LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ENGAGING POSTMODERNs IN WORSHIP:
A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES AND METHODS UTILIZED BY TWO
GROWING CHURCHES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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By
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ENGAGING POSTMODERNS IN WORSHIP:  
A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES AND METHODS UTILIZED BY TWO GROWING CHURCHES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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The purpose of this project is to provide effective methodology for engaging postmodern worshipers. Bethel Church and The Stirring, both located in Redding, California, were the target churches for this study. Each of these culturally-relevant churches was researched for the period of five weeks and data was collected through personal interviews, worship observations, and questionnaires. The findings of this study have produced numerous techniques for appropriately engaging postmoderns.

Abstract length: 70 words.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my lovely, patient wife Cindi, and to my precious children, Gavin, Riley, Levi, and Stella.
“Engaging Postmoderns in Worship:
A Study of Effective Techniques and Methods Utilized by Two Growing Churches in
Northern California”

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There is no shortage of data underscoring the Church’s inability to effectively engage young worshipers.\textsuperscript{1} Overall church attendance has been on the decline for many years. The percentage of Americans attending church on a weekly basis has declined from fifty-one percent to only twenty-nine percent in four generations (Builders, Boomers, Busters, Bridgers).\textsuperscript{2} Postmoderns, those born after 1970,\textsuperscript{3} are the most unchurched demographic among recent generations, and the prospects of wooing them to traditional church do not seem very hopeful. Research on those born between 1977 and 1994 indicates that only four percent of teenagers understand the Gospel and have accepted Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{4} Although many theories as to why this has occurred have been offered, research shows that little has been done to circumvent this growing problem. The atrophy of the local church continues as the number of young worshipers decreases.

With the serious decline in church attendance and participation (especially among the postmodern generation), it is imperative for church leaders to be both intentional and

\textsuperscript{1} Thom S. Rainer, \textit{Surprising Insights from the Unchurched} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 34.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3} David F. Wells, \textit{God in the Wasteland} (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 46.

\textsuperscript{4} Rainer, \textit{Surprising Insights from the Unchurched}, 33.
proactive in reaching and engaging this generation. The Church’s seeming inability to appropriately engage the postmodern generation has obvious implications on the future health and mission of the Church and must be appropriately addressed. Therefore, the author of this study will examine two churches that have demonstrated success engaging and incorporating the postmodern generation into their respective worship services and faith communities. Each church was studied for a period of five weeks and various interviews with church members and church staff were conducted. Questionnaires were also administered and successive worship observations took place.

The author’s rationale for this project is based primarily on two apparent needs: the need for more specific research concerning reaching and engaging postmoderns and the need to study and report best practices among churches experiencing success in reaching postmoderns. Specifically, many churches are dying as a direct result of their inability to effectively engage young worshipers. In many churches, little has been done to correct the problem as evidenced in the continual decline of postmodern worshipers. Churches truly need tested, proven techniques for addressing this growing concern.

The Statement of the Problem

Church attendance in North America has steadily declined over the past six decades with an increased rate of decline among those under the age of forty.5 This decline is noticed worldwide. The “usual church attendance” in England was 1,542,000 in 1970 but steadily dropped to only 871,000 by 2006, despite the population of England

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5 Ibid., 34.
The British-based group Christian Research forecasts that the number of practicing Muslims will outnumber practicing Christians in England in only a few decades. Although the North American decline is not yet as severe as it is in Europe, the United States is not far behind. George Barna’s research, as indicated in his graph below, shows the proportion of those who are outside the faith is growing with each generation. To date, it does not seem like this problem has been met with appropriate responses from the Church, and consequently, the decline continues to worsen.

![The Proportion of those “Outside” Christianity](Reproduced with written permission from the Barna Group)

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What can churches do to effectively combat this problem? The purpose of this project is to answer this question by providing proven methodology and tested techniques that have been successfully employed by the two different churches being studied. It is important to disclose that both churches are located in Redding, California and therefore possess a demographic that is representative of the community in which the churches reside. Thus, the methodology that is employed by the churches may not be universally applicable in different geographical and demographical applications. Specifically, what works here might not work in other locations and with other younger generations. That noted, the two churches being researched have demonstrated clear success engaging postmodern worshipers. Young congregants make up an unusually high number of the total number of worshipers in each of these churches. Furthermore, each of the churches has demonstrated continual, steady growth. Additional information regarding each of the churches being studied is provided in Chapter Three.

**Terminology**

There are multiple definitions that are commonly used to describe the postmodern generation. It is generally agreed, however, that post-modernity began to arise in the 1970s. In this project, the term “postmodern” worshiper will refer to anyone born after 1970. Although the term “postmodern” does carry with it philosophical associations, for this study the term will be specifically applied to the aforementioned age demographic. Thus, the postmodern age includes those worshipers ages one through forty. However, because parents often decide what church their children shall attend, and due to the

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difficulties in attaining and releasing information concerning minors, and because narrowing the focus provides more productive results for the purposes of this thesis, the researcher of this project will focus on postmodern worshipers ages eighteen to forty (1971-2010).

In addition to clarifying the demographic for this study, the researcher will investigate the entire worship service rather than a singular aspect of the worship service. For the purpose of this project, “worship” shall include (unless otherwise indicated) any of the components that relate to the total worship experience occurring within the sanctuary, including (but not limited to) preaching, music, ambiance, media, and hospitality.

**Statement of Limitations**

This project is limited in the following ways. First, the researcher studied only two churches which have demonstrated clear success engaging postmoderns. This is limiting in that, although the two churches researched possess a methodology that attracts young worshipers, two churches cannot fully represent the entire Church population. There are more methods and techniques for reaching the postmodern generation that likely exist and may not be employed by the two churches being studied.

Second, this project is not an exhaustive study aimed at exploring the philosophical thought processes and behaviors of the postmodern generation. This project seeks to provide a practical framework of the methodology used for reaching young worshipers by identifying techniques that have been successfully employed by two
specific churches. This project is intended to be practical and thus the research is specific to its application.

Third, this project is limited in that it evaluates only that which occurs within the sanctuary during the respective worship services of each of the churches being studied. Ministries and services provided by the church such as childcare, support groups, and small group Bible studies are obviously important aspects of the total church experience for postmoderns and other generations as well. However, the focus of this study is limited to the activities and events which occur during the worship in the designated worship center area.

Fourth, the methods and techniques discussed in this study have been proven to be effective for the specific congregations of the churches being researched. It should be noted that both churches are located in Redding, California, and therefore possess the same culture. Thus, the methods and techniques that are effective in this geographical location may not be as effective in other areas. In addition, the churches being studied seem to possess a more charismatic theology and therefore the data gathered may be more applicable to churches which possess a similar theology.

Biblical Perspective

The basis of this thesis is rooted in Scripture. The need for the Church to remain effective in speaking the “current language” and to successfully engage all people and age groups is a practice that can be seen in the life of Jesus. Christ’s earthly life manifests the importance of relevancy. This is seen throughout Scripture through numerous examples, encounters, and teachings. Jesus deeply loved all people regardless
of their age and station in life and He spoke clearly and effectively to common people despite the harsh criticism and scrutiny of the religious leaders.

The writer of Hebrews indicates that the followers of Christ recognized and appreciated the fact that Christ was relevant and effective in His communication. Hebrews 4:15 (NIV) states, “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” People can relate to a God who came and endured what they endure on a daily basis. Christ was successful in His communication to His people and was intentional with regard to how He carried it out. This communicates not only Jesus’ obedience to His Father but also the value Christ attached to being culturally relevant.

Christ also conveys the importance of relevancy through the way in which He spoke to people. That is, Christ was intentional in communicating in a manner that was engaging. This is seen through His repeated use of parables (figurative stories). Author Klyne Snodgrass states that Jesus’ parables serve “a prophetic purpose within the comprehensive narrative scheme to engage people with God’s Kingdom.”

Jesus engaged people by speaking their language. Clearly, Jesus possessed an in-depth knowledge of Scripture and Biblical principles that were well above that of the common man. Yet, Christ tactfully communicated in a fashion that was thought-provoking and intellectually palatable for the audiences of His day.

In Luke 20:9-19, Jesus told a parable which spoke of untrustworthy tenants who repeatedly refused to pay the owner of the vineyard. He used this parable to effectively disarm the chief priests and the teachers of the law who were trying to find fault with

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Him so that they could arrest Him as He was preaching in the temple courts. The parable was both simplistic and profound. That is, it was a simple agricultural story through which the common man could identify. However, the parable also spoke to the teachers of the law and chief priests as it was laced with Old Testament Scripture references and history (Psalm 118:22) and thus allowed for higher-level thinking. This parable, as well as the many other parables found throughout the Gospels, was an effective tool that Christ employed as He successfully spoke to large groups of people with varying intellects.

Christ also manifested His desire to be relevant by possessing a sincere concern for all demographics, with a special emphasis on those who were typically neglected. Women, children, Gentiles, tax collectors, the sick, adulterers, and the poor seemed to be given little care or concern in the time of Jesus. These groups were often mistreated and looked upon as an inferior social class.11 Contrary to this common practice, Christ seemed to offer those who were considered downtrodden or of lower social standing an increased amount of time, energy, and love. The postmodern generation is seemingly slipping through the cracks. Because Christ sought out those who needed extra spiritual care, it seems likely that Christ would expect the Church to make a concerted effort to address the needs of this eccentric postmodern generation.

Jesus demonstrated this concern for a young tax collector named Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. Although not warmly embraced by the people due to his profession, Zacchaeus was treated with love by Jesus. This is evidenced in the way Jesus identified the social outcast, engaged him by name, and appeared unconcerned with the public

response. Jesus explained to the people in verse 9 that, although they saw Zacchaeus solely as a greedy tax collector, he too was a son of Abraham. Christ told the onlookers in the following verse that He came to seek and save the lost and thus His mission appropriately included those who may have “fallen through the cracks” in the world’s eyes. Thus it seems obvious that He would embrace and engage the largely unchurched postmodern crowd.

Christ’s clearly identified mission also serves to reinforce the basis for this research project. In Mark 2:17, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees while he was dining with “sinners” as He told them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” Jesus’ mission was to come and save those who were lost and dying a spiritual death (Luke 19:10). Jesus was not a respecter of persons and did not attach a heightened value to status, wealth, or social class. He simply came to save the lost. The postmodern generation, as identified earlier, is a demographic that has failed to be effectively engaged and is in need of immediate spiritual help.

It is clear throughout Scripture that Christians have a spiritual obligation to be effective stewards over that which God has given to them (Matthew 6:19-24). Likewise, it is evident that Christ expects believers to employ stewardship over all areas of the Church, which is why God established the pastoral and elder structure and leadership within the church. A key ingredient of stewardship is discernment. Although Scripture provides sound biblical principles for dealing with the myriad of scenarios that arise within a church, discernment must be employed to appropriately link those principles to a plan of action that effectively deals with the relevant issues.
Jesus conveyed the importance of discernment in Matthew 16:1-4. The Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus for a sign from heaven to prove that He was indeed the Christ. Jesus responded by showing them that they were proficient and easily able to “discern the face of the sky” and yet they were unable to “discern the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:3 [NKJV]). Although Jesus was specifically referring to the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, He exposed the religious leaders’ failure to appropriately discern His Messiahship as they appeared to be blinded by their traditions. Church leaders must exercise the God-given discernment to “discern the signs of times” and address the Church’s inability to effectively engage the postmodern generation. Considering the aforementioned accounts of Jesus and many more like them which seem to reflect His intentional care and interest for those who were marginalized in society or simply not actively engaged in the institutionalized religious system, it seems appropriate for this research and study to be conducted. Postmoderns need to be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Statement of Methodology

This thesis project will focus specifically on The Stirring and Bethel Church and research the way in which these two churches successfully incorporate the postmodern generation into their worship services. The researcher observed services at each of these churches for the period of five weeks (five weeks at each location). The researcher also conducted interviews with congregants and staff as well as provided questionnaires for both staff and church members.
The Stirring is a church of predominantly young worshipers and is based in Redding, California. It is well-known in the Northern California region and has exploded in growth since it began three years ago as evidenced by the recent addition of a third service. Bethel Church, also located in Redding, California, is known around the world for its Supernatural School of Ministry as well as the “Jesus Culture” movement.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter One - Introduction

Chapter one contains an introduction to the topic, a statement of the problem, an explanation of terminology, a statement of limitations, a biblical basis, a statement of methodology, and a review of literature.

Chapter Two - Understanding Postmoderns

Chapter two provides a glimpse into the mind of the postmodern worshiper as the author explores the worldview, spiritual beliefs, consumerist nature, and desire for community of the generation being researched.

Chapter Three - Site Descriptions

Chapter three contains the descriptions of each of the two sites observed. The author provides a brief historical overview and also discusses the demographical make-up of the churches. In addition, the order of service for each location is presented.
Chapter Four - Experience-Driven Theology: The Driving Force Behind the Methodology

This chapter explores the experience-driven theology employed at the churches being researched. The author presents a critique of the experience-driven model as both sides of this controversial issue are discussed.

Chapter Five - Methodology for an Environment Conducive to Postmodern Worship

Chapter five identifies methodology used at both locations to create environments which help postmoderns engage in worship. Methods discussed include the freedom of expression, dress, inclusion of the arts, authenticity, reiterating the focus on community, human touch, a climate of honor, and focusing on social works.

Chapter Six - Contextualizing the Gospel Message

This chapter examines the techniques used by the speakers to contextualize the Biblical message. Methods such as narrative teaching, language, transparency, humor, speaking to felt needs, and thematic messages are addressed. The author also provides a critique which presents opposing views related to the contextualization the Gospel.

Chapter Seven - Worship Music: Techniques for Engaging Postmoderns in Worship

Chapter seven identifies specific techniques used by the two churches to effectively engage congregants within the musical portion of services. Posture, lyrical content, the organic nature of the musical flow, technology, and the use of presentational media are discussed in this chapter. Cautions regarding lyrical content and the subject of worship are addressed as well.
Chapter Eight - Recommendations

This chapter provides recommendations, based on the research from this project, for churches wanting to effectively engage young worshipers.

Review of Literature

The book Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity\textsuperscript{12} is a collection of essays by leading figures in the contemporary theological debate. This resource, edited by Paul Heelas, describes the postmodern generational philosophy with regard to religion. The author paints a detailed picture of the young thinker in chapter four of this comprehensive work as he asserts that postmodernism is a “religiously dressed up form of fundamentalism” through which the current culture tries to “have their cake while eating it.”\textsuperscript{13} He argues that this generation boldly holds to a strong set of beliefs yet embraces technology and desires freedom. The author’s detailed description of the postmodern thinker provides valuable insight into the ideology of this generation and was particularly helpful in chapter two as the postmodern “worldview” is explored.

Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird’s book Innovations in the Local Church\textsuperscript{14} provides an introduction to the current church types that have evolved over the recent past. The authors discuss the make-up of these culturally-relevant churches and the basic methodology that serves to make these churches effective to the younger generation.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{14} Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, Innovations in the Local Church (Ventura: Regal, 2007).
generation. The authors provide specific methodology in chapter nine, based on a successful church model, for helping churches effectively incorporate all generations in worship services. This was helpful to the author of this thesis in that it provided both a practical and balanced approach to incorporating the younger generation without forsaking existing congregants.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch’s book *The Shaping of Things to Come*\(^\text{15}\) offers insights into the mind of the postmodern worshiper. The authors provide information concerning the differences between “attractional” and “incarnational” churches as they challenge church leaders to be more Christ-like in reaching out to the generation that is being left behind. The authors argue for a contextualized approach to engaging postmoderns and provide a Biblical basis for doing so. They assert that church leaders should “examine the local community” as they attempt to discern what type of delivery style would be most effective in transmitting the truth of Scripture.\(^\text{16}\) This information proved to be invaluable to the author of this thesis as the contextualized approach to presenting the Gospel message is specifically addressed in chapter six.

*The Postmodern God*\(^\text{17}\) is a collection of essays and excerpts from leading postmodern theological thinkers. This book, edited by Graham Ward, reexamines postmodern theology and argues for a directional change that steers away from the liberalism that has engulfed postmodern theology. This resource addresses postmodernism in the areas of theology, feminism, liturgy, ethics, and more. This work


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 89.

opposes George Barna’s *Revolution* which argues for radical change with the Church. This work provides perspective on this divisive issue and therefore served as a valuable tool for appropriately understanding the generation being assessed.

The book by Graham Cooke and Gary Goodell entitled *Permission is Granted to Do Church Differently in the 21st Century*\(^{18}\) presents a “how to” approach to doing church in a more effective and culturally-relevant manner. This book provided the author with a proven framework for conducting God-centric worship that speaks the contemporary language. This book exposes the snares within the current church model and also helped to inform the author of this thesis to better understand how to practically move from the present state of worship to a more relevant worship model.

Although Ed Stetzer’s book *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*\(^{19}\) is focused primarily on the church planter, Stetzer discusses the relevancy of church ministry in a postmodern world in several different chapters. He discusses how churches can be “culturally relevant” and provides models for reaching postmoderns. He dedicates a special chapter for evangelizing postmoderns which provided a framework for proactive, intentional evangelism geared specifically toward the young. This work provides valuable data for effectively interacting and reaching the postmodern generation.

\(^{18}\) Graham Cooke and Gary Goodell, *Permission is Granted to Do Church Differently in the 21st Century* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2006).

\(^{19}\) Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman& Holman, 2003).
George Barna’s controversial book *Revolution*\textsuperscript{20} provides valuable data gathered from churches across North America. Through extensive research, Barna explains why church attendance is dropping at such an alarming rate. Barna’s suggestions for addressing this issue, however, appear to be problematic as he suggests extreme measures that direct worshipers away from the local church. Therefore, the author of this study will utilize the research data gathered within *Revolution* while disregarding the author’s suggestions for addressing the issue. The data collected within Barna’s book, however, does serve to help provide concrete evidence based in sound research, and thus it is a valuable source for this project.

Elmer Towns’ and Ed Stetzer’s book entitled *Perimeters of Light*\textsuperscript{21} examines postmodernism and identifies the many challenges that are manifested in the local church as a result of this ever-changing culture. The authors treat issues directly related to this project such as appropriate worship styles, the amount of Biblical content within a sermon, and overall boundaries of practice within a church. The postmodern age continually pushes the boundaries of the church as new methods and techniques are used to try to reach this dying generation.

Reggie McNeal’s book *The Present Future*\textsuperscript{22} calls for a shift in church leadership. The author addresses the current church model and lays out why it does not work in today’s culture. He challenges church leaders to move to a more Biblical model for reaching the lost and break away from consumer-driven church. He provides an

\textsuperscript{20} George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2005).

\textsuperscript{21} Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer, *Perimeters of Light* (Chicago: Moody, 2004).

explanation of the church growth movement initiated by Donald McGavran in the 1970s, and then offers a thumbnail historical overview regarding the evolution of the local church to its current condition.

The ministry journal *Modern Believing*\(^{23}\) addresses the growing challenge of producing contemporary corporate worship. In his article “Postmodern Worship: What it Could be Like,” Vicar Nick Jowett discusses the need for the Church to become more postmodern as he describes the church of the future.\(^{24}\) He also provides valuable assertions regarding what the church will look like in the years to come.

An additional resource that provided useful information for the researcher of this project is the ministry periodical *Congregations*. Contributing author Hillary Wicai describes the postmodern worldview and discusses the need for “multisensory worship.”\(^{25}\) This article helps illustrate the visual components that postmoderns look for in a worship service, and thus it served as a valuable resource for this project.

Although it takes a more philosophical approach, Marlea M. Gilbert’s dissertation “Incorporating a Rising Generation: A Study of Worship”\(^{26}\) provides research into the methodology that effectively engages the younger generation. Jay D. Parkins’ dissertation “The Monthly Alternative: A Model for Participatory Image-Based Worship


\(^{24}\) Ibid., 47.


\(^{26}\) Marlea M. Gilbert, "Incorporating a Rising Generation: A Study of Worship" (PhD diss., Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary), 2006.
in the Twenty-First Century”\textsuperscript{27} gives the researcher helpful data in the area of culturally relevant, image-based worship. These dissertations provided additional research that assisted the author in appropriately studying the topic.

CHAPTER TWO

Understanding Postmoderns

In gathering, evaluating, and presenting data within this study, it is important to first understand the way in which the postmodern worshiper views the world. Although this study focuses primarily on methodologies used to reach postmoderns in two specific churches, the outreach methods find their roots in the philosophical mindset of postmoderns. Therefore, a cursory review and discussion of the salient research done by sociologists and cultural researchers is warranted for this study. Possessing a general overview of the postmodern worldview will serve to provide a solid framework from which to better process data. This chapter will provide a glimpse into the mind of the group being evaluated as the researcher examines the postmodernist’s worldview, spiritual beliefs, consumerist values, and increased focus on community.

The Postmodern Worldview

The postmodern worldview is in direct contrast to that which came before. The modern view upholds humans’ ability to reason, to think, to evaluate, and to draw conclusions. Modernity contends that absolute truth does exist and humans have the cognitive ability to discover and discern such truth. In the postmodern worldview, truth seems a bit more elusive. Author and consultant Sally Morgenthaler describes this
worldview: “In the postmodern worldview there is no one story. The world is a totally subjective place, and how you view the world is dependent on your place in the world.”

Current studies suggest that the so-called postmodern generation is characterized in part by ethical relativism, a subjective view of truth, and the rejection of authority and absolutes. Their worldview reflects distorted values (as formerly defined by modernity) and is evidenced in relativism. Cambridge Professor Ernest Gellner defined relativism in the following way: “Everything is meaning, and meaning is everything and hermeneutics is its profit. Whatever is, is made by the meaning conferred on it.” To the postmodernist, truth is no longer an objective reality but rather is subjective and based on the specific worldview of the person who is seeking truth. Thus, the world is full of truth, but that truth is relative to the individual who deems it to be real.

The relativistic view held by postmodern thinkers ultimately leads to a truth that is absent of any real absolutes. Because truth is dependent upon each particular thinker, common truth cannot be agreed upon and absolutes cease to exist. Postmoderns hold to the belief that the acquisition of absolute truth is not possible, necessary, or even desirable. This line of thinking is directly opposed by the truth of Scripture and therefore creates enormous problems as postmoderns are confronted with the Christian faith.

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30 Ibid., 24.

31 Ibid., 35.
Because postmoderns determine truth intrinsically, they place significant emphasis on the experiential nature of life. Experience is everything. Progress, production, and performance are no longer held in high regard as was the case with modernity. Postmoderns are concerned with experience and that which comes from experience – emotions and purpose. Postmodern thinkers utilize experience to discern truth, and therefore truth is based on individual experience rather than absolutes. What is right or wrong, or good or bad becomes more about perspective and less about truth.

*Spiritual Beliefs*

Studies have shown that the generation being researched is marked by an openness to all religions. There is a common desire within postmodernists to strive together and accept the various truths that different religions offer. Claremont Professor of Philosophy David Ray Griffin explains the postmodern pluralistic view towards religion by proposing that postmodernists welcome a religiously pluralistic society and hope that “various traditional religions will recognize their commonalities and also mutually transform themselves by appropriating truths and values from each others’ particularities.” The desire of postmodernists is for all religions to coexist happily and for each individual to determine his or her own specific religious path. Evidence of this can be seen in the popularity of the “coexist” sign, as seen in Appendix Fifty-Six, which is pictured on stickers, buttons, T-shirts, hats, and more. This fashionable slogan portrays

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33 Ibid., 19.

34 Ibid.
Christianity as one of the seven world religions and conveys the message that all religions have merit and should be accepted.

The postmodern thinker may extract spiritual beliefs and practices from numerous religions to make up a very specific and unique style of worship. The particular style is derived through experiences that the postmodernist feels are genuine. He continually attempts to develop his spirituality and become a better person. Christianity is mixed in with the other religions and simply becomes one of the many ways in which postmodernists seek to develop their individual spirituality. Author Peter Berger describes the pluralistic, postmodern mindset as “a spiritual supermarket (which) undermines conventional forms of religiosity.”

The strong influence of postmodernism has served to shape the way in which contemporary Christianity is practiced in North America and beyond. This dominant force helped to produce a strong, influential movement that seemed to resonate with the postmodern generation. This movement, known as the “emerging church” has taken on many forms. One of the more theologically liberal sectors of the movement was founded by pastor, speaker and activist Brian McLaren. McLaren’s brand of this movement is most commonly referred to as the “emergent village.” The emerging church movement, which began in the late 1990s, grew rapidly and gained popularity as new methods of “doing church” were explored in this pluralistic society. It is labeled “emerging” because the ideas and methodology are still being formed and are in no way fully developed.


The controversial emerging church movement allows for experimentation and avoids restrictions when expressing faith. It seeks to be relevant to the culture of the day and attempts to avoid the secular/spiritual divide imposed by the Christian faith as a result of the Enlightenment. In general, the movement emphasizes the “church as the people of God, not a place to meet.”

Postmodernists have little concern with the place in which ministry occurs. Jennifer Ashley describes the multifaceted way in which the emerging church worships:

These are churches in skate parks where people are getting on their boards and worshiping God. These are churches in teahouses and nightclubs. There are hip-hop churches where the pastor raps and break dances during the service. There are prayer rooms in pubs, contemplative services in art galleries.

The emerging church offers postmodernists the opportunity to worship in an organic manner that is radically different than modernity’s structured version of traditional church. Proponents believe the emerging church is absent of the rigid liturgy and dress code that defines institutionalized church. They feel welcome, as if the church is speaking their language. The church meets worshipers in their world and reaches out to them in a manner that to them, is powerful and effective.

The emerging movement has not come without opposition. Prominent evangelical preachers like John McArthur and Josh McDowell as well conservative biblical scholars Douglas Groothuis and Millard Erickson have been outspoken in defending the “objectivity of Christian truth and experience.”

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39 Lee and Sinitiere, Holy Mavericks, 79.
diverse philosophies have caused a division among Christians which has served to disunite believers. Christians are now seen either as conservative Christians who are stuck in their ways and unable to remain relevant to contemporary culture, or as radical, new-age Christians who have inappropriately delineated from the unchanging truth of Scripture.

Christians are challenged in their attempts to intelligently communicate the Gospel to postmodernists because this generation possesses spiritual beliefs that are relative to their specific experiences. Although they may accept certain Christian truths into their overall religious belief system, many postmoderns will not fully embrace Christianity solely and completely. Because they feel that the truth of the Word of God is not absolute, evangelizing postmodernists becomes extremely difficult.

**Consumerism**

According to University of North Carolina professor and author Wade Roof, the postmodern generation was raised in a consumer-driven world in which they were “catered to and courted by marketers.”

He identifies evidence of this within the local church as he likens the names of religious formation or retreat programs to the names of best selling automobiles in the United States. Roof lists “Quest, Odyssey, Discovery, Explorer, and Pathfinder” as secular marketing names that were adopted by churches in an attempt to identify with the consumer-minded culture.

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Religion has been sucked into the consumer vacuum. Evangelists are seen regularly on national and local television broadcasts as well as on the Internet. Across North America, churches now meet in strip malls, movie theatres, gymnasiums, restaurants, and even bars. Worship services have been shortened, spiced up with technology, and framed in a package that church leaders call “seeker-friendly.” Author David Lyon refers to this as the “Disneyfication” of Christianity. Christians now employ marketing strategies like Disneyland to get people to buy into the message of Christ.

A Hispanic woman spoke with excitement as she described her recent trip to San Antonio, Texas, to see the well-known televangelist Joel Osteen. She told of a crowded arena, full of anticipation and perfumed with the smell of popcorn and pretzels. This event, titled “An Evening with Joel,” utilized video advertisements containing testimonies from Lakewood Church members as an attempt to challenge attendees to “financially and prayerfully consider partnering with Joel Osteen Ministries.” Joel Osteen merchandise, including CDs, tapes, books, and t-shirts filled tables and flanked the arena. Joel also makes his messages available through podcasts. Although many take offense with the “theologically light” message of Osteen, he successfully leverages technology by utilizing all appropriate media and engaging his audience as he speaks to the needs of this consumer society.

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44 Ibid.
The influence of media and entertainment has left its mark on the mindset of postmoderns. Christopher Lasch asserts that the postmodern generation, which he describes as being marked by narcissism, has been “hollowed out, deprived of the internal gyroscope of character that a former generation sought to develop, and endowed instead with an exaggerated interest in image as opposed to substance.” This generation has been raised on entertainment and has grown to expect this in all areas of life, including religion. Whether viewing a rock concert, attending a sporting event, or participating in a religious worship service, the expectation is to be entertained. This has shaped a mindset that is more focused on self and also highly concerned with image. Knowledge and understanding now take a back seat to appearance and status.

The postmodern mindset is also molded by media that bombards its audience with strategic marketing plans designed to reach specific target groups. Television screens now adorn the walls of most restaurants. Personal computers accompany patrons as they file into their favorite coffee shop for a morning cup of Java. Radio stations are heard between innings at baseball games, at recreational events, and social gatherings and provide the backdrop that has come to be expected when people get together. Microwave signals now carry advertisements, sporting updates, personal messages, the Internet, and can be easily accessed through cellular devices.

Because postmodernists have grown up in a world that incessantly attempts to solicit their time, energy, finances, and faith, they are used to being stimulated in a way that is highly digital and very effective. They are used to being the focus and expect –

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with varying degrees – to be catered to. Any departure from this seems insensitive and even inappropriate.

**Heightened Sense of Community**

Scholars Stanley Grenz and John Franke suggest, “the overarching focus of the biblical narrative is the person-in-relationship or the individual-in-community” and he therefore contends that “community ought to be the central theme” in postmodern theology.\(^{46}\) This belief is well-received by the postmodern generation which has been marked by an increased desire for community.\(^{47}\) As noted above, experience is extremely valuable to this generation. Sharing life’s experiences is held in high regard. Contrary to modernity, this generation does not place a high premium on institutions. Postmoderns contend that the institutionalized church has not been fertile soil for the growth of authentic community. Postmodernists long for community with one another and are comfortable fellowshipping in an informal setting. They desire to know that others will walk with them through the ups and downs of life.

This overwhelming need for community has manifested itself in the preaching styles of postmodern pastors. Some pastors are now seen more as conversationalists whose responsibility is no longer found in proclaiming truth, but rather in focusing worshipers on a homiletical conversation.\(^{48}\) They are seen as facilitators who guide the

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\(^{47}\) Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 89.

priesthood of believers in the conversation focused on Scripture. In postmodern theology, the responsibility of drawing spiritual conclusions and applying those conclusions to one’s life is primarily the responsibility of the individual believer. This break from traditional preaching style, although extremely controversial, provides postmodern worshipers the opportunity to be collectively active in finding spiritual truths and fosters a climate of community.

Emergent Pastor Doug Pagitt leads an unconventional church in Minnesota called Solomon’s Porch. At this church there is nothing traditional. Pews, suits, ties, liturgy, and everything else that might remind a visitor of a traditional church service are noticeably absent. Congregants wear jeans and t-shirts and sit on comfortable couches as they listen to Pagitt offer open-ended conversations as opposed to the traditional pastoral monologue. Congregants sporadically respond with their own interpretations and thoughts pertaining to the truths presented and therefore are an integral part of shaping the overall message. Pastor Pagitt explains his views regarding the inclusion of worshipers in the presentation of Biblical truth:

I have come to believe there’s a kind of dehumanizing effect when week after week competent people aren’t allowed to share their ideas and understanding; when week after week one person is set apart from the rest as the only one who is allowed to speak about God; when week after week people willingly, or by some sort of social or spiritual pressure, just sit and take it; when week after week they’re taught that the only way to be good learners is to be better listeners.

The Socratic method of spiritual leadership which Pagitt employs appeals to a postmodern generation that needs to feel valued. Instead of being spoken to, worshipers

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49 Doug Pagitt, Preaching Re-imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 69.

50 Ibid., 76.
collaborate on something meaningful. This promotes authenticity as the speaker never truly knows where the message may go and must be ready to adapt as needed. For a generation marked by skepticism, a sense of genuineness is highly valued. This conversational/Socratic style of teaching promotes both a sense of community and a feeling of authenticity and seems to be the style of choice most welcomed by postmodern worshipers. It is important to note, however, that this method is controversial as it appears to minimize the Biblical authority given to the shepherd as described in Scripture (Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9, John 21:15-17).

This generation’s desire for community is also evidenced in the way in which it reaches out to the world. No longer do Christians expect the people to come to the church, but rather postmoderns now take Christ to the people. This is evidenced by the rise of missional ministries which carry out community support ministries both locally and globally. Postmoderns see the church as missional as opposed to institutional; therefore they see the Gospel lived out in concert with others through serving. Frost and Hirsch call this “incarnational” ministry through which Christians do not “create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the Gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don’t yet know him.”

The postmodernist wants to join forces with others and make a lasting mark on the lives of others. Pulling off a large, professional, well-produced worship service is not the primary goal of this generation. Postmodern believers long to be Christ to others with others. Emerging church leader and author Neil Cole writes, “We want to lower the bar

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of how church is done and raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple." The paradigm of value has shifted from investments into "things" to investments into people. This generation highly values one another and wants to be involved socially in helping make the world a better place.

Summary

The postmodern generation possesses a view of truth that is based in relativism. The subjective nature by which they determine truth varies significantly as each individual’s biases, ideology, and experiences influence what may be qualified as truth. The pluralistic, postmodern mindset allows for a multitude of religions which can be effectively combined to create a unique set of religious beliefs and practices which meet the specific needs and tastes of the individual. This generation is highly consumer-driven and is accustomed to being appropriately engaged in a manner that speaks to them.

Postmoderns highly value community and strongly desire to be in relationship with one another. This generation longs for frequent human interaction and is marked by a desire to share and walk through life’s experiences with others. It is important to note that some of these beliefs do not appear to fully align with Scripture and therefore caution must be exercised when exploring this ideology.

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CHAPTER THREE

Site Descriptions

Brief Historical Overview


Bethel Church, which began with approximately fifty attendees, has experienced slow, intermittent growth over the years. However, it was not until 1996 when Bill Johnson took over as lead pastor that Bethel experienced significant growth. The change in leadership led not only to numerical growth but also worldwide recognition. Johnson began leading conferences early in his tenure which brought Christians from around the world to Redding.

In 1998, Bethel began the School of Supernatural Ministry with thirty-six students. Now, there are 1200 students who attend and 250 of them are international students. Dann Farrelly, interview by author, November 4, 2009, transcript. This two-year program attracts primarily young worshipers from around the world and is worth noting in this section as it provides more evidence that Bethel’s methodology is effective in attracting postmodern worshipers. In addition, Bethel

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54 Dann Farrelly, interview by author, November 4, 2009, transcript.
launched the first “Jesus Culture” conference in the summer of 1999. These often sold out conferences, which focus on initiating revival, feature contemporary worship led by young Bethel artists and messages given by featured speakers from around the nation. Ministries like this have contributed to the need for Bethel to increase the number of services over the years to accommodate their growth. They now conduct four services each weekend: Friday night at 7:00 p.m., Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., and Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m.

The second church researched for this study, The Stirring, was planted in January of 2007 and nearly 300 people attended the first Sunday night gathering. Founder and lead pastor Nathan Edwardson planted the church with a volunteer staff made up of friends and couples totaling fifteen people. These key leaders have helped foster a climate of growth over the years as the gatherings continue to grow. According to Edwardson, nearly 800 adults and 100 children now attend the services on any given weekend, with the exception of times when local college students are gone for summer break.

Although they began with just one service three years ago, The Stirring now conducts three services which all occur on Sundays at two different locations. The 10:00 a.m. service occurs at the Eureka Way campus and consists more of families. The 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. services both take place at the Bechelli Lane campus and are made up of younger congregants. In 2007, The Stirring made an agreement with the Nazarene

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56 Nathan Edwardson, interview by author, October 21, 2009, transcript.

57 Ibid.
church to lease a large gymnasium and hold their Sunday evening services at this location. The Stirring is in the process of purchasing a 24,000 square foot building that will be the future home.

Demographical Data

For the purpose of appropriately assessing the methods and techniques used by the two sites to effectively engage postmodern worshipers, a cursory study of regional demographics follows. The two churches studied for this research project are located in Redding, California, which is in the Northern part of the state. Located in the valley, Redding maintains a steadily growing population of over 90,000 people, of which over 85.7 percent are Caucasian.58

Redding is a conservative, highly Republican city with an average median household income just below 42,000 dollars.59 The year-round mild temperatures of the Redding region afford the residents of this area ample opportunities to enjoy the beautiful lakes and mountains. This particular area of Northern California is a paradise for people who love the outdoors. Perhaps the significant quality of the natural environment contributes to the fact that less than twenty-four percent of the population of Redding claims religious affiliation compared to the national average over fifty percent.60 The

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
religious affiliation among Redding Church-goers is illustrated in figure 3.1 as seen below.\(^\text{61}\)

\[\text{Figure 3.1 Religious Affiliation among Redding's Church-Going Population}\]

The ages of residents living in Redding see a significant decline in two major areas.\(^\text{62}\) The first decline, as seen in figure 3.2, is seen in ages 22.5 through 33.5. This age group is made up of the postmodern contingent being researched (ages eighteen to forty) as defined in Chapter One. This data suggests that the two sites being researched would have a numerical disadvantage in reaching postmoderns due to the significant drop among postmoderns in Redding. Thus the methods and techniques used to engage this geographically sparse generation would seem to possess increased validity as there are fewer postmoderns present in the city. The second age decline in noticed at age fifty-two and is continued from their through the remainder of the graph which ends at age eighty-

\(^{61}\) Ibid.

five. Although significant to the overall culture of Redding, this second decline has fewer implications for the purposes of this paper.

![Distribution of Residents' Ages in Redding](image)

**Figure 3.2 Distribution of Residents’ Ages in Redding**

The ages of the congregants at both churches are noticeably differently than what is seen in the community. The Stirring congregation is made up of many Simpson University students who prefer the alternative style of worship that this church offers. Although present in all gatherings, young worshipers are seen more in the 7:00 p.m. service as the Sunday morning and 5:00 p.m. gatherings are a bit more balanced in terms of the age of worshipers. Approximately four percent of the 400 plus worshipers observed at each of the 7:00 p.m. gatherings appear to be over the age of forty.

Bethel worshipers also depart from the age norms found in the community as they too possess a heavy postmodern contingent. Of the almost 500 people in attendance during the Friday night services, only fourteen percent appeared to be over the age of forty. Although this is considerably higher than that which was observed at The Stirring, it still appears inflated in the area of postmoderns when compared with the averages found in the community. This data says much about the effectiveness of the two
churches being researched. They clearly employ successful techniques and methodology that effectively engage this numerically underdeveloped generation as evidenced by the attendance data which confirms the large presence of postmoderns in the respective worship services, despite the low representation of this group within the local community.

The ethnic make-up of the churches being evaluated appears to be a mirror image of that which is found in the community of Redding. As seen in figure 3.3, the population of Redding is made up primarily of Caucasians. Hispanics are the next most concentrated race followed closely by the Asian population. Contrary to the abnormality seen in the comparison of church attendees’ ages verses that which is seen in the community, ethnicity appears to be identical both in the local society as well as within the churches being studied.

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63 Ibid.
Bethel Order of Service

As seen in figure 3.4, the Friday night services at Bethel began at approximately seven minutes after 7:00 p.m. On most occasions, one of the pastors called the church to worship by informally asking the congregation, “Are you guys ready to worship?” During the services observed by the author, no lighting changes occurred, no music was played, and no other media was used to create ambiance. The pastor then read Scripture, prayed, or encouraged the congregation with a short testimony (it was one of these or combination). This lasted for approximately four minutes and then the worship music began and immediately the worshipers were observed singing, raising their hands, and dancing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bethel Friday Night Order of Service</th>
<th>Stirring Sunday Night Order of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:07 p.m. – Pastor welcomes congregants</td>
<td>7:00 p.m. – Service begins with worship music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:11 p.m. – Worship music begins</td>
<td>7:41 p.m. – Vision statement/Announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 p.m. – Greeting time for congregants</td>
<td>7:46 p.m. – Offering prayer and offertory song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:07 p.m. – Weekly announcements</td>
<td>7:49 p.m. – Video introduction for message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:09 p.m. – Offering prayer/Offertory song</td>
<td>7:50 p.m. – Message begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:16 p.m. – Speaker introduced</td>
<td>8:37 p.m. – Challenge to respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:19 p.m. – Message begins</td>
<td>8:39 p.m. – Final worship song/Response time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:06 p.m. – Speaker dismisses congregants</td>
<td>8:47 p.m. – Closing remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:51 p.m. – Congregation dismissed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.4 Order of Service Comparison

The worship team led the congregation in singing for approximately fifty-four minutes during this section of the service. At approximately 8:05 p.m. one of the pastors initiated the greeting time. Language such as, “Let’s love on each other” and

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\[64\] See Appendix Forty-Two. This is a photograph of the Bethel Worship team and congregation during the November 13 worship service.
“Hang out with one another” was used. During this time there was no music being played.

At 8:07 p.m., one of the pastors on staff gave the weekly announcements. They were essentially the same from week to week as the pastor told about the main ministries within the church. He kept the announcements simple and to the point and therefore this time moved quickly. A program titled “The Weekly” was distributed as congregants entered the service and it provided pertinent information regarding the various ministries as well as upcoming events.65

At approximately 8:09 p.m., one of the pastors introduced the offering. This was not always done by the same pastor who gave the announcements. There are many pastors who frequently rotate and therefore different pastors were seen from week to week leading different components of the services. The pastor typically said a few words, instructed the visitors to financially give to their home church, prayed, and then asked the people to come forward. The congregants of Bethel then got out of their seats and walked forward and dropped their tithes and offerings into three Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets (literally Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets) located at the front of the sanctuary. Part of a worship song was played during the offering time and the average length of the offering portion of the service, including the offertory song, was just under seven minutes.

At approximately 8:16 p.m., one of the pastors introduced the speaker and shortly after, the message began. During the five visits, the speakers were never the same person but were all Bethel pastors who are employed by the church in varying capacities. The

65 See Appendix Five.
speakers were mixed in terms of gender with three males and two females. Message lengths varied from speaker to speaker but the mean length of the five speakers was forty-seven minutes. Services ended at approximately 9:06 p.m. and the speaker dismissed the congregation.

The Stirring Order of Service

Unlike Bethel Church, The Stirring service began on time as worship music commenced the service. Congregants worshiped through singing for approximately forty-one minutes before one of the pastors on staff introduced the offering. It is worth noting, and will be discussed in Chapter Five, that the church’s mission statement, “we love, we make disciples,” is always mentioned during the announcement time.

As opposed to the short, consistent, well-rehearsed announcements within the Bethel gathering, The Stirring announcements changed from week to week and appeared less produced and more personal. Perhaps this is due to the significant differences in the service programs. In vast contrast to the program used by Bethel, information regarding ministries, upcoming events, and other logistical items were noticeably absent from this simple program. Stirring worshipers were greeted by two young volunteers who handed out a small 3.5” x 5.5” welcome card. This card simply lists the times of the services, the theme and title of the current teaching series, tithing updates, staff members’ names, and the simple mission statement “we love, we make disciples.”

66 See Appendix Forty-Three. This is a photograph of the November 22 worship service at The Stirring.

67 See Appendix Six.
After a short offering prayer, congregants were asked to “bring” their tithes to
God as a portion of one of the songs already sung was played. It is important to
recognize that both churches utilize the same procedural method of giving that challenge
congregants to publically come forward as they tithe to their respective churches. A
forty-five second video introduction that was custom made for Pastor Nathan
Edwardson’s sermon series “Under the Chuppah” was played on the two large screens
that flank each side of the stage. After his message, Edwardson set up the response time
by challenging congregants to “hear what God is saying to you and be willing to
respond.” As he did this, the worship team quietly took the stage. A final song was
played as congregants responded to the challenge issued. Edwardson took a few minutes
to add closing remarks and then dismissed the congregation at approximately 8:51 p.m.
After being dismissed, many congregants remained in the auditorium to help put away
folding chairs as well as to fellowship with other worshipers.
CHAPTER FOUR

Experience-Driven Theology: The Driving Force Behind the Methodology

Through the observation process and research conducted in this study, it is apparent that both churches share a common foundational theology, which in turn impacts several shared methodologies in reaching postmodern worshipers. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight this common and foundational theology held by the leaders of both Bethel and The Stirring.

Focus on Experience

Through the study and observation of these churches, it is apparent that both ministries operate under the influence of strong and effective leaders. While effective leadership is a common trait among many organizations, the leaders of Bethel and The Stirring share a foundational theology of worship that highly values experiencing God. Because of this strong theological belief, both leaders employ an experience-focused leadership model that reflects this value. This theological belief is clear, intentional, and manifests itself through methodology that appears to be effective in reaching postmoderns. Both Pastor Bill Johnson 68 of Bethel Church and Pastor Nathan

68 See Appendix Forty-Four. This is a photograph of Bethel Church Lead Pastor Bill Johnson.
Edwardson of the Stirring take active roles in the creating and maintaining a climate where encountering God is both valued and nurtured. Although this theological belief appears to be evident in all aspects of the services, it seems to be primarily manifested in the “singing” portion of the worship gatherings. Therefore, the singing portion of the services will be the focus in this chapter.

When asked about his focus on the importance and priority of experiencing God in worship, Edwardson remarked, “I want to create a space where people can come and sense the presence of God, a space free of hindrances and barriers.” Edwardson says that he is “passionate” about securing an environment that is conducive to experiencing God and often gets labeled as a “control freak” because he doesn’t want to allow anything to detract from what he describes as a “God encounter.” Edwardson’s experience-driven theology seems to be well received by postmodern worshipers. Shane, age twenty, said that he began attending The Stirring because “I feel the presence of the Lord.” Responses such as Shane’s are common as thirty-five out of fifty-two Stirring worshipers indicated that “experiencing God” was either a valuable part of the worship service or helped lead them to the church. This data seems to confirm that Edwardson’s focus on experience ultimately manifests itself in methodologies that appear to be conducive and ultimately successful in engaging worshipers.

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69 See Appendix Forty-Five. This is a photograph of The Stirring founder and Lead Pastor Nathan Edwardson.

70 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.

71 See Appendix Eight.

72 See Appendix Three.
Bill Johnson of Bethel possesses a similar theology of worship which also highly values experiencing God. He asserts, “If we don’t do anything else we will worship (through singing). If we are going to suffer anywhere, it will be the message not worship.”\textsuperscript{73} This would seem to be a bold departure from the more traditional (conservative) leadership model that seems to value preaching and teaching above congregational singing. This apparent line of demarcation sets the tone for what the leader of Bethel values most – “experiencing God through worship (singing).”\textsuperscript{74} This focus on the tangible presence and manifestation of God is welcomed by a postmodern generation who values “sensory” engagement in worship.\textsuperscript{75}

Johnson’s focus on experiencing God through the musical worship portion of the service was largely shaped by his father.\textsuperscript{76} In the 1970s, Johnson’s father, who started Bethel Church, asked congregants to leave the church as a result of their unwillingness to sing contemporary choruses. These individuals held to the strong belief that only hymns were appropriate. Johnson has been an assertive leader, just as his father, and has helped shape Bethel into a culture driven to expect a tangible experience with God. Dann Farrelly, associate pastor and head of Biblical Studies at Bethel Church, believes in the vision set forth by Johnson and states, “Worship is in our bones. It is not the warm up for the really important Word. Our whole goal is to experience Him.”\textsuperscript{77} It appears that this

\textsuperscript{73} Farrelly Interview, November 4, 2009.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{76} Dann Farrelly, Questions for you, e-mail message to author, January 27, 2010.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
experience-driven focus is working as evidenced by twenty-seven-year-old worshiper, Matt, who states that he attends Bethel because “The presence and power of God is manifest here.”

To a generation that seems to value authenticity, Johnson’s actions speak louder than words and serve to support his experience-focused theology of worship. Lawwrence Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke sum up the importance of modeled leadership: “The spiritual leader who is a servant does not demand. He serves. In his service, the spiritual leader sets an example for the body – an example that has compelling power to motivate heart change.”

Johnson personifies this example to the people at Bethel. He emphasizes the importance of spending time in sincere worship as the primary way in which people experience God. When describing Johnson’s leadership, Farrelly notes, “He models and oozes the joy of ‘wasting time with God.’”

Johnson’s theological belief in experiencing God is also noticeable in his teachings, books, magazine articles, and website. He uses these forms of communication to challenge his congregation to pursue God’s presence. Johnson writes:

Our confidence levels skyrocket when the presence of the Lord becomes manifested to us. The clearer the manifestation of His presence, the greater the dimension of faith. To live by the theory of His presence is wrong. To say, "Well, I know He's always with me" is not good enough. That truth must launch us into an experience, or we're violating the truth. Truth is given as an invitation for

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78 See Appendix Thirty-Seven.

79 Clyde Hoeldtke and Lawrence Richards, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 115.

80 Farrelly e-mail to author, January 27, 2010.
divine encounter so that we would know by experience that God is upon us and God is with us.\textsuperscript{81}

This theological belief which values encountering God through worship seems be an effective approach for congregants. When asked to identify the greatest strength of the church on a questionnaire, twenty-six out of fifty-six worshipers indicated that “the presence of God” (or something to do with experiencing God through worship), was the greatest strength of Bethel Church.\textsuperscript{82} This response was higher than any other and serves to indicate that Johnson’s ministry philosophy is being accepted by his congregants. Bethel Church member Josh, age thirty, identifies “the hunger for God” as being the greatest difference at Bethel Church.\textsuperscript{83} Tyler, a twenty-year-old worshiper at Bethel explains what makes this church different from other churches: “People get encountered by God every service whether it’s through getting healed, delivered, or in-filled.”\textsuperscript{84} Postmodern worshipers at Bethel indicate they desire to experience God and this seems to be, at least in part, a direct reflection of the theological approach to worship employed by Bill Johnson.


\textsuperscript{82} See Appendix Three.

\textsuperscript{83} See Appendix Nine.

\textsuperscript{84} See Appendix Ten.
Critique of Experience-Based Worship

Experientially-based worship appears to be common among many churches similar to the ones observed for this research.\(^8^5\) However, not everyone agrees with the “experience-based” philosophy of worship. Conservative Kevin Kluck describes the emergent church’s desire to feel and to experience God in the following way: “What the emergent manifesto suffers from is an imbalance of too much ‘already’ and not enough ‘not yet.’ The fancy term is ‘over-realized eschatology.’ That is, emergent leaders are hoping for heaven on earth before Jesus returns to earth to bring the new heaven and new earth.”\(^8^6\) Kluck feels that experience-based worship is rooted in a dangerous misunderstanding of eschatology and the inappropriate attempt to sequester that which was meant for eternity here on earth. He adds that this focus can lead to worship that is focused primarily on the external manifestations of God rather than on the deity, attributes, and Personhood of Christ.

Kluck points out that Christ’s primary focus centered on the well-being of others and their eternal condition rather than their experiences on earth.\(^8^7\) Jesus told the disciples to follow Him and that their reward of eternal life would be in heaven (Mark 10:30). Christ also warned them not to fear those who can kill the body but rather He who can kill the body and the soul (Matthew 10:28). According to Kluck, Jesus spoke of heaven and all its beauty as He described the saints enjoying this eternal paradise (Luke 21:31).


\(^8^6\) Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We’re Not Emergent* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 187.

\(^8^7\) Ibid.
Although Christ did perform many miracles while on earth and those who interacted with Jesus often experienced some tangible evidence of His majesty, the aforementioned author notes that Jesus’ focus seemed to be on internal matters such as the spiritual health of the soul. His teachings spoke of a “life” that would manifest itself in and through the saints of God. Although Kluck concedes that this “life” can be experiential to some degree, it is not an externally generated “feeling” but rather a natural manifestation of the “life” that lives within.

Conservative scholar and author D.A. Carson points out the dangers associated with focusing too intently on experience within worship:

Certainly some kinds of appeal to experience lend themselves to distorting the truth. Many revivals, genuine movements of God, end in disarray because Christians begin to pant after the experiences rather than the gospel and the Christ of the gospel that alone anchor them. Even the most sympathetic observer of the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905 recognizes the sad way it staggered to a close, however glorious its beginning.88

According to Carson, churches focused primarily on experiencing God through worship may be at risk of idolatry as they elevate the experience above the very One they intend to worship – God. The healing, the prophetic word, the goose bumps, the tangible outpouring of the presence of God, may soon become the designation of their worship rather than the Person of Jesus Christ. Carson notes that the Bible appeals to the experience in Galatians 3:1-5 as Paul confronts Gentile Christians regarding their misunderstanding of conversion. They incorrectly believe that they can experientially become regenerated by observing the Mosaic Law.

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Brian McLaren is the liberal pastor, author, and founder of The Emergent Village and presents experiential worship in a more positive manner. According to McLaren, a new kind of worship that involves art, poetry, dance, and other non-traditional forms of communication should be employed to engage this postmodern culture. He asserts that modernity presented a God who “is an uptight God who is about black-and-white easy answers” and who is a “conceptual God encountered through systems abstractions, propositions, and terminology.” McLaren argues for a contemporary form of worship that draws upon culturally-relevant forms of communication and allows the worshiper to participate in the worship. He considers himself a mystic and is willing to employ any methodology that will help his congregants experience God.

McLaren’s belief in the need for worship that is experientially stimulating is not limited to the “singing” form of worship. Rather, he maintains that all aspects of the worship gathering should be thought provoking and engaging. McLaren notes the experiential nature of the Bible as he argues for interactive sermons:

I guess you could say that the Bible is a book that doesn’t try to tell you what to think. Instead, it tries to teach you how to think. It stretches your thinking; it challenges you to think bigger and harder than ever before. It not only records ancient conversations among human beings and God, but it also stimulates new ones, never failing to create a community for essential conversations that enrich all of life.

McLaren places a high value on role of experience within worship as evidenced above and represents the more liberal viewpoint on this issue. The churches being

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observed seem to resonate with the more liberal theology which places a premium on the role of experience.
CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology for a Church Environment Conducive to Postmodern Worship

The research data gathered over the five week period suggests that both churches have been successful in creating an environment that is conducive to postmodern worship. On ninety-one percent of the questionnaires, worshipers indicated that one or more of the atmospheric methodologies discussed in this chapter helped them engage in worship.92 There appears to be commonality between the churches with regard to specific methodology and techniques utilized to engage the postmodern generation and create an environment in which they feel comfortable. In this chapter, specific environmental methods used by both churches to engage postmoderns in worship will be explored.

Freedom of Expression

Thomas Luckmann, author of *Invisible Religion*, suggests the following: “Matters that come to be of ultimate significance for the members of later generations are likely to be congruent only to a limited extent with matters that were of ultimate significance to earlier generations.”93 Freedom, at least in the context of religious expression, did not

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92 See Appendix Three.

appear to be of great importance to modernity. The postmodern mind, however, is much more concerned with the topic of religious freedom and tends to be more resistant to structure, liturgy and boundaries which they feel may restrict their need to fully express themselves. This generation longs to have the autonomy to physically express itself in worship while being free of all barriers and constrictions. To the postmodern worshiper, acceptable forms of praise should be determined by the individual, not the church. Although this ideology is controversial and theologically questionable, it appears to be the prevailing belief held by the majority of postmodern worshipers. Such is the case with the churches evaluated for this study. During the observations, both churches implemented methodologies of worship seemingly rooted in the philosophy that individuals have the freedom to determine the boundaries of self-expression during corporate worship.

One specific technique used by The Stirring to help create an atmosphere where worshipers can freely express themselves is seen in the way in which the auditorium is lit. Edwardson intentionally removes physical barriers which hinder the freedom to worship and identifies a “brightly lit” room as one such barrier. This seems to appeal to the postmodern generation which embraces radical individualism. David Wells describes

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97 Edwardson Interview, October 21,2009.

98 Wells, *God in the Wasteland*, 204.
individualism as the “belief that the individuals are in the center of their world and in charge of their own destinies (and) transcend all social forces.”\textsuperscript{99} This technique, however, may be viewed as controversial because corporate worship is described in Scripture as being a group of believers worshiping in harmony together (Acts 2:42-47). This view appears to focus more on the needs of the individual within the worship context.

The auditorium at The Stirring is flanked with modern lamps which provide just enough ambient lighting to negotiate the room. Only stage lights and the portable contemporary lamps are used for illumination. Edwardson states, “It is not up to me to determine how people express themselves to God. I am challenged with the task of creating a safe place where people can be themselves and communicate their love for God in their way.”\textsuperscript{100} The dim lighting provides this “safe” place where anonymity for worshipers is protected. Worshipers seem to appreciate the worship atmosphere and describe it as having a “family feel” and note that they feel “safe” and “at home” in this free environment.\textsuperscript{101} Kevin, twenty-one, identifies the “dim lighting” as being “personal” and describes this technique as being one of the ways The Stirring “engages” him.\textsuperscript{102} Other congregants described the “environment of the room,” the “atmosphere,” and the “physical setting” as ways in which they were “engaged” at The Stirring.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.

\textsuperscript{101} See Appendix Eleven.

\textsuperscript{102} See Appendix Twelve.
The practice of minimizing the lighting seems to have an impact on the way in which worshipers respond to each other. Worshipers do not look around the room and do not appear to be concerned with the personal expressions of others. During a November 22 gathering, two young female congregants wept together on their knees as they embraced each other for approximately twelve minutes during the service. Congregants paid no attention to the emotional outpouring and seemed uninhibited by what some churches may have deemed a distraction.

Although this focus on anonymity may help produce an environment that is conducive to postmodern worship, it is important to again point out some concerns that arise with this focus. Scripture encourages us to build one another up and encourage each other (Romans 15:2, Proverbs 27:17). An overemphasis on anonymity within the worship setting may unintentionally remove opportunities for fellow believers to comfort, exhort, admonish, and build up each other.

An additional method aimed at securing an atmosphere of freedom within worship at The Stirring is a “loose” service structure. Although Edwardson understands the importance of organization and structure, his methodology incorporates what he calls “a sense of flow” as he remains open to “the movement of the Holy Spirit.”\(^\text{103}\) There were three occasions during the five gatherings observed in which services were altered due to one of the pastors on staff feeling led to share a passage of Scripture, pray, or share a testimony. This freedom in structure is welcoming to postmodern worshipers at The

\(^{103}\) Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
Stirring. Jenna, twenty-three, notes that she feels “engaged” in worship because gatherings allow “space for encounters with God.”  

Bethel implements the same technique of allowing the structure of the service to be pliable. Dann Farrelly laughed as he described the approach Bethel takes to engage postmoderns in worship: “We are quite unintentional in our methodology for reaching the postmodern generation.” The intentional lack of methodology is, however, a specific method. The act of being intentionally unintentional ultimately produces a unique methodology, regardless of intent. In this case, it appears to produce an atmosphere without the restrictions of a rigid liturgy in which congregants feel open to express themselves in a corporate worship setting. As pictured in Appendix Forty-Six, some worshipers utilize banners to express their love for God, others kneel, some raise their hands, others sit solemnly, while some lay prostrate on the floor. Whitney, a twenty-two-year-old Bethel attendee states, “I am accepted just as I am and my needs are met because we just want more of God. I have freedom to worship……..I feel safe.”

Worshipers at Bethel feel a sense of security and can be themselves as evidenced by the responses in questionnaires, personal interviews, and observation. In the “short answer” portion of the questionnaire, twenty-nine of fifty-six congregants made some form of positive reference to the “safe” worship environment. At this church, there

104 See Appendix Thirteen.
105 Farrelly Interview, November 4 2009.
106 See Appendix Fourteen.
107 See Appendix Fourteen.
108 See Appendix Three.
seems to be no “right” or “wrong” way to worship and all individuals have full autonomy
to worship in their own style without fear of ridicule. The flexible service structure is a
method that seems to be effective in engaging postmoderns within this congregation.

Dress

Some studies indicate that nearly nine out of ten non-Christians feel that the term
“judgmental” accurately describes present-day Christianity.\(^\text{109}\) Like it or not, this
negative stereotype is real and is felt by the postmodern generation. Edwardson is well
aware of this view of Christianity and employs specific methodology to circumvent this
negative connotation. He explains: “I am not trying to recreate church as it was or as it
is expected to be. I want to invite people into a community of believers where they feel
welcomed and loved just as they are.”\(^\text{110}\)

One of the very specific methods used by The Stirring to engage postmoderns is
likely one of the simplest. Edwardson encourages pastors, worship team members, and
volunteers to maximize their ministry potential by “dressing the part.” That is, he asks
those around him to be intentional in wearing clothing that speaks to the current
generation. Although he does not have to ask this as often as he used to due to the
contagious nature of that specific methodology, he feels that it is crucial for worshipers to
walk into an atmosphere that is culturally relevant and welcoming.

Pastors, worship team members, ushers, and volunteers of both churches dress
casually. Jeans and T-Shirts are the standard dress at both churches. The congregations

\(^{109}\) David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books,
2007), 15.

\(^{110}\) Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
seem to dress in accordance with the staff and volunteers. One young pastor from Bethel wore a ball cap two of the five weeks and a vocalist from The Stirring wore different designer stocking caps each of the five weeks. The casual dress by staff and volunteers appears to be a technique that is welcoming to postmoderns as all present seem to be dressed in a similar fashion and therefore no obvious wardrobe variances between congregants and staff are observable. Juliette, twenty-seven, identifies the “relaxed atmosphere” as one of the ways The Stirring relates to her specific stylistic needs.111

Inclusion of the Arts

The regular inclusion of the arts is a method used by the churches being evaluated to promote an atmosphere that is attractive to postmoderns. Although this occurs more often at Bethel, both sites make it a common practice to incorporate various art forms into the worship service. Drama, dance, musical and vocal solos, and various forms of painting are all forms of worship that are used with regularity within gatherings. In addition to the worship music, the most commonly used art form is painting. This worship method can be seen in Appendix Forty-Seven.

As the worship service commenced, painters were seen on the right corner of the stage and begin with a blank canvas and began painting as they were inspired. At the conclusion of the worship set, the painters deposited their brushes and the art work stayed on stage to be appreciated by the congregants. This method appears to be appreciated by members of Bethel Church. Mary, twenty, says “the encouragement of the arts during worship (specifically painting and dance) is what sets Bethel apart from other

111 See Appendix Fifteen.
churches.”¹¹² When asked what how Bethel engages her in worship, Julia, twenty-seven, lists painting, dance, and music.¹¹³

**Authenticity**

Because postmoderns tend to be highly skeptical of institutionalized church as noted earlier, a worship culture built on trust is greatly valued by this generation. To the postmodern generation, authenticity is not something that is simply conveyed through word, but rather it is modeled through observable action.¹¹⁴ That is, this seemingly more cynical generation desires to see tangible proof of the values that are professed. Both sites are very intentional about being authentic and therefore employ appropriate techniques for accomplishing that goal.

One important technique used to secure an environment of authenticity by the Stirring is what Edwardson describes as “being intentionally vulnerable.”¹¹⁵ He says that church families must be willing to be vulnerable, to take risks, if they want to gain the trust and respect of the people. This technique was observed during the November 22 gathering as a young couple from the congregation shared a testimony in which the husband publicly spoke of two instances of infidelity as well as an addiction to pornography. He and his wife cried as they described their journey through these trials

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¹¹² See Appendix Sixteen.

¹¹³ See Appendix Seventeen.


¹¹⁵ Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
and explained how God delivered them from the sin that had nearly ruined their marriage. Although this technique may be effective, it should be noted that possible dangers may arise as a result of being overly vulnerable. Ridicule and public humiliation can result to both the speaker and to innocent family members and therefore caution appears to be appropriate when considering the implementation of public testimony regarding sensitive and personal issues.

Based upon the results of this study and from the research and writings of others who have focused on postmoderns, transparent vulnerability seems to appeal to younger worshipers. Niki, age twenty-seven, notes that she attends The Stirring because of the church’s “realness” and respects most her lead pastor’s “authenticity and commitment to honesty.”116 This comes as no surprise to Edwardson who believes that one of the greatest strengths of the church is the authenticity in gatherings.117 His practice of intentional vulnerability appears to be effective in developing an atmosphere built on trust and respect.

Bethel Church is also purposeful in developing an environment of authenticity. They use the specific technique of informality to foster authenticity. Bethel pastor Dann Farrelly explains the way in which this is carried out: “We are very informal. We are transparent. We don’t treat people like customers and we don’t try to be slick.”118 This informal, genuineness is highly apparent in the services of Bethel Church. “House music” which serves to establish a comfortable mood is noticeably absent before

116 See Appendix Eighteen.

117 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.

118 Farrelly Interview, November 4, 2009.
services. Gatherings do not start on time. Services yield to the movement of the Spirit and pastors frequently interrupt the service with a prophetic prophecy. Words are often put on the screens late or incorrectly as song flows are not structured and change from service to service. A video utilized by a teacher during the November 27 service did not have audio for approximately fifteen seconds before the situation was rectified. These mistakes within the worship services seem to provide a feeling of authenticity by allowing the gatherings to come across as unrehearsed, unpolished, and genuine. Mackenzie, eighteen, appreciates Bethel’s focus on authenticity and says the worship services “speak her language by being real and blunt.”

This intentional departure from services which are highly polished, professional, and devoid of any dead space seems to be in direct opposition to the “big church” model. Neil Cole explains:

The conventional church has become so complicated and difficult to pull off that only a rare person who is a professional can do it every week...When church is so complicated, its function is taken out of the hands of the common Christian and placed in the hands of a few talented professionals. This results in a passive church whose members come and act more like spectators than empowered agents of God’s kingdom.

The Bethel model is designed to foster a culture of authenticity. Mistakes within the services were observed with regularity during the five-week observation period. During the November 20 service, one of the pastors joked about “forgetting to pay the light bill” when the house lights failed to come up after a short video. The congregants laughed and the procedural error appeared to have no negative effect on the flow of the service. It is important to note that the observational data does not suggest that postmoderns engage

\[119\] See Appendix Nineteen.

\[120\] Cole, Organic Church, 26-27.
more effectively in services possessing procedural mistakes. The churches researched are intentional in planning and discussing service flows and take a proactive approach in securing an orderly environment where mistakes are minimized. Rather, the data seems to identify a church which highly values genuineness and where professionalism, although very important, yields to authenticity.

The Friday night worship team is completely made up of volunteers, many of which are Bethel School of Ministry students. They do not use a paid worship leader for these services. The atmosphere of worship that exists at Bethel welcomes whoever is leading, regardless of their style or level of development. In five weeks, there were four different worship leaders and all seemed to be equally appreciated by the congregation, regardless of their skill level. The technique of being intentionally informal seems to be effective in producing a worship environment where authenticity is realized.

Reiterating the Focus on Community

Author Derek Phillips describes community as “a group of people who live in a common territory, have a common history and shared values, participate together in various activities, and have a high degree of solidarity.”121 This description accurately describes what was witnessed at both sites during the five week observation period. Because postmoderns possess a strong desire to be in community with others, the techniques used to foster such an environment are important for the purposes of this study.122 Both churches focus strongly on community, and that focus manifests itself


122 Miller, Consuming Religion, 89.
through techniques that serve to create an environment welcoming to postmodern worshipers.

One such technique employed by both sites is the systematic verbal reiteration of the focus on community. Pastor Edwardson, who identifies the greatest strength of The Stirring as being “the strong vision of community,” believes that the leader must “blow torch” the vision so that everyone can clearly see where the church is going. The very clear vision of The Stirring, as set by Edwardson, is simply “we love, we make disciples.” According to Edwardson, the vision should be clear, compelling, should remain the same, and should be reiterated every week during gatherings. He laughs as he describes the visions of many churches as being “one night stand” visions that change from month to month and are heard only once by the congregation.

The technique of communicating the focus is easily recognized in the worship gatherings. All five services make mention of the community-based vision “we love, we make disciples,” and pastors regularly discuss upcoming events that serve to nurture relationships. One example was seen during the November 22 service as Associate Pastor Dan Lance encouraged worshipers to purchase gift cards that were to be disbursed to families in need both in the church and throughout the local community. Lance told the congregation, “You know how much we value people in this church family….we have an opportunity to speak into peoples’ lives through these gift cards.”

This vision was realized by worshipers as twenty-nine of fifty-two Stirring members indicated that “community” was the greatest strength. It is worth noting that this question was a “fill in” and no word bank was given. Therefore, the fact that over

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123 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
half responded with the exact same answer seems quite compelling and provides valuable
data which supports the value of utilizing the powerful technique of reiteration. The
technique of reiterating the vision and intentionally communicating it in creative ways
appears to be effective when considering that fifty-six percent of the worshipers at The
Stirring chose the exact same word to describe the church’s strength without any
prompting. Many congregants love the “family atmosphere” and the focus on “loving
people” as indicated on questionnaire responses and personal interviews. John, thirty-
five, feels like he is “at home” at The Stirring and adds, “It’s nice to feel needed.”

There is more evidence that suggests the technique of regularly reiterating the
focus on community is indeed a seemingly effective method. Approximately 300-350
young adults from The Stirring meet during the week in small groups called “Life
Groups” where they can develop stronger relationships with fellow worshipers. In
Scripture, disciples are made in relationship and there is no example of a lone disciple.

Stirring pastors Nathan Edwardson, Derrick Fleck, and Dan Lance each communicated
the importance of being involved in Life Groups at least once during my observation
period. At The Stirring, believers meet together and discuss real-life issues in small
groups of five to fifteen. These small group discussions are designed to allow more in-
depth discussion and more personal interaction.

Verbal reiteration of the community-based focus is a technique that is also
effectively employed by leaders of Bethel Church. Although community is not as
intense a focus as with The Stirring, pastors and volunteer leaders support the belief in

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124 See Appendix Twenty.

125 Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity
Press, 2004), 24-25.
community by implementing the aforementioned technique regularly. Language such as, “let’s love on each other,” “hang out with one another,” “isn’t it good to be together,” and “welcome to our family,” were all used during the observation period. One pastor described being on a “journey together” during the November 6 message.

**Human Touch**

Author Sarah Cunningham explains that postmoderns are often mislabeled as technological junkies who prefer gadgets over people. Cunningham points out that this generation prefers “human contact” over technology. This truth could not be more evident at Bethel. As seen in Appendix Forty-Eight, worshipers regularly embrace each other during services. Congregants are continually observed exchanging hugs, shaking hands, and kneeling together.

The method of communication appears to help cultivate an atmosphere that engages young worshipers. Many congregants remark about the friendly, loving nature of fellow worshipers. Erik, a twenty-eight-year-old worshiper at Bethel points out the importance of being relationally intimate with other worshipers: “We can never be more intimate with God than we are with our relationships with those around us.” Nathan, twenty-four, adds, “People here have so much love.”

The human touch method of communication is seen not only in the sanctuary but also in “Hebrews” – Bethel’s coffee shop. The researcher observed congregants

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126 Sarah Cunningham, *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 38.

127 See Appendix Twenty-One.

128 See Appendix Twenty-Two.
embracing fellow worshipers as they took a short break from the gathering to partake in a cup of coffee together. Laughter filled the air as members conversed during their recess. A feeling of intimacy was observable in the frequent non-verbal communication that occurred as congregants displayed affection for one another in an outward manner.

Human touch is a method used by The Stirring as well. On the November 22 service, Edwardson invited the congregation to partake in a “hand washing.” Worshipers were invited to come forward and wash each other’s hands as a symbol that God has forgiven them and removed the sins of the past from their lives. This portion of the service seemed to be well-received by those in attendance as approximately thirty-five percent of the congregation went forward to either receive a hand washing or to wash the hands of others. This physical display of love and intimacy for fellow congregants was palpable as tears of joy and subsequent embracing took place.

Climate of Honor

David Wells asserts that the postmodern generation is highly skeptical of institutionalized church and feels like the organization (the church) is sometimes elevated above the organism (the individual). The churches being researched have found a method that appears to dispel this negative association. Both churches intentionally create an atmosphere where the individual feels honored. Bethel pastor Dann Farrelly explains Bethel’s focus on honor:

We work hard at creating a culture of honor. This honor is recognized in the Trinity and so it seems as though we should place such a value on it. We never talk about our people like they are part of the problems that occur within this church. We love them and honor them. If there is an issue with someone, we go

\[129\] Wells, *God in the Wasteland*, 17.
to them and say ‘you are way too cool to be acting like this.’ This is just the way we speak to each other because this seems like the way God speaks to us.\textsuperscript{130}

This method of honoring individuals evidenced itself within the services. During the November 13 service, Erick Johnson, son of Bethel leader Bill Johnson, gave the message. Before he began he said, “Let’s give it up for the worship team – they were awesome.” These kinds of comments were made regularly during the observation period. When speakers were introduced, pastors would use words like “let’s honor him as he comes.” This method is valued by postmodern worshipers at Bethel. When asked to list the greatest strength of the church, “honor” was second only to “the presence of God.” Aluyn, a twenty-seven-year-old male who traveled from Taiwan to attend the School of ministry, states, “They honor everyone and see the good and speak into my life.”\textsuperscript{131}

\textit{Focus on Social Works}

David Kinnaman cites an unbeliever’s perception of the contemporary Church: “Christianity has become bloated with blind followers who would rather repeat slogans than actually feel true compassion and care.”\textsuperscript{132} This alleged perception of Christianity said to be found in the ideology of postmoderns seems to be noticeably absent among worshipers at the churches being observed. This appears to be attributed, at least in part, to the churches’ focus on social works. Both sites employ a methodology that challenges congregants to participate in service to the local and global community. In doing so, the

\textsuperscript{130} Farrelly Interview, November 4, 2009.

\textsuperscript{131} See Appendix Twenty-Three.

\textsuperscript{132} Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, \textit{UnChristian}, 15.
worship environment appears more appropriate for the postmodern mindset which values acts of service and giving back to others.

The Stirring strategically engages in social works. One example is seen in the “Erase the Dark Music, Art and Film Festival” conducted by The Stirring. Each year the church produces this festival to raise money for Cypress Elementary School, one of the lowest income schools in the city of Redding. The first year congregants raised over 8,000 dollars and purchased shoes for all the students on that campus. The second year, they raised 10,000 dollars and purchased backpacks for all of the students. In addition, The Stirring purchased supplies for teachers, gave needy students clothing, and painted walls and helped with playground equipment. The Stirring also gives ten percent of all income back to the community and helps support churches, organizations, and community projects.

Bethel Church employs a similar methodology with regard to social concerns. They conduct local ministries which go into the community and evangelize. One such ministry involves picking up and dropping off homeless people from local shelters so that they are able to attend church. Another ministry, “Night Strike,” is a Friday night ministry that focuses on evangelism within local bars and night clubs. This bold ministry goes into local establishments and presents the truth of Jesus to those who will listen. In addition, Bethel servants are challenged to give to global ministries oversees as well as support relief efforts such as with the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Congregants from both churches value this methodology. Many worshipers comment about the active role their respective church takes in giving back to the community. Bethel congregant Hannah, nineteen, admires her church for “having a heart
for this city.” Stirring worshiper Derrick, thirty-two, admires the vision of the church and says it “cares and reaches out” to those in need. It evident that the methodical practice of partaking in social works effectively contributes to a worship atmosphere that is welcoming to postmoderns at the two churches being researched.

Summary

As discussed in this chapter, both of the churches being observed employ specific methodology which serves to create church environments that are conducive to postmodern worship. The churches create environments where congregants are able to freely express themselves. Dress is casual and appears unintimidating to those who value a relaxed atmosphere. Various art forms are incorporated into the services and provide multiple ways to connect stylistically. A high value on authenticity manifests itself within the specific techniques utilized in each of the respective churches. Worshipers are regularly reminded of the focus on community and the practice of human touch seems to further reemphasize this importance. A climate of honor is secured as staff, volunteers, and worshipers esteem one another. The churches being observed also focus on social works within the community as well as within the nation and world. These practices appear to be effective in creating welcoming environments that effectively engage postmodern worshipers.

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133 See Appendix Twenty-Four.

134 See Appendix Twenty-Five.
CHAPTER SIX
Contextualizing the Gospel Message

New Testament professor and postmodern preaching advocate Ronald Allen writes: “The sermon is not simply the words of God modulated through the words of the preacher. Rather, the sermon is an interpretation of the Gospel in the context of the congregation.”\textsuperscript{135} The churches being researched both appear to use a style of preaching that is highly contextualized to fit the stylistic preferences of the postmodern generation. This method of teaching appears to be effective in presenting ancient Biblical truths in a modern fashion. Author and scholar Robert Schreiter is also a supporter of the sometimes controversial postmodern preaching methods and advocates this “contextualization” of the Gospel as he believes that it is a mistake to attempt to deliver the unchanging truth of Scripture in the same format, with no respect to the culture or time in which it is delivered.\textsuperscript{136} He believes that true inculturation of the Gospel requires the following:

One (must) begin with the culture to be evangelized, and imagine a more dialectical approach to the relation between Gospel and culture in which the presentation of the Gospel is gradually disengaged from its previous cultural


\textsuperscript{136} Grenz and Franke, \textit{Beyond Foundationalism}, 154.
embeddedness and is allowed to take on new forms consonant with the new cultural setting.\textsuperscript{137}

\textit{Narrative Teaching}

Although both churches share in this contextualized approach to presenting the Gospel, the methodology used to execute this approach differs significantly. At The Stirring, the contextualized teaching style appears to manifest itself through a “storytelling” delivery style. Instead of sequentially verbalizing Biblical points from a pre-determined outline, Edwardson uses a narrative style of preaching through which worshipers are engaged in a relaxed, informal presentation of the Gospel. Edwardson sits on a stool as he delivers the message without the aid of notes. There is no podium, just Edwardson, his Bible, and a stool. Edwardson says, “I am simply the guy who tells the story of Jesus, and invites others to join me in that story.”\textsuperscript{138}

Edwardson’s use of the narrative style of preaching seems to be consistent with the research conducted by those in the field of homiletics. Columbia Theological Seminary Teaching Professor Lucy A. Rose believes, “Stories are the starting point for expanding former definitions” and are essential in “nurturing the central ecclesial conversations.”\textsuperscript{139} According to Rose, postmodern teachers must embrace storytelling as the primary means of communication if they are to be effective in reaching that generation. Emergent Church Pastor Brian McLaren also supports the use of stories as an


\textsuperscript{138} Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.

\textsuperscript{139} Rose, \textit{Journal for Preachers}, 27.
effective way in which to transmit the Gospel. He notes that Jesus “hardly spoke without using parables which are works of short fiction” and concludes that “in inspiring the Bible, the Holy Spirit seemed to prefer a narrative approach.”

This narrative style of teaching is Biblical in origin and, therefore, is not a divergence from Scripture. Emerging church pastor Dan Kimball alleges that most of our modern-day forms of preaching came from fifth century Greek sophists (Greek teachers who invented the art of persuasive speaking known as rhetoric). Kimball asserts that the three-point speech that is still used today in many churches was developed by Aristotle. He maintains that church leaders John Chrysostom and Augustine significantly impacted how preaching was presented and made the oratory forms of the Greek and Latin styles the model for church sermons.

**Language**

The contextualized teaching style is a technique that is also used by Bethel Church. This technique, however, manifests itself differently within this church. One of the ways in which the contextualized style is realized is through the specific use of contemporary language. It is a language that appears to be tailored to the specific culture of this community of believers. This contemporary form of communication is observable within the worship gatherings and seems to be a technique that is effective in engaging worshipers. This was seen in the November 20 gathering as Pastor Dick Joyce previewed

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142 Ibid.
1 Peter 1:23, which describes believers as being born of incorruptible seed. He warned
the congregation, “Now this is going to get X-rated.” He then explained how we all came
from an earthly seed and explained how the word “seed” is derived from the Greek word
*sperma*. He pointed out that God knew what He was doing when He created the “earthly
seed’s journey to life.” Joyce immediately made a swimming motion with his hands and
said, “Those little suckers know how to swim.” Although this language may not be
accepted in all churches, it seemed to help effectively convey Joyce’s point as the
worshipers both laughed and applauded.

Another example of this contextualized language was observed during the
October 30 worship service. Family Life Pastor Danny Silk was speaking about the
importance of talking to God in one’s personal life. He titled the message, “Four
Reasons Why You’re Crazy if You Don’t Talk to Yourself.” The very title of his
message evidences the use of this contemporary language. Throughout the message, he
used phrases like “shout if you hear me” and “let me hear you speak blessings over
yourself.” Grant, a twenty-three-year-old Bethel worshiper, appreciates the languages
used at Bethel and said, “It (Bethel Church) uses my vocabulary.” Crystal, twenty-six,
values the “non-conventional” language used at Bethel and says it helps meet her stylistic
needs. It is important to note the language is rooted in a charismatic theology and thus
it may not be appropriate for all churches. However, it is another example of the
effective “language” technique that is used at Bethel Church to appropriately connect
worshipers to the truth of Scripture.

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143 See Appendix Twenty-Six.

144 See Appendix Twenty-Seven.
Transparency

The contextualization of the Biblical message is also seen in the transparency of the speakers. Speakers at both sites communicate Biblical truth through methodology that is rooted in the openness of their personal lives. Postmodern author Sarah Cunningham explains why transparency is important to the postmodern generation as she uses controversial rap artist Eminem as an example:

Eminem is one of the most controversial rap artists of my generation...Eminem’s overwhelming popularity blows a lot of people’s minds, especially Christians. How could the public adore someone who seems to use the F-word to punctuate nearly every sentence he says in public? I know why. So does Eminem. And so does my generation. People adore Eminem because he is painfully transparent... Eminem may be controversial, and he may say a lot of things that make me cringe, but my generation responds to him with adoration because he doesn’t gloss over life’s flaws. He is willing to let the world know him for who he is. And the twentysomethings and the generation that follows us respect that kind of authenticity.145

The Stirring pastor Nathan Edwardson believes that postmodern worshipers are looking for “leaders they can trust – leaders who will be real with them.”146 His belief in the need for transparency among church leadership is manifested through a methodology of preaching which regularly utilizes personal examples, stories, and illustrations. During his “Under the Chuppah” series in which Edwardson spoke on relationships, he regularly spoke openly about his own struggles and successes regarding relationships. This technique appeared to be effective in connecting worshipers with the Biblical text.

During the November 1 gathering, Edwardson said, “the purpose of marriage is not happiness, it is holiness.” As he discussed that successful marriages have “healthy conflict,” he told of a recent fight with his wife. With his wife sitting in the front row,

145 Cunningham, Dear Church, 42-43.

146 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
Edwardson described the argument in detail as worshipers listened intently. He continued with the story and shared how, after resolving the dispute and forgiving each other, he then asked his wife, “Can we have sex now?” When the eruption of laughter ceased, Edwardson then used that story to connect the listeners back to the Biblical text. Although this kind of transparency may not be appropriate for all churches, it appeared to help engage the worshipers by making the message more meaningful and memorable.

This kind of transparency is appreciated by worshipers at The Stirring. Kassy, twenty-one, says that The Stirring is different from other churches because of its “genuineness,” and adds that the church speaks to her through the “real life examples.” When asked what congregants liked best about Edwardson, words such as “honesty,” “sincerity,” “genuineness,” “authenticity,” and “realness,” were all commonly used. Andrea, nineteen, appreciates Edwardson’s transparency and identifies his best attribute as being his ability to be “very relatable.”

The technique of being transparent through Biblical teaching is a technique that is employed at Bethel Church as well. During the November 20 gathering, Associate Pastor Dick Joyce made the Biblical point that Christians will suffer persecution when they begin living out their faith. He used a personal story to help connect the worshipers to the Scriptural truth. Joyce told of a time in which he was asked to speak at a “mega church” and how he looked forward to this opportunity “with great anticipation.” Before he went out to speak, the lead pastor at the church asked Joyce “not to speak on issues dealing with prophetic nature” and asked him to be “sensitive to their church culture.”

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147 See Appendix Twenty-Eight.

148 See Appendix Twenty-Nine.
Joyce responded to the pastor by saying “What about what God wants?” Joyce, tears filling his eyes, shared how this interaction “deeply wounded him.” After hearing this intimate story, the worshipers applauded as they showed their appreciation. His vulnerability and transparency appeared to be well received by the congregation.

*Humor*

The contextualized teaching style can also be seen at both sites through the regular use of humor within Biblical messages. During all services at both locations, the observer regularly noted this technique being used within the presentation of the Gospel. Collective laughter was recorded by the researcher an average of 6.7 times per message at Bethel and 7.8 times per message at The Stirring. The speakers used humorous stories to help connect with the audience. Edwardson says, “If you don’t make the message meaningful, you will lose them (the audience). Using stories that are funny speak to them and bring them into the message.”

During the November 1 gathering, The Stirring pastor Nathan Edwardson used a humorous story to make the Biblical point that God tells us not to return evil with evil (1 Peter 3:9). He told of a man who accidentally broke the zipper of his wife’s dress as he attempted to help her zip up the dress before she left the house for work. Later that day, the frustrated wife came home and saw her husband underneath the car. With only the lower half of his body visible, she quietly snuck up on him and angrily zipped his jean zipper up and down repeatedly in an attempt to repay him for inadvertently breaking her zipper earlier that day. Upon running into the house, she saw her husband standing in the

149 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
kitchen. Edwardson explained that the man working on the car was the neighbor who had come over to help fix a mechanical problem. The worshipers erupted with laughter and the Biblical point of not repaying evil for evil appeared to be effectively conveyed to the young audience.

*Speaking to Felt Needs*

The churches being observed were purposeful in conveying messages that addressed the present concerns of the postmodern generation. This methodology was observed at both sites and appeared to be an effective way in which to appropriately contextualize the Gospel message to each of the respective congregations. Speakers dealt with culturally relevant issues such as sex, relationships, pornography, infidelity, forgiveness, and self esteem.

Speaking to felt needs is a technique that Jesus employed as evidenced in Matthew 6:25-33 as He spoke to the multitudes of people from the mountainside.\(^{150}\) He challenged them not worry about immediate concerns such as food, clothing, or their physical condition. Rather, Christ encouraged the people to first seek the Kingdom of God and, in doing so, He assured them that their physical needs would be met. Jesus understood his audience and took into account the needs of the people. Author and Pastor Bob Rognlien explains:

> Jesus effectively combined divine insight with culturally relevant modes of communication. He drew on the experiences of his listeners to make this truth come alive for them. He understood the pressures of subsistence-level farmers laboring under the weight of oppressive taxation. He spoke to that need, drawing

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on the sights, smells, and sounds that surrounded them. He employed metaphors woven into the fabric of their lives, such as sowing and reaping.

Christ was mindful of the felt needs of the people and effectively addressed those needs as he conveyed truth to his audience.

Pastor Edwardson is intentional with regard to presenting Biblical messages which speak to the needs of his congregants. Postmoderns highly value participating in social works and therefore this generation boasts the highest rate of volunteerism to date. Edwardson says he embraces this concern and regularly “champions the cause of the weak” throughout his messages and challenges worshipers to get involved in serving others. He also speaks on controversial topics such as sex and relationships. His messages are graphic and sometimes push the envelope with what might be normally accepted in corporate worship. When asked about the controversial nature of some of his messages Edwardson responds:

I am just speaking to the needs of the people. Marriages are screwed up, relationships are failing, pre-marital sex is at an all-time high, and people don’t know how to love each other. Somebody’s got to help stop the bleeding. I don’t preach what I want, I preach what they need.

Worshipers at The Stirring seem to appreciate messages which target their felt needs. Andrew, twenty-two, says, “I like the message the pastor presents because it always relates to something in my life.” Andrea, twenty-seven, notes that the church is

\[151\] Ibid.
\[153\] Edwardsdson Interview, October 21, 2009.
\[154\] Ibid.
\[155\] See Appendix Thirty.
relevant to her because “Topics we talk about relate to my generation.” Speaking to
the felt needs of congregants appears to be a technique that is both effective and
appreciated.

**Thematic Messages**

An additional technique used to effectively engage worshipers was observed in
the thematic construction of the Biblical messages. Although both churches utilize this
technique, it was predominantly noticeable in The Stirring gatherings. Unlike some
churches whose service components appear to be disconnected from one another, the
message was strategically tied in with the overall theme of the entire worship service and
worked in concert with the other facets of the gathering. Instead of being its own entity,
Edwardson’s sermon was part of a planned theme that was manifested throughout the
entire 100-minute service. The message worked in conjunction with the physical
ambiance, worship music, and support media, to effectively convey the theme of the
worship time.

This thematic approach is embraced by professionals in the field who confirm the
effectiveness of this technique. One such professional is Pastor Bob Rognlien. Rognlien
asserts the following:

One of the most important strategies for reaching people intellectually is to make
sure the entire worship service, and not just the sermon, is thematic. A strong
theme running throughout the worship service experience, tying all the disparate
elements together and building conceptual momentum from the beginning to the
end, connects people cognitively with the message and has a greater impact on
their lives.  

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156 See Appendix Thirty-One.

This thematic approach was identifiable throughout the entire Stirring gatherings. The theme can be observed the very moment the worshiper enters the gymnasium. As seen in Appendix Forty-Nine, worshipers were immediately greeted by a television displaying static upon entering the building. Normally, two greeters welcomed congregants to the gathering. This week, however, Nathan began a series entitled *Vox Dei*, which is Latin for “voice of God.” The theme of the entire service was “fasting from the noise that keeps you from hearing God’s voice.” Before the message was spoken, this idea was conveyed to worshipers through this thematic entry scene. This theme was further supported throughout the service through the use of specific worship songs that reinforced the idea as well as through all visual media and physical ambiance alterations. The message was part of a broad plan to leave a specific idea in the minds of worshipers.

Edwardson believes that the message must be “thematically tied in to the overarching idea of the gathering.” Observational data gathered throughout the five week observation period in combination with feedback through questionnaires and personal interviews suggest that Edwardson’s thematic approach is appreciated by the audience. Worshipers used words like “engaging,” “relatable,” “powerful,” and “stimulating” to describe The Stirring worship gatherings. Ian, twenty-four, appreciates the creative nature Edwardson takes in constructing thematic services and says he values

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158 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
his pastor’s ability to “think outside the box” as he looks at ways to bring the service together under one “vision.”

Critique of the Contextualization of the Gospel

The contextualized presentation of the Gospel seems to be a source of debate among Christians in this culture’s diverse theological landscape. John Burke, a pastor often associated with postmoderns describes the dangers associated with an overly aggressive, contextualized approach to reaching postmoderns not properly rooted in Scripture:

A very real temptation exists to carve out an identity by differentiating myself from what is traditional or pragmatic or modern. Jesus rebuked Peter, saying “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns” (Matthew 16:23). I think this is a valid warning for the emerging church that is shaping theology in our postmodern world. We must be very wary of reinventing theology for the sake of being the new, “new thing,” which is very much a trend of the cultural flow in which we swim.

Burke points out the desire of some postmodern church leaders who attempt to separate themselves from traditional churches by radically changing the way in which they “do” church. He is not suggesting that changing methodologies is negative. Rather, he is providing a Biblical caution to leaders who prioritize human concerns above that which God prescribes. He embraces change that appropriately aligns with the truth of the Word of God.

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159 See Appendix Thirty-Two.

Burke warns postmodern leaders not to over-emphasize form as the designation of the worship can inappropriately be redirected to the people instead of the Creator. The truth of Scripture can become blurred as human preferences now drive the gathering. He explains that doctrine is mixed with various interpretations, feelings, and stylistic preferences which serve to create a relativistic ideology that strays from the absolute authority of Scripture. John Burke emphasizes the importance of Biblical authority:

I think the emerging church will finds itself stranded on the shoals of postmodernity if we separate from Scripture as our final authority. Yes, communities of faith need to interact and inform interpretation, but it cannot be the tradition or the community that becomes the final authority – only the Scriptures can claim that, and only because of God’s validating prophetic fingerprint and the Messiah’s words.  

Emergent pastor Doug Pagitt represents a more liberal approach as he argues for a more aggressively “contextualized” presentation of the Gospel and challenges Burke’s assertions:

John Burke writes, “Theology must seek to answer the question of the culture without conforming to the culture. We must let our culture’s questions help us better conform to truth and God’s revelations.” (Pagitt) I think this notion, while sounding good, is simply not possible. Every time we use language, meet in a place, or make decisions, we are full participants in our culture. This idea that we can stand outside of culture with some sort of neutrality is not possible. So it seems to me that we need to be a part of the cross-cultural practice of engaging with our faith from our culture, in relationship with another culture, but not allow ourselves to think that we are somehow unbiased.

Pagitt believes those who present the Gospel message should first look at the culture and then discern how to include Scripture in the presentation. He asserts that Biblical teachers should not begin with Scripture. Rather, he believes that people will better understand the Gospel if Scripture speaks to them in their “language” and addresses their

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161 Ibid., 62.
162 Ibid., 77.
“real” concerns. In short, he maintains that the Gospel must conform to the culture as opposed to the culture conforming to the truth of Scripture.

Conservative David Wells takes issue with those who over-contextualize the Gospel as he asserts that contemporary preachers tend to “miscalculate the importance of truth.” He believes that the only way to “recover the saliency of God” is for church leaders to “move away from Our Time’s prevailing anthropology and move away from Our Time’s prevailing theology.” Wells cautions church leaders:

We have turned to a God that we can use rather than to a God we must obey; we have turned to a God who can fulfill our needs rather than to a God before whom we must surrender our rights to ourselves. He is a God for us, for our satisfaction – not because we have learned to think of Him in this way through Christ but because we have learned to think of Him this way through the marketplace. In the marketplace, everything is for us, for our pleasure, for our satisfaction, and we have come to assume that it must be so in the Church as well.

**Summary**

This chapter examined the methodology used by the churches being studied to effectively contextualize the Gospel message as they conveyed Biblical truth to postmoderns. At The Stirring, the narrative teaching style is utilized by the Biblical teachers to present truth in a more relaxed and non-threatening fashion. At Bethel, specific language that seems to resonate with the culture is used while presenting the Gospel. Teachers at both sites are highly transparent through the messages by using personal stories and illustrations to connect with their respective audiences. Humor is a

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163 Ibid., 76.
165 Ibid., 114.
technique that is regularly observed at both sites and appears to be an effective way in which to focus worshipers on a specific Biblical point. Speakers appear to address generationally-appropriate concerns as they effectively speak to the felt needs of their audiences. These churches present thematic messages which strategically tie into the overall theme of the particular service and serve to leave the worshiper with one overarching idea. A critique concerning the contextualization of the Gospel was presented and opposing views were discussed so as to provide a balanced, Biblical approach to effectively conveying truth to the postmodern culture.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Worship Music: Techniques for Engaging Postmoderns in Worship

The Priority of Music

The postmodern generation holds music in high regard.166 Young adults can be seen in coffee shops or in the local mall listening to portable music devices. Internet stores such as iTunes, Rhapsody, eMusic, Amazon, and many others provide customers with the ability to download their favorite songs instantly. Small headphones adorn young athletes as they warm up for upcoming sporting events. Automobiles are produced with intricate sound systems that reproduce digital audio with precision. Television and radio advertisements promote upcoming concerts and market the CD debut of the band that will soon be well-known among American pop culture.

The priority of music is obviously apparent within the two churches researched. Responses from worshipers who attend these churches confirm this. When asked what part of the service is most appealing to them, congregants from both churches responded by indicating “worship” or “worship music” on ninety-one percent of the questionnaires. It is important to note that in the Redding culture, “worship” typically means the part of the service in which worship music is played and congregants sing and respond. That is not to suggest that worshipers at these two churches fail to include Biblical teaching, tithing, prayer, or any other component of the service in the scope of worship. Biblical

166 Kimball, Emerging Worship, 1.
teaching, for instance, was rated higher than worship in terms of “importance” for both churches, and appears to be valued as an important aspect of the total worship service.\footnote{167}

Thus, when worshipers in this culture use the term “worship,” they are typically referring to the specific musical portion of the service, however not limiting worship to only music. The fact that postmodern worshipers highly value worship, as evidenced by the responses above, serves to emphasize the importance of being proactive in acquiring methods and techniques used to engage this generation.

\textit{Posture}

One technique that appears to be effective in engaging worshipers is the physical posture of the band and worship leader. This nonverbal technique was observed at both locations, although it was carried out in different ways. At Bethel, the worship leader often stood sideways, as indicated in Appendix Fifty, and typically led from either side of the stage. As identified by the arrow, the worship leader positioned herself stage right and faced the band. Notice the violinist, circled in Appendix Fifty, stood facing the back towards the leader. The worship team appeared to be somewhat disconnected from the audience.

At first, this unconventional technique may seem to work in opposition to the desired outcome of engaging worshipers. Why would the worship team intentionally disconnect from those they hope to engage? Steffany Frizzel, the worship leader seen in Appendix Fifty, explains: “I don’t treat the audience like an audience. I simply join

\footnote{167 See Appendices Three and Four.}
them in worship. I go after God in worship because my first ministry is to Him.”¹⁶⁸

Natalie, a twenty-seven-year-old worshiper at Bethel, appreciates the genuine worship and notes that it is “not just hip and cool, but it has substance and authenticity.”¹⁶⁹

The posture of the worship team changes throughout the service and seems to align with the particular song being played. When fast, celebratory songs are being sung, the body language of the worship team appropriately adjusts to fit both the tempo and mood of the song. Some worship team members are observed dancing with their instruments while others sway back and forth in rhythm. On songs that are more emotional and have a slower tempo, team members display commensurate posture.

During such a song, the violinist stopped playing and lifted her hand in the air (see Appendix Fifty-One). This gesture may seem counterintuitive to traditionalists who expect musicians to lead via the playing of their instruments. However, this technique is a form of nonverbal direction that falls in line with the leadership values of this church. The first written core value of Bethel Church is as follows: “Our first ministry is to God, therefore we worship with extravagant joy and gratitude.”¹⁷⁰ Worship team members use body posturing to communicate this value and appear to be received as genuine worshipers whose primary concern is to worship God. Holly, twenty-five, says she is engaged through the worship at Bethel and notes that the worship team “worships God from a genuine, tender heart.”¹⁷¹

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¹⁶⁸ Steffany Frizzel, interview by author, March 24, 2010, transcript.

¹⁶⁹ See Appendix Thirty-Three.

¹⁷⁰ Dann Farrelly, questions for you, e-mail message to author, January 27, 2010.

¹⁷¹ See Appendix Thirty-Four.
Lyrical Content

The churches being studied place a premium on song selection and therefore exercise considerable discernment and care when choosing worship material. Specifically, the worship leaders employ the methodological practice of intentionally choosing songs which they feel will lyrically relate to their church culture and therefore help congregants engage in worship. It is important to note that this is done under the thematic umbrella that unifies each service as indicated in Chapter Six. Although other factors contribute to the decision-making process, lyrical content is held in high regard by both churches and is a primary factor when choosing worship songs.

Postmoderns tend to relate better with lyrics that express feelings and conversations with God.\textsuperscript{172} Author Rex Miller explains the lyrical shift that has occurred with this generation:

Compare the lyrics of traditional hymns with most of today’s songs. “When I in awesome splendor consider all the works thy hand hath…wrought” is replaced with “I’m in awe of you, awe of…you.” One catalogs the reasons for awe, and the other expresses the feeling. One carries content well; the other carries emotion well.\textsuperscript{173}

The churches being researched choose songs that lyrically express emotions and a collective yearning to experience God. This methodology is evidenced in the song “Always Forever” by Phil Wickham. This song was observed at both churches and appeared to be one of the most engaging worship songs as evidenced by the outward response of congregants. Wickham’s lyrics, displayed in Figure 7.1, use metaphorical language to intimately describe God. God is emotionally depicted as the “air, love, day,

\textsuperscript{172} Rex Miller, \textit{The Millennium Matrix: Reclaiming the Past, Reframing the Future of the Church} (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 72.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
You are the hand that catches my fall  
You are the friend that answers my call  
You are my day, You are my night  
You are my love and all of my life

You are the love I need  
You are the air I breathe  
You are my love my life always forever  
I would lay down my life  
Just to be by Your side  
You are my love my life always forever

You are the grace that covers my sin  
You’re everything the beginning and end  
You have my soul, my heart and my mind  
You have my love and all of my life

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, forever

Figure 7.1 “Always Forever” – Phil Wickham

night, friend, hand, everything, life, and grace” by the songwriter. Wickham continues his expressive description of God by indicating that he would “lay down his life just to be by (God’s) side.” This brave assertion, whether meant literally or figurative, is a bold statement that demonstrates the way in which postmoderns prefer to convey their affection in worship. Although potentially controversial, these lyrics speak in contemporary language using illustrative, metaphorical, descriptive language that resonates with the generation being evaluated.

The Stirring pastor Nathan Edwardson says that Phil Wickham’s “Always Forever” helps worshipers connect to the theme of the service. He notes that even if the song doesn’t fully relate to the Biblical message (as was the case when this song was


175 Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.
played during the November sermon series on “relationships”), it is still thematic in that the overall theme of every service is always Christ. Edwardson says that this song conveys the postmodern generation’s overwhelming passion to seek Christ as it speaks in a way in which young worshipers can appropriately identify and relate.

Worshipers at both churches seem to appreciate the lyrical content and express their approval within the administered questionnaires. When asked if “worship style” or “worship content” was more important, eighty-three out of 108 congregants indicated worship “content” was more important while only fourteen indicated that “style” was superior. This left seven who felt both “content” and “style” were equally important, while 2 left the question blank. Bethel worshiper, Joel, twenty-six, indicated that content is more important and adds, “we are here to worship God, not to entertain people with our style.”

The Stirring worshiper Josh, twenty-one, says that content is more important and asserts “what is being said is more important than how it is said.” It is evident that lyrical content is an important ingredient to song selection within this generation, and thus a methodology which embraces this value, as seen in the churches researched, appears effective in engaging postmoderns.

**Organic Flow**

The unstructured, organic flow of the worship music is congruent among the churches observed and seems to be an effective technique for connecting with young worshipers. The term “organic flow” is used to describe a musical worship set that is free

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176 See Appendix Thirty-Five.

177 See Appendix Thirty-Six.
of rigid structure, thematic, adaptable, and moves fluidly from one song to the next.

Worship leaders from both churches have the autonomy and authority to make real-time changes to the worship set based on the prompting of the Holy Spirit. A previously arranged song list or some aspect of the musical worship set, may be altered during the service as determined by the worship leader. Songs may be shortened or lengthened, prayers may be added or omitted, and prophetic words or illustrations may be suddenly inserted to the musical worship portion of the service. The music portions of the services are free-flowing and organic and appear to be well-received by the worshipers.

The Stirring worship leader, Jenna Barney, explains the organic flow:

As a worship leader, I feel my upmost priority on a Sunday night is to create space for God’s Spirit to work in people’s hearts. We are there to worship our Creator in song, true, but above that, in spirit and in truth. So I want to let God’s Spirit move the worshiper’s heart to a place where that is true for them. I let certain songs go longer with more freedom for “free songs” to be sung.178

This Spirit-sensitive musical flow was witnessed November 8 at The Stirring service.

During the middle of the song “Burning Ones,” Associate Pastor Derrick Fleck motioned to the worship leader and then came on stage and shared the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He began this unplanned addition by stating, “I feel like God is calling me to share this with you tonight.” He then read Daniel 3:8-26, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego being thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar. After reading the story and a brief commentary, Fleck then exited the stage and the song picked right back up at the point at which it had been stopped. This entire mini-sermon took just over six minutes. It is important to note that the music never truly ceased.

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178 Jenna Barney, The questions about worship, e-mail message to Author, March 2, 2010.
Fleck spoke while the piano player held a “strings” patch on the keyboard and the
guitarist strummed melodic underscore music in the background.

This impromptu short message felt both unrehearsed and authentic, and was well-
received by congregants as evidenced by applause and sporadic cheers of “yah,” “that’s
right,” and “amen.” In addition, it seemed to be a natural part of the worship package as
the sharing was thematic and seemed to fit with the lyrics of the song. Musicians
appropriately adjusted the dynamic levels to fit the changing energy and intonation of the
speaker. The story became embedded in the song and it did not appear to feel out of
place, categorized, or intrusive.

Having an organic musical flow requires the regular use of nonverbal cues to
effectively communicate with the worship team. Songs at both locations are not scripted.
Rather, worship leaders rehearse the song but do not commit to a particular sequence.
Instead, specific, predetermined hand gestures are used at both churches and serve to
prompt musicians. As seen in figure Appendix Fifty-Two, hand gestures cue team
members and help to identify the song form as determined by the worship leader. Team
members are observed frequently watching the team leader as they direct the flow of each
song in real time. Hand gestures appear to be an effective technique for allowing the
worship to remain unscripted.

A methodical practice that contributes to the organic nature of the worship is seen
in the amount of time designated for musical worship. As noted in Chapter Three,
worshipers at Bethel and The Stirring spend fifty-four and forty-nine minutes in worship,
respectively. Although the overall services are close to two hours, the time spent in
musical worship appears to be significant and should not be ignored. The elongated
worship time is a methodological practice that is embraced by The Stirring worship leader Jenna Barney. She points out the following:

> It takes time for human beings, in general, to “switch gears” so to speak, and become immersed in something. Our world has taught us to “rush” things too much. I value the time we take to wait on the Lord in song, silence, or cadences and instrumentals. Part of creating a space (for God) is allowing the time for it.  

This practice is also appreciated by worshipers who value the ability to express themselves to God through worship. Matt, a twenty-seven-year-old Bethel worshiper, notes that he “needs to be given time to interact with the presence of God.” This methodology is well-received and appears to be effective in engaging postmodern congregants.

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**Leveraging Technology**

Communications expert, author, and University of Illinois professor Quentin Schultze describes the use of technology within the Church as essential and notes that it adds “better relevance” for young worshipers. The churches researched utilized technology in varying forms to help engage worshipers. This technology manifested itself within specific techniques and was observed at both church locations. One such technique was realized in the use of personal in-ear monitoring at Bethel Church. This technique replaces traditional “wedge” monitoring and adds several benefits. Each worship team member is given a PSM 600 as pictured in Appendix Fifty-Three, which

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179 Barney, e-mail message to Author, March 2, 2010.

180 See Appendix Thirty-Seven.

provides precision monitoring as well as significantly reduced stage volume. These units also help provide a clean stage by eliminating both “wedge” monitors and the corresponding cabling needed to power them. In addition, team members can move about the stage freely as these wireless devices provide uninterrupted referencing regardless of their stage location. At a list price of $1,686.68 per unit, these devices are long-term investments that appear to have lasting benefits.\footnote{Active Musician, "Psm 600 Wireless Personal Monitoring System," 2010, available at http://www.activemusician.com/item--MP.P6TRE3?ref=fg&ovchn/; Internet; accessed 14 April 2010.}

A second technologically-based technique observed at Bethel was the use of Aviom personal mixers (see Appendix Fifty-Four). Personal mixing is a relatively new technique that takes the monitor mixing responsibilities away from the sound technician and assigns the task to the individual musician or vocalist. This appears to be a wise move as the end user (the musician or vocalist) now individually controls his/her own mixer and therefore has total control of the overall monitor mix. Users simply push a button to select a channel and then turn the volume knob to adjust the gain appropriately. Team members understand the importance of this technology as worship leader Steffany Frizzel points out, “if my monitor mix sounds good, I’m going to sound better in the house (audience) mix.”\footnote{Frizzel Interview, March 24, 2010.}

Not only is this innovative monitoring technique appreciated by Bethel worship musicians and vocalists, but it seems to produce a more accurate worship product that engages postmodern worshipers. Numerous Bethel congregants, including Brian and Kevin, indicated that “quality music” was the way in which they were “engaged” by the
Monitoring techniques such as personal ear monitoring and personal mixing appear to contribute to the overall “quality” of the music and therefore seem to be effective techniques in reaching young worshipers.

It may seem as though relying so heavily on technology contradicts the church’s stated desire to be “authentic” in worship as noted in Chapter Five. Bethel worship leader Steffany Frizzel clears up this apparent contradiction: “All the tech stuff we use helps us not worry about things going wrong. If I’m worried about a tech problem, I’m not able to be led by God the way I need to be. When things work it is much easier to just focus in on God and be genuine in my worship to Him.”

**Presentational Media**

Generationally-appropriate presentational media is another technology-based technique that is effectively employed at churches being evaluated. At The Stirring, worship music is supported by graphical imagery that thematically conveys the lyrical content and mood of the particular song being played. This was observed during the November 8 service as the worship team played the song “Burning Ones.” The image of fire, as seen in Appendix Fifty-Five, was strategically placed behind the song lyrics on both projection screens and seemed to effectively support the chorus lyrics “we are Your burning ones, we are consumed by You.”

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184 See Appendix Thirty-Eight.

185 Frizzel Interview, March 24, 2010.

Visual support is used throughout the entire worship portion of the gathering and continuously changes to support the specific worship material. Because postmoderns highly value visual media, this technique is welcomed by The Stirring congregants.\textsuperscript{187} Stephanie, twenty-two, says she loves the “atmosphere” at the The Stirring and describes the church as “intentionally artsy.”\textsuperscript{188} Pastor Edwardson shares his belief in the importance of using support media within worship: “I want to use every piece of technology I can to paint the most meaningful picture. The better the picture, the more it resonates.”\textsuperscript{189}

\textit{Cautions}

Based upon general cultural trends, there seems to be a common “narcissism” among postmodern culture that has evidenced itself with Christian worship music.\textsuperscript{190} Theologian, author, and University of Notre Dame professor Christopher Lasch gives an example of this elevated love of self as manifested in the worship song “I Will Celebrate:”

God is never the subject of the song, but with all the repeats “I” is the subject 28 times… all the songs are about us…the most dangerous of the subtle influences on contemporary worship practices is the self-centered bent of the modern


\textsuperscript{188} See Appendix Thirty-Nine.

\textsuperscript{189} Edwardson Interview, October 21, 2009.

\textsuperscript{190} Christopher Lasch, \textit{The Culture of Narcissism} (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 32.
world…The Church must combat the constant influence of the cultural mind-set on our character and its subtle expression in Christian worship. 191

Many of today’s Christian worship songs seem to place the worshipper’s feelings and desires above the One who is to be worshiped. Although generations do like to express themselves differently, Christ must remain the designation of our worship. To elevate self above the Person of Christ is idolatry. According to Scripture, worship must be God-centered and place the focus on Him and nothing else (Deuteronomy 5:8-9).

Although these expressions of love for God are in no way wrong, when placed in corporate worship songs, they seem to refocus the worship on humans rather than Christ. Feelings are temporary and change with the circumstances of life. If worship is based on feelings, it is inconsistent. If worship is based on the truth of Scripture, it is unchanging. Although the delivery style of worship should be generationally appropriate, the content (based on the truth of Scripture) and the designation of the worship must never change.

This importance worshiping out of doctrinal truth can be seen in the life of Job. 192 Although Job was a righteous man, God allowed his servants, his livestock, and all of his ten children to be killed. Upon hearing this, Job “fell to the ground in worship and said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart.’” He continues, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” 193 Had Job’s worship been based on his feelings, his praises would have likely been few given the numerous tragedies that had just occurred. Job’s worship was rooted in faith, as well

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192 See Job (chapters 1-42).

193 See Job 1:20-22.
as in the truth and sovereignty of God. Job understood the temporal nature of our earthly experiences and clung to the sustaining power that comes from the truth of Scripture.

Summary

Music plays a large role in the lives of the generation being researched. “Posturing” is a nonverbal form of communication used at Bethel Church to engage worshipers through body positioning and gestures. Lyrical content is paramount when choosing songs as postmoderns prefer to convey worship through metaphors, illustrations, and other forms of descriptive language. The churches both utilize an “organic” flow and therefore the gatherings are free of a rigid, compartmentalized structure. In keeping with that flow, musicians use hand signal to cue worship team members and the time allowed for musical worship is appropriately generous so as to accommodate the organic flow. Personal monitoring, personal mixing, and support media are all technology-based techniques that are used at the sites and appear to provide a better overall worship experience for congregants. Lastly, cautions regarding keeping Christ the subject of the worship and worshiping from the truth of Scripture instead of experience was discussed.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Recommendations

Author and Lead Pastor Erwin McManus writes, “We’ve spent millions of dollars preserving our music and hymnals rather than creating worship that expresses the culture in which we live.”

Today, church leaders are presented with one of the most difficult challenges in church history. Never before has North America witnessed such a steep decline in church attendance. Young worshipers are noticeably absent in worship services, leaving many church congregations looking more like convalescent homes than vibrant, healthy church families where multi-generational community, discipleship, and teaching occurs. Churches continue to close their doors as aging parishioners die off and younger worshipers simply haven’t been engaged enough to fill the void.

**Recommendation One: Intentionality**

So how does the Church appropriately address this issue? First, church leaders must be purposeful in bringing about change. As noted in Chapter Three, Bethel Lead Pastor Bill Johnson implemented controversial changes in an effort to engage young worshipers. Those changes include withdrawing from the Assemblies of God

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195 Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 34.
denomination, moving away from hymn-based worship, building a multi-million dollar state-of-the-art worship facility, beginning the School of Ministry, launching the nationally renowned “Jesus Culture” movement, and conducting worldwide workshops and conferences that focus largely on reaching the younger generation. Although some of these changes are not practical for all churches, it is clear that Johnson took bold steps to effectively engage the postmodern culture.

Johnson’s intentionality toward change is not shared by some church leaders who hold to the belief that what they have done in the past is the way that it should be done today. Liberty University professor Vernon Whaley refers to this attitude as “institutionalism” and considers it to be a “hindrance to worship.” Because specific methods and techniques have been met with success in the past, it is natural to assume that those same methods will continue to have success if employed today. This belief appears to directly contrast the proactive philosophy shared by the leaders of the churches researched. Both Johnson and Edwardson purposefully take an assertive role in securing and maintaining an environment that connects with contemporary culture.

Newton's first law of motion states that every object will remain at rest or in uniform motion in a straight line unless compelled to change its state by the action of an external force. If applied to this study, this law could be translated, “Every church will continue to engage their current demographic unless intentional steps are taken to


strategically alter their trajectory.” The church desiring to incorporate postmoderns must prioritize their efforts and take measurable steps toward that end.

**Recommendation Two: Participatory Worship**

For young worshipers, the days of polished services led by trained professionals who individually crank out their finely honed craft as congregants look on, appear to be over. Postmodern worshipers seem to possess a desire to be part of the worship experience and long to take an active role in conveying their feelings to God. Young worshipers do not want to be entertained but rather incorporated in worship. Phyllis, twenty-nine, said she “feels free to express herself and engage” at Bethel Church.¹⁹⁸ Kristena, twenty-nine, noted that she connected with The Stirring service by “worship leaders engaging with the (church) body.”¹⁹⁹

This study has shown that positive responses can result when church leaders give attention to the values, needs, and worldviews of postmodern Western culture. Both Edwardson and Johnson made adjustments in their respective worship presentations to incorporate the participatory desires of the young generation. Leaders attempting to engage this culture must be proactive and changes need to be made such as minimizing “performance songs” where congregants remain seated as songs are sung by vocalists on stage. More time should be designated for worship and songs should be long enough for momentum to build and for congregants to have an opportunity to participate and respond. Ambiance alterations such as dimming the lighting to allow for anonymity

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¹⁹⁸ See Appendix Forty.

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix Forty-One.
among worshipers and creating physical space for outward displays of worship should be made. Songs that reflect postmodern styles of expression should be incorporated into the worship set to provide generational appeal to young worshipers. The church desiring to engage postmoderns must employ methods such as these to appropriately incorporate the culture’s need to be participatory in worship.

Recommendation Three: Unify the Service Thematically

Churches attempting to engage the generation being studied should employ a thematically unified approach to the construction of services. Compartmentalized gatherings where various service components are visibly detached from one another are less desirable to young worshipers. The churches observed in this study employed this strategy as church pastors representing the various church disciplines worked in conjunction with one another to thematically plan the content of the entire worship gathering.

Planning and care is taken to thematically plan a service where one common theme is represented. Edwardson considers factors such as worship music, lighting, the Biblical message, illustrations, and artistic expressions when planning the central theme of the gathering. As noted in chapter five, Edwardson used a congregational “hand washing” at the end of the November 22 service to bring his series on relationships to a close. The theme of the service was “forgiveness” and this public display, as well as the all the other components of the service working in conjunction, was a powerful way to unify the service and effectively communicate the theme.
Church leaders must bring together the various disciplines of the church and unite them under one thematic umbrella. It is easy for everyone to focus solely on their specific area of ministry. If left unchecked, churches can become fragmented institutions where departments are isolated and no common theme unites the service. Simply put, everyone does their own thing. This common practice fails to effectively engage the postmodern culture that prefers a thematic service where everyone is telling the same story. Unifying the service is an effective technique that will help connect with the younger generation.

Recommendation Four: Authenticate the Service

Many churches have worked tirelessly to perfect their services as they attempt to create a flawless “product” that is without procedural imperfections. Some churches hire worship producers to help ensure that the professionalism, quality, and structure of the gathering is seamless. Although these “seeker-friendly” services may appeal to previous generations, postmoderns prefer an authentic place of worship where professionalism surrenders to authenticity.

As noted in Chapter Five, worshipers at both locations appreciate the genuineness of the services. Nikki, twenty-seven, indicated that she valued the “realness” of The Stirring services and respected the “authenticity and honesty” of her pastor. Edwardson purposefully tries to create this authentic atmosphere as evidenced by the emotional testimonies that he arranged on the November 22 service. Two congregants boldly shared how their marriage was affected by pornography and how it led to

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200 See Appendix Eighteen.
infidelity. Not only was this story extremely powerful, but it seemed to convey a sense of authenticity that can only come through vulnerability.

For the church that wants to engage the postmodern generation, a tangible climate of authenticity must be present within gatherings. Church leaders must be willing to be vulnerable and allow the rigid service structure to take a more “organic” flow. Testimonies and personal stories should be used to connect with young worshipers who value transparency. Space must be created within the service structure to allow for the movement of the Holy Spirit and for “unplanned” works of God to be communicated. Techniques like the narrative teaching style and contemporary “non-church” language should be employed when engaging postmoderns as these forms of communication appear to be received more sincerely than traditional methods. Church leaders must be willing to facilitate a paradigm shift in worship methodology to appropriately secure a postmodern-friendly atmosphere where authenticity is valued.

Recommendation Five: Future Study is Needed

This study has produced specific methods and techniques that have been proven to be effective in the two churches observed. Because both sites are located in Northern California, no geographical discrepancy exists between the two churches and therefore the results of this study may be more applicable to this region. Although there were significant differences between Bethel and The Stirring, many common methodologies were observed in these two churches. Are the common methodologies applicable to other churches in North America? Will the techniques observed in this region prove to be effective in other cultures located on this continent?
The questions above are valid and need to be addressed through further research. That author therefore suggests that future study be conducted by individuals located in varying geographical locations throughout North America. Data can then be compared to this existing study and more universally-applicable conclusions can be drawn. Further study will help ensure that this growing problem is met with sound, applicable research that will properly address this serious issue.

**Conclusion**

In this project, the author presented methods and techniques that are effectively used to engage postmodern worshipers at two growing churches in Northern California. These techniques and methods appear to be instrumental in helping these churches connect with their respective congregations. Although the techniques used may be specifically tailored to the geographical culture of Redding and thus may not be universally applicable, it is apparent that the methodology observed effectively engages young worshipers.

As methodologies do have a significant impact in engaging younger worshipers, methods are ultimately rooted in the philosophy and theology of a particular church. It seems that in a constantly changing and dynamic culture, some methodologies have the potential to be spuriously adopted by churches without reference to the theological underpinnings of those methods. As Bethel Church is based on a more charismatic theological format, it would be unwise to prescribe and espouse specific methods such as the use of an “organic” service flow as described in Chapter Seven. This practice, which is mostly rooted in a theology that endorses spontaneity, contributes to the highly flexible
service structure employed by both churches observed in this study. Although this method seems to be effective in engaging young worshipers within the specific churches observed, it may be inappropriate for churches that do not possess a charismatic theology.

In concluding this project, it is important to keep the research in perspective. Methods and techniques must never be the focus of worship. Likewise, church leaders must not allow the “tyranny of the urgent” to distract them from the overall mission of reaching the lost with the life-changing message of Christ. Worship practices will continue to change, but the steadfast dedication to worshiping the Person of Jesus Christ must remain. Emerging Church Pastor Dan Kimball offers a Biblical perspective in this ever-changing world:

Amid our anxiety, remember that although ministry methodology, church, and culture change, Jesus never does. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He is the same now as he was in the Upper Room and as he appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. He is the same Jesus as when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of Castle church in Wittenberg. He is the same as when the Enlightenment was full in full force. Modern world, postmodern world, post-postmodern world…Jesus never changes. He is the reason for and the focus of all that we do. He is our anchor, no matter which direction the tide may be taking us.\(^{201}\)

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APPENDIX ONE

CONSENT FORMS

The following pages within appendix one contain samples of individual consent forms and a congregational consent letter. Each individual interviewed signed one of the consent forms and a staff representative from each of the two churches being researched signed the congregational form after permission was granted by the leadership within the respective churches.
ENGAGING POSTMODERNS IN WORSHIP:
A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES AND METHODS UTILIZED BY TWO GROWING CHURCHES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

September 29, 2009

Church Leadership/Governing Board,

Greetings in the name of Christ,

As you well know, engaging the young is not an easy task. Without question, many churches are ineffective and unprepared when it comes to reaching this difficult generation. Your church, however, has demonstrated clear success in the arduous task of evangelizing post moderns. I am writing my doctoral dissertation on this subject and believe that your church provides extremely valuable data that will be used to describe an effective model for reaching postmodern worshippers.

I am writing to ask permission to observe your worship services for the period of five straight weeks beginning the weekend of November 1 and ending November 29. I will attend all five services and take notes. In addition, I would like to video record the services. I would also like to interview the worship planning team or those responsible for formulating the worship program. Individual conversations may be requested in an attempt to acquire more detailed information. Data gathered will be used to explain what this unique congregation does well in its worship.

Because I am investigating how the worship attracts participants, I will also invite various worship attendees to participate in group or individual interviews as I attempt to discover how the worship effectively reaches them. I recognize that everyone’s time is valuable and thus the interviews would be concise and efficient.

Of course my full Dissertation Proposal is available for your review at your request. I will publish or disseminate the results of the study as my doctoral dissertation at Liberty Theological Seminary and may use video and any data gathered in popular and scholarly journals and in workshop presentations.

Protecting the privacy of all individuals is extremely important and thus all video will be done in such a way that the congregation is kept out of the video except when seen from behind as a large group (no individual faces). In addition, all individuals being interviewed will be asked, in writing, if their names or images may be used. Of course anyone who requests will have their identity concealed in all published documents. I
would request permission to use the name as well as the location of the congregation as this is an appreciative study of your church.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration and assistance in this endeavor.

We the authorized representatives of _____________________________ accept this invitation and hereby authorize the observation and recording of worship and the interviewing of staff and participants.

Authorizing Signature___________________________________   Date_____________
Title__________________________________________

Respectfully,

Jon Lepinski
Worship Pastor
Neighborhood Church of Redding
APPENDIX TWO

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Engaging Postmoderns in Worship:
A Study of Effective Techniques and Methods Utilized by Two Growing Churches in
Northern California

Name __________________________   Age______   Gender________   Date__________

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions using the following rating scale:

1 - Never   2 - Sometimes   3 – Fairly Regularly   4 – Often   5 – All the Time

1. The worship music is presented in a format that speaks to me.     ________
2. The biblical teaching helps address current issues in my life.  ________
3. The physical environment helps promote effective worship. ________
4. I feel a sense of community within the corporate worship setting. ________
5. The child care provided is safe, efficient, and effective. ________
6. Someone from the pastoral staff personally recognizes me sometime during, or shortly before or after the worship service. ________
7. Something occurs within the service that shows me that this church cares about me and me and my spiritual growth. ________
8. This church supports missions and gives back to the community either financially or through goods or services. ________
9. There are people of all ages in the worship services. ________

Please answer the following questions in reference to their importance in the overall worship service using the following scale:

1 – Unimportant   2 – Somewhat Important   3 – Important   4 – Very Important   5 – Essential

1. The style of the worship music is …………………………………  ________
2. The physical environment of the church is…………………………  ________
3. The sense of community I feel within the church service is .........  ________
4. The biblical message within the service is…………………………  ________
5. The quality of child care is…………………………………………  ________
6. Personal recognition from the pastoral staff is…………………… . ________
7. Authenticity within the worship service is…………………………  ________
8. The length of the service is…………………………………………  ________
9. Going to a church that cares about my spiritual growth is ……….  ________
10. The church being involved in missional projects is……………….  ________
11. The church giving back to the local community is……………….  ________
12. The church being relational (visibly caring for each other) is…….  ________
13. Having people of all ages within the worship services is…………  ________
14. Having ethnical diversity in worship services is………………..  ________

Please fill in the blank

1. I believe that __________________ is the greatest strength of this church.
2. If I could change one thing in this church it would be______________________________.
3. What I like best about my pastor is______________________________.
4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is______________________________.
5. __________________ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Music</th>
<th>Physical Worship Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Worship Environment</td>
<td>Worship Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Biblical Message</td>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>The Biblical Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>A Sense of Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.

2. Please identity what makes this church different from other churches.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?

4. What led you to begin attending this church?

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
Consent Form

I hereby agree to allow the information on this questionnaire to be used and published by the author of this study, Jon Lepinski, for his Doctoral Dissertation. I also agree to allow any information given through verbal interviews to be recorded and published. **Last names will NOT be published in any form.**

NAME_____________________________________DATE__________________
APPENDIX THREE

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS - BETHEL

Please answer the following questions using the following rating scale:

1 - Never  2 - Sometimes  3 – Fairly Regularly  4 – Often  5 – All the Time

1. The worship music is presented in a format that speaks to me .............. 4.2
2. The biblical teaching helps address current issues in my life .............. 4.7
3. The physical environment helps promote effective worship .............. 3.8
4. I feel a sense of community within the corporate worship setting ......... 4.1
5. The child care provided is safe, efficient, and effective .................... 3.1
6. Someone from the pastoral staff personally recognizes me sometime during, or shortly before or after the worship service ..................... 2.9
7. Something occurs within the service that shows me that this church cares about me and my spiritual growth ......................... 3.8
8. This church supports missions and gives back to the community either financially or through goods or services ......................... 4.7
9. There are people of all ages in the worship services ....................... 4.2

Please answer the following questions in reference to their importance in the overall worship service using the following scale:

1 – Unimportant  2 – Somewhat Important  3 – Important  4 – Very Important  5 – Essential

1. The style of the worship music is .............................................. 3.0
2. The physical environment of the church is .................................. 2.8
3. The sense of community I feel within the church service is ............ 4.4
4. The biblical message within the service is .................................. 4.4
5. The quality of child care is ...................................................... 3.9
6. Personal recognition from the pastoral staff is ............................. 2.9
7. Authenticity within the worship service is .................................. 4.9
8. The length of the service is .................................................... 1.9
9. Going to a church that cares about my spiritual growth is ............ 4.8
10. The church being involved in missional projects is ..................... 4.3
11. The church giving back to the local community is ....................... 4.2
12. The church being relational (visibly caring for each other) is............. 4.9
13. Having people of all ages within the worship services is.................. 4.1
14. Having ethnical diversity in worship services is........................... 3.4

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

Worship Music............... 3                      Physical Worship Environment...... 7
The Biblical Message........ 2                      Spiritual Growth....................... 1
A Sense of Community....... 4                      Childcare.................................. 8
Missional/Community Events 5                      Quality of the Service................. 6
APPENDIX FOUR

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS – THE STIRRING

Please answer the following questions using the following rating scale:

1 - Never    2 - Sometimes    3 – Fairly Regularly    4 – Often    5 – All the Time

1. The worship music is presented in a format that speaks to me............. 4.7
2. The biblical teaching helps address current issues in my life............. 4.0
3. The physical environment helps promote effective worship............... 4.2
4. I feel a sense of community within the corporate worship setting...... 4.6
5. The child care provided is safe, efficient, and effective................... 4.7
6. Someone from the pastoral staff personally recognizes me sometime during, or shortly before or after the worship service................. 4.0
7. Something occurs within the service that shows me that this church cares about me and me and my spiritual growth........................ 4.4
8. This church supports missions and gives back to the community either financially or through goods or services............................... 4.6
9. There are people of all ages in the worship services....................... 3.7

Please answer the following questions in reference to their importance in the overall worship service using the following scale:

1 – Unimportant    2 – Somewhat Important    3 – Important    4 – Very Important    5 – Essential

1. The style of the worship music is ............................................ 3.4
2. The physical environment of the church is.................................... 3.2
3. The sense of community I feel within the church service is ............ 4.5
4. The biblical message within the service is..................................... 4.5
5. The quality of child care is.................................................... 4.3
6. Personal recognition from the pastoral staff is.............................. 3.0
7. Authenticity within the worship service is .................................. 4.8
8. The length of the service is.................................................... 2.5
9. Going to a church that cares about my spiritual growth is .......... 4.2
10. The church being involved in missional projects is...................... 4.1
11. The church giving back to the local community is...................... 4.1
12. The church being relational (visibly caring for each other) is .............. 4.8
13. Having people of all ages within the worship services is .................... 3.9
14. Having ethnical diversity in worship services is ............................... 3.1

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

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# APPENDIX FIVE

**BETHEL’S PROGRAM “THE WEEKLY”**

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

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**ADULT EDUCATION**

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**KIDS AND LEADERSHIP TEAM**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>11/18/2023</td>
<td>[Event description]</td>
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<td>11/25/2023</td>
<td>[Event description]</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/2/2023</td>
<td>[Event description]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**WHAT ABOUT MY KIDS?**

- [Activity description]
- [Activity description]
- [Activity description]

**FINANCES/GIVING**

- [Funding appeal]
- [Funding appeal]
- [Funding appeal]
APPENDIX SIX

THE STIRRING’S WELCOME CARD
APPENDIX SEVEN

THE STIRRING’S DISTRIBUTION CARD

an eight week series
September 20th - November 15th

LOVE  DATING  MARRIAGE  SEX

theStirring.org
we love. we make disciples.

one church. two locations.

Located at 2828 Eureka Way
for info call 510.1990

sunday mornings
10 a.m.

Located at 2225 Fashell Ln.
just off I-5 in Redding
for info call 510.1990

sunday evenings
5 p.m. 7 p.m.
APPENDIX EIGHT

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is _____________.

5. The most important ingredient to effective corporate worship is _____________.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Music</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Worship Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Biblical Message</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sense of Community</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   Because I feel the presence of the Lord and I'm comfortable.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   That I feel comfortable in it.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   God speaks through teachings at this church directly to me.

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   God was putting a desire in my heart.

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   Because in this generation humor brings comfort.

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   Good choice of songs, the holy spirit, and music.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   I'm shy.

8. Which is more important to you; worship style or worship content? Why?
   Worship is worship if all please the Lord, it is not meant to please.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   A clear presentation of the truth because I'm not going to church to be entertained.
   I'm here to be fed, but worship is also essential.
APPENDIX NINE

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is ___worship______. 
5. ___Total openness___ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Music</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Physical Worship Environment</th>
<th>2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Biblical Message</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Sense of Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   Student, it's my local church

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   Hunger for God, openness to the Spirit

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   Gives spiritual food, presents opportunity to serve

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   Bethel Student

5. How does this church "speak your language" and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   It's open to the spirit

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church "engages" you in the worship service.
   Singing in prayer language, allowing different positions (laying, standing, sitting)

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   N/A I go to the school

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   Content. Style seems more about flesh, content is more about the heart

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   Powerful worship is authentic & will open the Spirit to better receive the presentation of truth.
APPENDIX TEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is __________.
5. __________ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Music</th>
<th>Physical Worship Environment</th>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Spiritual Growth</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Sense of Community</th>
<th>Childcare</th>
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<td>8</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missional/Community Events</th>
<th>Quality of the Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   The teaching empowers me and changes me as well God often shows up.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   People get encountered by God every service whether its through getting healed, delivered, infilled, etc.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   I feel empowered from the church and I think the sermons definitely feed me.

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   Started listening to podcasts and then changed my life - wanted to come to the school for a year and learn more.

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   I feel like this church is led by the Spirit not the law. I don’t want people to be legalistic but truly love, each other and God.

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   Easy to enter into genuine worship because of the culture here.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church. Not as much as it would back at my home church.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   Worship style is the one we are worshipping and giving Him all we have then it doesn’t matter to me.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   Clear presentation of the truth as long as it leads into changed lives and an encounter with God. I am not interested in head knowledge for the sake of head knowledge.
APPENDIX ELEVEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is __________. 
5. __________ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Worship Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.  
   FAMILY FEEL

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.  
   LEADERSHIP RELEVANCE

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?  
   LIFE GROUPS

4. What led you to begin attending this church?  
   PASTOR TALKED TO ME

5. How does this church "speak your language" and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?  
   WORSHIP

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church "engages" you in the worship service.  
   MUSIC, MESSAGE, COMMUNITY

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.  
   IT IS OF HIGH IMPORTANCE

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?  
   GOD CAN MOVE IN ANY STYLE

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?  
   TRUTH CAN'T BE ARGUED WITH.
APPENDIX TWELVE

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is a good message.
5. Balance is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

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<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   Non-denominational, spiritual, empowering, the love

2. Please identity what makes this church different from other churches.
   A much more emotionally driven message

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   Personal relationship with pastors, awesome worship, passionate pastors

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   A friend, and I was saved on my first visit (April 22, 2007)

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   Very contemporary, driven by God’s love, devoid of “cookie-cutter” traditional
   Church

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   Dim lighting (personal), awesome pastors, passionate speakers

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of
   this church. People love to pray for each other, empower each other, and support each other in their faith.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   I feel they are equal simply because the stirring has a great balance

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   A clear presentation of the truth because, ultimately, that’s what we’re here for; however, good worship can help
   better soften our hearts for him, and open us to hear his message.
APPENDIX THIRTEEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is response.
5. The Holy Spirit is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Biblical Message</td>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Sense of Community</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   I want to devote myself to community of believers who are devoted to God and each other.
2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   It's authentic feel of love, community, and openness.
3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   It encourages me to follow Jesus more closely every day.
4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   I suddenly felt at home.
5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   Language wise, music wise - uses words and music I understand to help me understand.
6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   Relational leading, exhorting Scripture, space for encounter.
7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   It's everything... and it's out of their relationships with Christ that they connect with and draw me into the same.
8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   Because I like it when things mean something "across the board".
9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   Both are so important because an experience has no foundation without truth and truth has no relation without experience...
APPENDIX FOURTEEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is **All of it**.
5. **Testament** is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Music</th>
<th>Physical Worship Environment</th>
<th>3/2</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>The Biblical Message</td>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sense of Community</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Short Answer**

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   - For ministry school - to pick up the momentum of what God is doing here.
2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   - The core values of honor & never being satisfied, but always pursuing more of God.
3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   - They Empower + train me to have a personal walk w/ God, founded in Scripture + experienced by me. Holy Spirit daily.
4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   - I started hearing the stories + witnessed what they had.
5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   - I’m accepted just as I am - my needs are met because we just want "More of God." Creates an intimate atmosphere - Freedom to worship the best way for me.
6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   - "It's so I feel I'm accepting just as I am..." "Unity is safe."
7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   - Relationships are a big plus here. "Freedom to worship the best way for me."
8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   - Content, because it's pure, honest, not just an experience w/ God. Style change often.
9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   - I feel they are equally important. Truth w/out Experience gives me head knowledge w/no power to implement it into my life + Experience w/out truth leaves me wishy-washy.
APPENDIX FIFTEEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is **worship**.
5. **Authenticity** is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Biblical Message</td>
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<td>A Sense of Community</td>
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<td>Physical Worship Environment</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Service</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.  
   It's a community that pushes me toward God.
2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.  
   Sense of community
3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs? Down to earth messages and people who care
4. What led you to begin attending this church?  
   Community a place to raise a family
5. How does this church "speak your language" and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?  
   Modern worship, relaxed atmosphere, in touch with Holy Spirit
6. Please list three specific ways in which this church "engages" you in the worship service.
7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.  
   I could not thr...somewhere where I don't feel connected. Through life group and other relationships feel loved, connected, and challenged.
8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?  
   Content. The Holy Spirit can be in any style. As long as it's authentic, longer
9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?  
   Both are important. But the truth is necessary, it can lead you to powerful experiences.
APPENDIX SIXTEEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is __________. What is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

5. Belonging to a group is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship. How is this group forming or doing what it's doing at your church?

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

| Worship Music | 2 | Physical Worship Environment | 8 |
| The Biblical Message | 1 | Spiritual Growth | 3 |
| A Sense of Community | 4 | Childcare | 6 |
| Missional/Community Events | 7 | Quality of the Service | 5 |

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   - Their freedom in worship, prophetic healing, and the emphasis on the Holy Spirit.
2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   - Freedom in the Holy Spirit, encouragement of the arts during worship (dancing, drama)
3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   - Freedom in the Holy Spirit, encouragement of the arts during worship (dancing, drama)
4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   - By providing a safe environment to take risks (healing process, etc.) to promote growth!
5. How did the presence of God influence your decision to attend?
   - Freedom in the Holy Spirit, encouragement of the arts during worship (dancing, drama)
6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   - The presence of God when leadership welcomes God to have His way; it is very engaging!
7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   - It’s a big part—engaging!
8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   - CONTENT AND THE ANOINTING, GENUINENESS OF THE WORSHIP TEAM.
9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
APPENDIX SEVENTEEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is ______________.
5. The __________ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.
   
   the people (love, unity)
   
   The people, good and bad, start________.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important. I cannot answer this question.

Worship Music _______ Physical Worship Environment _______

The Biblical Message _______ Spiritual Growth _______

A Sense of Community _______ Childcare _______

Missional/Community Events _______ Quality of the Service _______

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church. BSSM

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches. Their message for more of
   God. The mix of or focus increasing the mind through sound
   
   their words and giving free
   
   to the move of the
   
   Holy Spirit.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs? See above

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   
   School (BSSM)

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   
   I don’t need a specific style to enter into worship but they are trying
   
   to be diverse. weekly

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service. and somewhat didn’t
   
   painting, dance, music

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of
   this church.
   
   weekly. relationship would play an important
   
   role in my motivation to join a congregation.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   
   Content, I need to connect to the lyrics, at least to a certain degree.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   
   A clear presentation of the truth, because it is our
   understanding of God that creates the rift through which
   we view him and relate to him, also changes worship.
   
   If I don’t know how good God is, I’m not going
   
   to be excited about praising him, no matter how awesome

Content Form
APPENDIX EIGHTEEN

Please answer the following questions in reference to their importance in the overall worship service using the following scale:

1 – Unimportant  2 – Somewhat Important  3 – Important  4 – Very Important  5 – Essential

1. The style of the worship music is .............................................. 3
2. The physical environment of the church is.................................
3. The sense of community I feel within the church service is .........
4. The biblical message within the service is................................
5. The quality of child care is.....................................................
6. Personal recognition from the pastoral staff is............................
7. Authenticity within the worship service is.................................
8. The length of the service is.....................................................
9. Going to a church that cares about my spiritual growth is ..........
10. The church being involved in missional projects is...................
11. The church giving back to the local community is...................
12. The church being relational (visibly caring for each other) is.....
13. Having people of all ages within the worship services is...........
14. Having ethnical diversity in worship services is.......................

Please fill in the blank

1. I believe that ___________________ is the greatest strength of this church.
2. If I could change one thing in this church it would be ____________
3. What I like best about my pastor is ____________________________

[Handwritten note: to honesty]
4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is **I truly do love all of it.**

5. The **people leading** is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

- **Worship Music**
- **The Biblical Message**
- **A Sense of Community**
- **Missional/Community Events**
- **Physical Worship Environment**
- **Spiritual Growth**
- **Childcare**
- **Quality of the Service**

**Short Answer**

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   - The **family atmosphere & preaching of topics**

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   - Same as **I**

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   - **Family**

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   - **Welcoming, casual**

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church. I am deeply committed to the staff as I truly believe in the vision of this body.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   - **I would rather not have one with the other.**
   - In a healthy church they should feed each other.
APPENDIX NINETEEN

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is ________
5. What is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship?

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

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<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   
2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   
3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   
4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   
5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   
6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   
7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   
8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   
9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
APPENDIX TWENTY

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is ________, and the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship is ________.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

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<td>Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missional/Community Events</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church. It's my home; I feel I can be myself.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches. It's friendly, and I have made many friends.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs? Yes, I wish I could be there more often. It's great!

4. What led you to begin attending this church? My friend brought me. Ashley.

5. How does this church "speak your language" and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs? My language, I'm know I am growing, it's العرب to be what I have and help us, and I always worship my way. I know we are.

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church "engages" you in the worship service. Raising hands, crying "whoo hoo" to God, totally letting God flow.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church. I want to be a part. I love to go. I want to be with people and discuss the sermon. I pray and praise.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why? Worship content. I worship God, it's speaking with God.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why? A clear presentation of the truth. God is perfect.

Consent Form
APPENDIX TWENTY-ONE

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is ___________ Service.

5. ___________ God is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

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</table>

Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?

4. What led you to begin attending this church?

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
APPENDIX TWENTY-TWO

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is __________. 
5. __________ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

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6. The place where they make me feel the Spirit is __________. They make the Bible real.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church. People love someone who loves.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
APPENDIX TWENTY-THREE

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

5. The Holy Spirit is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

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Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   It's safe and welcomes the holy spirit.

2. Please identity what makes this church different from other churches.
   It's not afraid to be real and go for God's heart!
   Taking chances.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   I get revelation each time because God's presence is so present.

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   My heart. Heard it on podcast. It was the truth!

5. How does this church "speak your language" and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   It's not afraid to speak and address truth!

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church "engages" you in the worship service.
   Amazingly talented leaders, safe environment, freedom!

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   They honor everyone. I see the good and speak into my life. They call out the good all the time.
   None as long as the spirit is there.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   Bith! Worship gets my heart ready for the truth.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
APPENDIX TWENTY-FOUR

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is all of it.
5. Corporate teaching is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

Number the following from most to least important. 1 represents the most important and 8 represents the least important.

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Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   - It's home.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   - Relevant music, atmosphere, prayer.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   - Family focused. Tackles problems/needs through lifegroups.

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   - It was planted out of my other church.

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   - Creatively.

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   - Relevance, atmosphere, prayer.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   - They’re everything!

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   - Worship content because it’s truth.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   - Clear presentation of truth which causes a powerful worship experience.
4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is ____________________.
5. A sense of belonging is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

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Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   The vision of the church.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   The special dynamics & vision (specific) - need sense of family.

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   By corn & Rejoice & 

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   The lead people encouraged me to attend.

5. How does this church "speak your language" and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   Fit in very well, how it is run, function, Sunday dinner.

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church "engages" you in the worship service.
   Style, personal, physical, environment.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   They make me feel like this home. That's why I belong to a family.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   Worship style... church fee me to engage physicians worshipers. It's not authentic.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   As it relates to a Sunday night. Evil say a clear presentation of the truth. The truth makes sense. Can come through the spoken word or at any given time in our services.
APPENDIX TWENTY-SIX

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is depend on the day.
5. _____ is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

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Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   It has God.

2. Please identity what makes this church different from other churches.
   See #1

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?
   Challenging me!

4. What led you to begin attending this church?
   BSSM

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?
   It uses my vocabulary

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.
   People, God, I engage others.

7. Briefly discuss the role that relationships (with other church members) play in your desire to be a part of this church.
   People are the Church. Without them, there isn’t.

8. Which is more important to you, worship style or worship content? Why?
   Style.

9. Which is more important, a powerful worship experience or a clear presentation of the truth? Why?
   Truth invites power and experience.
APPENDIX TWENTY-SEVEN

1. I feel the Spirit at the string and I have grown in the Spirit since going.

2. Leaders truly seek Jesus and live it out - not "traditional" singing hymns and be talked at.

3. I am not given every answer, I am encouraged to seek God myself and take advantage of the fellowship - people were active in seeking the Spirit.

4. A friend suggested it & I felt the need and urge to continue.


6. Music is filled with Spirit, leaders filled with Spirit an atmosphere conducive to feeling freedom of Spirit.

7. Other church members seek Jesus and I can identify their roles & struggles - by fellowship with them it allows me to move
APPENDIX TWENTY-EIGHT

4. The part of the service that is most appealing to me is

5. The message of worship is the most important ingredient to effective corporate worship.

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Short Answer

1. Please list the main reason you attend this church.
   
   [Handwritten text: I feel reconnected with the Lord, feel comfortable and part of family, it feels genuine, it holds and its genuine, it is clear, friend brought me, re-boots confidence.

2. Please identify what makes this church different from other churches.
   
   [Handwritten text: The confidence it holds and its genuineness]

3. How does this church meet your spiritual needs?

   [Handwritten text: It give real life examples to apply, my confidence.]

4. What led you to begin attending this church?

   [Handwritten text: Friend brought me]

5. How does this church “speak your language” and relate to you and your specific stylistic needs?

   [Handwritten text: I think the style attracts you to listen to the word.]

6. Please list three specific ways in which this church “engages” you in the worship service.

   [Handwritten text: This is what can apply to my life and bring to God. The worship lifts my spirits and opens my heart.]

Consent Form

I believe they are equal in a way.
APPENDIX TWENTY-NINE

Unimportant  2 - Somewhat Important  3 - Important  4 - Very Important  5 - Essential

1. The style of the worship music is ........................................ 5
2. The physical environment of the church is............................. 4
3. The sense of community I feel within the church service is ....... 5
4. The biblical message within the service is......................... 5
5. The quality of child care is........................................... 5
6. Personal recognition from the pastoral staff is..................... 5
7. Authenticity within the worship service is............................ 2
8. The length of the service is............................................ 2
9. Going to a church that cares about my spiritual growth is ....... 5
10. The church being involved in missional projects is................ 5
11. The church giving back to the local community is............... 2
12. The church being relational (visibly caring for each other) is.... 2
13. Having people of all ages within the worship services is........ 2
14. Having ethnical diversity in worship services is..................

Please fill in the blank

1. I believe that _______ is the greatest strength of this church.
2. If I could change one thing in this church it would be _______.
3. What I like best about my pastor is _______.