>