SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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THOMAS WAYNE DOSS

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Thomas Wayne Doss

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APPROVED BY:

Rodney D. Whaley, D. Min. Committee Chair
W. Douglas Crawley, DMA, Committee Member
Vernon M. Whaley, PhD. Dean of the School of Music
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ABSTRACT

The life change that Christ Jesus wants to produce in His children is nothing short of miraculous. His offer of salvation immediately transforms the accepting person, bringing him into a divine relationship with the Heavenly Father, but Christ desires to further transform the new believer into a person who more accurately bears the image of God and declares His greatness and glory to all. This is a progressive and life-long process that calls the Christian to a life that includes sacrificial worship, avoidance of worldly living, and renewing the mind with godly pursuits. Because this is the will of God for the believer, this thesis presents a biblical foundation for transformation and scriptural examples of lives that were transformed by the power of God. Study is dedicated to the development of spiritual disciplines that produce life change in private worship. Attention is also given to corporate or public worship through the analysis of case studies to present identifying qualities of churches that are considered to be transformational. Field research indicating the communicative and emotive power of the arts in sparking transformation during worship is considered. Through comparative analysis of the various forms of data, concepts and principles of spiritual transformation are extrapolated and applied to the practices of private and public worship. Applicable implications are also drawn that are useful for persons responsible for planning and leading congregations in worship.

Keywords: Transformational worship, life changing practices of private worship, worship that transforms congregations
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my precious wife Joyce who has stood beside me for over 25 years. Her love and commitment is without equal here on earth. She has been an encouragement to me in my own journey of transformation. Sweetheart, I love you dearly. Thank you for your patience, prayers, and countless proof readings. You may indeed know this material better than I.

To my sons, Jonathan and Phillip, I thank you for constantly challenging me to relate to you in the same way our Heavenly Father relates to His children. I miss the mark so many times, but I strive to get it right. I love you guys.

To Dr. Vernon Whaley and the faculty of Liberty University's School of Music, thank you for pursuing the mission of not only developing musicians, but also passionate worshipers for the kingdom of God. It has been a blessing to study under you and your staff.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ iv

DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................................... v

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1
   Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................................. 2
   Statement of the Purpose .................................................................................................................. 5
   Significance of the Study .................................................................................................................. 5
   Research Questions ......................................................................................................................... 6
   Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................................... 6

CHAPTER 2: LITERARY REVIEW ......................................................................................................... 9
   Biblical Foundations and Examples of Transformation in the Context of Worship ..................... 10
   The Disciplines of Private Worship and Their Transformational Influence ............................. 12
   The Practices of Public Worship that Demonstrate Transformation ...................................... 15
   The Convergence of Worship and Transformation ......................................................................... 17
   Leading Congregational Worship Designed to Encourage Transformation ............................ 21

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS .................................................. 27
   Research Methodology .................................................................................................................. 27
   Assumptions ................................................................................................................................ 29

CHAPTER 4: A SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR TRANSFORMATION ..................................... 30
   A New Creation: The Case for Immediate Transformation ......................................................... 30
   Shaped by the Creator: Progressive Transformation ..................................................................... 31
   Future Hope: Completed Transformation ...................................................................................... 37

CHAPTER 5: EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION IN PRIVATE WORSHIP ............................. 39
   Portraits of Personal Transformation ............................................................................................. 39
   The Preparation for Personal Transformation ............................................................................... 43
   The Process for Personal Transformation ....................................................................................... 46
   The Proof of Personal Transformation .......................................................................................... 52
CHAPTER 6: EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC WORSHIP ................. 54
  The Church of Antioch: A Model for the Transformational Church .................. 54
  The Contemporary Church and Transformation .............................................. 63

CHAPTER 7: THE CONVERGENCE OF TRANSFORMATION AND WORSHIP .......... 75
  Transformational Worship and Theology ....................................................... 75
  The Value of the Arts in Transformational Worship ......................................... 77
  Liturgy and Transformational Worship .......................................................... 84
  Leading and Designing Worship that Encourages Transformation .................... 88

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION ................................................. 97
  Summary of Study ................................................................................. 97
  Summary of Procedure ....................................................................... 98
  Summary of Findings .......................................................................... 98
  Limitations ......................................................................................... 103
  Recommendations for Future Study .................................................... 104
  Implications for Practice: A Model for Transformational Worship ............. 105
  Conclusion ......................................................................................... 114

REFERENCES ....................................................................................... 116

APPENDIX I .................................................................................. 121

APPENDIX II .................................................................................. 124
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 6.1: Stetzer and Rainier's (2008) Transformational Loop ........................................... 64
Figure 6.2: Five Deliverables of Small Communities .................................................................. 72
Figure 7.1: Witvliet's (2008) Three Forms of Communication Powered by the Holy Spirit ...... 80
Figure 7.2: Aspects of the Agogic Moment ................................................................................. 81
Figure 7.3: Abernethy's (2008) Pathway of a Song .................................................................... 83
Figure 7.4: Stanley and Jones' (2008) Five Rules of Engagement ................................................ 95
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17, [KJV]). It is no coincidence that God directed these inspired words to be penned by the Apostle Paul, for it best summarizes the author’s life-changing encounter with God.

Once known as Saul, he was adversarial to the message of the gospel of Jesus and to those who declared the truth of Christ’s resurrection. His aggressive attempts to imprison or execute anyone who spoke the name of Christ caused great concern among the early believers. The scripture’s first mention of Saul was at the stoning of Stephen, a follower of Christ and among the first to be martyred for his faith. Saul’s contemptuous gaze was fixed on Stephen as stones were mercilessly hurled at his body. Though stones could break Stephen’s bones, they could not crush his faith in God nor could they keep his gaze from the radiant glory of the resurrected Christ (Acts 7). Unbeknownst to Saul, he too would soon encounter the glory of God.

Following the orders of the Chief Priest, Saul was on his way to Damascus to seize and incarcerate the Christians who were there spreading the gospel. His malevolence grew with every step toward his destination. As he neared the desert oasis, the bright sun bowed to a greater radiance. The glory of the Almighty God was made manifest before Saul in blinding brilliance. In the presence of the Lord, Saul fell to his knees. In that moment his life was changed forever.

The transformational conversion experience was only the beginning of Saul’s journey. Not only was his life changed, his name was changed from Saul to Paul, there was a momentous change of his life’s purpose, and as a passionate worshiper of Christ he was “unashamed” in his declaration of the message of the gospel (Romans 1:16). With boldness His life brought praise and glory to God. As a result of Paul’s ministry, Christianity spread among the Jews and
Gentiles, churches were formed, and worship became a way of life for those who had been redeemed. The worship that Paul both lived and taught involved much more than a one-time encounter in the presence of God. It involved an ongoing vital relationship between the Savior and those He had saved.

When Paul writes in Romans 12 that our fundamental response to God should be to offer our entire lives, including our bodies as living sacrifices, the apostle calls us to a comprehensive view of worship in our everyday lives, not merely a block of time on Sunday morning...Living all of one's days in the shadow of the Cross and in gratitude to God is precisely how the transforming power of worship is unleashed in our lives (Walters 2006, 195).

In short the Christian has been transformed from a child of darkness into a child of light. Yet there is also an ongoing aspect of transformation that calls the believer to a deeper place of communion with God whereby he is made more like the heavenly Father. As God is revealed to man, he reflects, realigns, and responds in such a way that reflects God’s glory in the present world. Where there is true worship, there is transformation.

**Statement of the Problem**

With any study related to worship there are difficulties that present themselves. In present culture, the term “worship” is often misunderstood. A prevalent misconception regarding worship in the church today is that it is narrowly defined as a weekly occurrence when the church body gathers together for services. The gathering of God’s people in assembly is a vital part of worship that calls believers to a time and location to offer praise to Him. From the early accounts of Old Testament corporate worship, there was a time and place set aside for God’s children to celebrate His goodness, seek His cleansing, and encounter His presence, but God’s worship was also to be practiced daily in the lives of those who followed Him. If worship is only seen as “something we do on Sundays” and not a part of the totality of life, there is little hope for transformation.
Equally confusing to an understanding of true worship is the notion that music and worship are synonymous. This would be like saying all four-sided geometric patterns are squares. While the square is a four-sided shape, there are a number of other shapes that have four sides. Music can be part of worship, but worship is vastly more than music. An argument could even be made (an argument outside the scope of this thesis) that music isn’t worship, but rather a tool of worship. When individuals and churches use the terms “music” and “worship” interchangeably, there is cause for concern.

For the believer, the command to “worship” the Lord is non-negotiable. Music, however, encompasses a wide variety of genres and means of expression. Personal preferences and tastes can (and often do) cloud the church when it comes to corporate worship. As a result, skirmishes which are detrimental to the health of a congregation and lead to division arise over preferences within the local church body.

Many church people fight about music because they have yet to understand the purpose of music in the worship process. That lack of insight causes them to focus on and fight for their preferred sound, instruments, presentation techniques, or their desired order of service. Too often church leaders get caught up in the fuss. These battles are inappropriate distractions from meaningful ministry and fruitful discipleship. Christians need to be more zealous about, and devoted to worshiping God. The Church needs to move on and focus on the One worthy of worship and the desire of His heart - which is to be worshiped with intensity and passion by His people - rather than to focus on the tools used to facilitate our expressions of love and gratitude. (Barna 2002)

Barna’s assessment of the worship wars as “inappropriate distractions” within the body of Christ, reminds us that indeed they are but a smokescreen for a much larger worship war that takes place in the realm of what is unseen. Nothing thrills Satan more than when the attention of God’s children is taken off of the visage of their Heavenly Father and turned toward personal preferences, wandering away from the true purpose of worship.

The consumerism of contemporary culture also presents a challenge to life-changing
worship. With the rise of churches aimed at specific demographic audiences, the message being conveyed is that if a person looks long enough, he will find a worship community which appeals to his specific tastes and needs. While a healthy church is one concerned with meeting the needs of their congregation, it is more focused upon the believer’s deepest need, life-change that produces Christ-likeness. Well-meaning churches fall short of transformational worship and settle for accommodational worship when they design services to target audiences rather than lead their congregations in worship that sees God as their ultimate audience. Another problem is that some worship leaders spend more time transforming worship than they do seeking to lead people in worship that transforms lives. “God calls us to make a transformational impact on the world, not provide a carnival of frenetic activity for ourselves...Pastors and church leaders must move beyond entertaining consumers and into engaging Christ's mission” (Stetzer & Ranier 2010, 3-4). Pastors and worship leaders have before them the responsibility to prayerfully design worship services that challenge believers toward transformation. “If people aren't seeking their lives transformed by the reality of Jesus Christ, we may not be doing our part to make sure the worship service is having the effect God wants it to have. People should be more like Jesus when they walk out of our church than when they walked in” (Hatley and Searcy 2011, 36).

Transformation should be the goal of every worship service.

The means of evaluating the effectiveness of corporate worship can be highly subjective. While one church body may measure their worship service based upon the level of energy that is perceived, another may consider their worship meaningful when people respond to the pastor’s appeal at the conclusion of the worship service. Both measurements can be helpful but do not answer the question, “Did the worship service facilitate life-change?” Transformation is difficult
to quantify, but it should still be the goal every time the believer spends time in the presence of God.

**Statement of the Purpose**

It is God’s supreme desire that His people engage in worship that affects the heart, mind, soul, will, and spirit of both individuals and congregations, thoroughly transforming them from the natural man to that which reflects the image and character of the Triune God. The intended result of this study is to create a resource which will serve the Kingdom of God by encouraging public and private worship that is transformational and advances the Great Commission for the glory of God.

**Significance of the Study**

We worship an immutable God. “He never changes or casts a shifting shadow” (James 1:17, NLT). He is holy, faithful, true, and righteous. Because He is in all things perfect, there is no need for Him to change. Contrary to God’s perfection, man has fallen short of God’s glory and is separated from a relationship with God by sin. Apart from God man is hopeless. His need for change is imperative. When man recognizes this need for change and accepts Christ as his Savior and Lord, he is transformed from a state of alienation from God into a relationship with God and is called to worship the heavenly Father. This instantaneous/positional transformation is the commencement of a life-long transformational process for the believer, molding and shaping him into the image of God.

As is the case in any relationship, it can be either neglected or cultivated. From the creation of mankind God has desired and continues to desire that His children seek to know Him more deeply and become more like Him with each passing day. One significant means of
cultivating such a transformation is through the practice of biblical worship. The Scriptures provide the directive for transformation in the life of the believer. They also connect worship to the transformational process. It can then be concluded that it is God’s will for His children to be transformed into Christlikeness through worship and as a result, live a life that brings glory to God and makes Him known.

In light of the fact that worship and transformation are part of God’s revealed will for His children, the shared relationship between the two concepts are worthy of study and application. This study is beneficial to the individual believer, the local New Testament church, and the broader work of God’s kingdom on earth.

**Research Questions**

The research and conclusions contained in this thesis endeavor to answer the following questions: (1) What biblical mandate exists regarding transformation? (2) How does transformation integrate with the practice of worship? (3) What evidence demonstrates that the Word of God, work of God, and worship of God is transformational? (4) How does biblical transformation manifest itself in the life of a believer and in the assembled body of believers? (5) Are there identifiable worship methodologies, for both private and corporate worship, that specifically encourage and produce transformation? (6) How can churches effectively leverage these methodologies to challenge congregants toward transformation?

**Definition of Terms**

In the context of this body of work there are a number of terms that are noteworthy and provide a framework for the study of transformation and worship. The terminology to be defined is categorized as either terms which are foundational to the study of transformation or terms which seek to harmonize transformation with various components of the discipline of
Christian Worship.

The Greek term “metanoia” (μετάνοια) is described as the changing of the mind. This change is more than a mental assent. It also is a decision to turn from sinful behavior and to travel in the opposite direction. This is also known as the act of repentance.

A similar Greek term “metamorphoo” (μεταμορφόω) has two dimensions of use. The first means to transfigure. This is seen in the gospel account of Jesus who was transfigured before Peter, James, and John in Matthew chapter 17. The other meaning of the word is to change into another form. This is similar to the English term, metamorphosis. An immediate illustration that comes to mind is the progression that transpires as a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly.

The terminology of the New Testament scriptures provides a foundation for the understanding of transformation that is both immediate and sustained. Instantaneous/positional transformation occurs when an unsaved person chooses to confess and forsake sinful behavior, accepting God’s gift of Salvation, making Jesus Christ his Savior and Lord. At that moment, man’s soul is immediately redeemed from darkness and brought into light (I Peter 2:9).

Incremental/progressive transformation is an ongoing process in the life of the believer. This may sometimes be referred to as spiritual growth or maturity. It is forward and progressive movement away from the behaviors and customs of the world toward a lifestyle that is patterned after and passionately worships Christ.

Because the ultimate outcome of worship is transformation, it is helpful to delineate terminology pertaining to numerous forms of worship. The first form of worship is known as private worship. Private worship stands in contrast to the potential largeness of the corporate worship gathering. It is a time of withdrawal from the demands of daily living to commune alone
with God. It is an individual engagement with the Lord through scripture reading, prayer, meditation, and worship. It involves the development of spiritual disciplines. “The only road to Christian maturity and godliness (a biblical term synonymous with Christlikeness and holiness) passes through the practice of spiritual disciplines...godliness is the goal of the disciplines, and when we remember this, the spiritual disciplines become a delight instead of drudgery” (Whitney 1991, 16-17). Private worship and discipline are intertwined.

In contrast, public (or corporate worship) is the gathering of the body of Christ to celebrate God and His past and his redemptive work; past, present and future. Ligon Duncan wrote, “The very purpose of assembling together as the people of God in congregational worship is to give to the Lord the glory due His name and to enjoy the blessing of His promised special presence with His own people, in obedience to His instructions set forth in the Bible” (Duncan 2009, 104).

Another type of worship examined in this thesis is life-style worship. As an individual spends times in corporate and private worship, God seeks to do a miraculous work of transformation. Life-style worship is a relinquishment of everything that a person thinks, does, and owns to the control and glory of God. “In every daily activity, in every encounter with people, in every circumstance, in every conversation, in every thought, in every place, every relationship, every use of our talents and the resources that we have been given, in every choice that we make, we learn to increasingly focus on God’s Kingdom… In other words, our lives are to be lived in a continual mindset of worship” (Boyd 2013).
CHAPTER 2: LITERARY REVIEW

The literature that has been reviewed in preparation for the research that is to follow is representative of much of the discussion that is taking place among church leaders today as they seek to navigate through the often choppy waters of worship. While pastors and worship leaders long to see the transformed lives of those in their congregations, life-change cannot be forced or rushed. The process often requires attitude changes within the congregation and at times in the attitudes of leadership as well. Debate stemming from personal preferences or aspirations to compete with other churches has created needless distraction and caused many congregations to veer off course toward unfruitful pursuits. By all appearances a church may have energetic, creative, and excellent worship programming, yet never lead worshipers to experience God’s presence and power in a transformational way.

Much of the writing in the area of worship focuses on biblical foundations of worship, the history of worship, and the equipping of those who lead worship. Each plays an important role in understanding and practicing worship that brings glory to God. A wealth of resources exist to equip believers who desire to grow in their understanding of Christian worship.

Transformation is a subject of study in many disciplines. Educators, business leaders, fitness experts, counselors, and others in the professional world aspire to see lives changed as a result of their influence upon those they encounter. There are countless writings on the topic of transformation. The theme of transformation is central to Christianity. God’s word contains many accounts of those whose lives were changed as a result of their encounters with God. Throughout every generation of Christianity, the subject of transformation has been addressed through spoken and written word.

A convergence of worship and transformation not only creates a more narrowly focused
lens, it presents the opportunity to study their symbiotic relationship. While there is a limited amount of literature at the present that specifically addresses the topic of transformational worship, there is much research and writing concerning biblical life change. The models of spiritual transformation found through research will create a substantive root system that supports the growth of personal and corporate worship that results in transformation. The writings of biblical scholars and worship practitioners combined with documented research in the field provide guidance to pastors and worship leaders as they prayerfully embrace the challenge of directing their congregations toward worship that is transformational. As pertinent literature was reviewed, a number of categories emerged: (1) The theological foundations of transformation and biblical examples of transformation in the context of worship, (2) the disciplines of private worship and their transformational influence, (3) the practices of public worship that demonstrate transformation, (4) the convergence of worship and transformation, and (5) designing worship services that point congregations toward Jesus Christ and His transforming power.

Biblical Foundations and Examples of Transformation in the Context of Worship

The Word of God is the principal and ultimate authority for faith and Christian action. It is the revelation of God to mankind. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the eyes of man are opened to God’s truth and can understand the Scriptures. In all matters relating to the study of worship, the Bible must be the original source. For additional insight and understanding of the texts of the Scriptures, various Biblical Commentaries, scholarly articles and books served as valuable resources.

The seminal scripture text of Romans 12:1-2 serves as the centerpiece of the biblical foundations section of the thesis. To better understand the nuances and meaning of the Scripture
passage, D. Edmond Hiebert (1994) presents a verse by verse overview of the text in his article, *Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2*. In this article Hiebert (1994, 309) writes, “Christianity involves both ‘believing’ and ‘behaving’ the gospel.” The initial act of sacrificial worship is the originating point in the ongoing process of transformation.

Worship as a sacrifice is central in Grant Osborne’s (2010) treatment of the Romans 12 passage in the *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Romans*. The blood sacrifice of the Old Testament becomes a metaphor for a New Testament worship that calls for a personal “living” sacrifice that is holy and is a distinctly spiritual act of worship (Osborne 2010, 319). He also concludes that Paul’s appeal to the church is applicable not only when the church is gathered for corporate worship but also in the day to day life of the Christian.

Kruse (2012) speaks directly to the issue of motivation. His book, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, indicates that the act of sacrifice is in direct response to the mercy that each sinner has received from a gracious and loving Lord. As the Christian responds to God’s rich mercy by giving himself in complete surrender, he worships in such a way as to experience life change. Kruse (2012, 464) goes on to conclude that the outcome of this change is the ability to discern and demonstrate actions in keeping with God’s perfect will.

The relationship between “renewing the mind” and transformation is the central premise of Moo’s (2000) treatment of this section of Paul’s letter to the Roman believers. In *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans* the mind is presented as a necessary participant in the process of transformation. “By the ‘renewing of [the] mind’ we transform ourselves and prove in our practice God’s good, pleasing and perfect will. When we change the way we think, we change the way we live. (Moo 2000, 398). Stoessel (1963) similarly reflects on the role of the intellect in life change. His article, *Notes on Romans 12:1-2: The Renewal of the Mind and Internalizing the*
Truth, goes beyond the cognitive actions of renewing the mind and clarifies that it is the Holy Spirit that brings insight to the mind that is capable of producing change. Community within the body of Christ also creates a climate that encourages right thinking. And as the believer applies himself to the pursuit of truth and mind renewal, he will over time manifest actions that are Christ-like and Christ pleasing.

**The Disciplines of Private Worship and Their Transformational Influence**

The process of transformation that produces Christ-likeness begins internally in the heart of the Christian but in order for authentic life change to take place and move the believer closer to God’s intended design for His child, that person must be committed to the process of growth and spiritual maturity.

The reality is that most Christians lack an awareness of how spiritual growth and transformation happens. In Ingram’s (2005) book, *The Miracle of Life Change: How God Transforms His Children*, he reminds readers that, “[God] wants to transform your desires, give you love and power, and form the very character of Jesus within you” (Ingram 2005, 17). The “spiritual metamorphosis” presented in this work takes place in several stages. First, a person is spiritually born into God’s family. Next, the believer journeys toward maturity in Christ. The ultimate goal is to reach a level of maturity that leads to spiritual reproduction, bringing others to encounter the change that Christ gives. Ingram (2005) details the process of transformation, product of transformation, and obstacles that the Christian may encounter. As a result, a number of relevant themes emerge that bring readers to the following conclusions: (1) God desires all believers to experience life change. (2) Change is made possible because of Christ’s victory over sin and death. (3) God uses the church as a means of encouraging life change. (4) The believer experiences transformation by leaving behind old ways, filling the mind with the things of God,
and living with a Christ-centered orientation. (5) Transformation does not take place through “trying harder,” but rather through rigorous training (Ingram 2005, 200).

A life reorientation that makes Christ central is the summative premise of Ruth Barton’s (2010) book, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Through the metaphor of rhythm she calls for a natural approach to the spiritual life that avoids heavy handed or rigid standards in favor of essential patterns that “ebb and flow” (Barton 2010, 15). Though these patterns may be categorized as disciplines, they tend to be more reflective in practice than action oriented. The reader is asked to consider the benefits of solitude, meditation upon God’s Word, intimate prayer, self-examination, observance of a Sabbath, honoring the body, seeking God’s presence, and appropriately responding to God’s bidding in that person’s life. The purpose for engaging in these practices, according to Barton (2010, 151-153), is to reflect upon each experience asking God to reveal which have been the most beneficial in producing life change. This leads to developing an action plan that encourages the consistent practice of the “spiritual rhythms.” Once the plan has come together the person desirous of transformation will commit to the implementation of the plan. Along the way, spiritual rhythms will be more fluid in an environment that is open to adjustments that are motivated by a passionate desire to please God rather than a sense of duty or obligation.

Regardless of a person’s level of spiritual maturity, maintaining spiritual rhythms are vital to the ongoing process of transformation. While those who are younger in their faith may need the encouragement of more mature believers, those who have been on the journey for a longer period of time must engage in the process of ongoing personal reflection and evaluation of their own walk with Christ. Even those in positions of spiritual leadership within the church are not exempted from the need for personal inventory. The fact is that church leaders must be
certain that they maintain and model a strong level of mental, physical, intellectual, and spiritual health as they seek to lead their congregations. Meyer (2010) addresses leaders and challenges them in *Whole Life Transformation: Becoming the Change Your Church Needs*. In this book the author transparently shares much of his own journey of transformation as he recognized the need to authentically lead his congregation toward spiritual life change.

In the first part of Meyer’s (2010) work, he identifies a number of hurdles that slow down the Christian’s quest for change. Most poignant is the premise that, “The expectation of the average Christian for the sanctified life has been lowered. [Therefore,] we are in need of leaders who once again set the bar high and personally evidence whole life transformation as normal and expected for all Christians” (Meyer 2010, 24). Equally challenging to the process of life change is the lack of integration between spiritual matters and matters of everyday life. This is illustrated by the author’s own conflict to live his faith in such a way that it made a noticeable difference in his dealings with his family, neighbors, and others. For all the time and energy invested in the ministries of the church, there is seemingly little cross over into life outside of the church walls. Meyer (2010, 52) points out, “When our beliefs remain facts, propositions and information that do not translate into life, they are not enough. In fact, we can be dead wrong in life while being right about the Bible.” The pitfall of performance can also be detrimental to life change. When people are more focused on outward appearance and reputation management than they are on the work of God’s Spirit that takes place in the soul, it is a reflection of their self-centeredness.

Worship that is performance oriented and brings attention to platform personalities is an affront to worship’s true purpose of bringing honor and glory to God. Similarly, attempts by the church to become more “consumer friendly” result in the church growth models that more closely resemble corporate entities than they do centers for worship. “The work of transformation cannot
be co-opted as a man-made project; it reflects the personal touch of God’s Spirit calling us out of resistance and self-centeredness and into the cooperative work of repentance” (Meyer 2010, 91).

Having examined issues that are detrimental to the process of spiritual change, the author considers means that enhance and facilitate transformation in the lives of congregants. Meyer (2010, 110-11) indicates relationship is one of the core components of encouraging transformation. Using Jesus’ relationship with His disciples as a model, Christ demonstrated that life change involves much more than teaching, it also requires relationships. Following the example of the Savior, a leader best serves his followers as he practices Christ-like qualities with a passion that is contagious. “I discover that when an individual, pastor or church discovers the gospel of the kingdom, a fire starts that spreads quickly with remarkable power” (Meyer 2010, 121). A leader who desires to effectively help others in their spiritual journey must demonstrate a commitment to preparation or training. The discipline required to train on a personal level produces godly character in the leader and makes him a worthy example. As a leader presses on in his own process of life change and growth, God uses him to influence others.

**The Practices of Public Worship that Demonstrate Transformation**

Having examined the necessity for personal transformation in the life of every believer and accentuated the need for those in positions of spiritual leadership to serve as models worthy of imitation, attention is now given to the assembling of both leaders and congregants as a church body. The gathering of God’s people is not merely for the benefit of the participant. While gathering is beneficial to each participant, God’s expectation is that internal transformation be expressed publicly for mutual edification in the assembly of believers. As the church worships together, the overall character of the congregation experiences a change that results in a greater public ministry to reach those outside of the church. This is the biblical model
set forth in the book of Acts by the church of Antioch. Iorg’s (2010) study of this church, *The Case for Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformational Church*, is a compelling example of what God desires His church to be in the world today. By design, Iorg (2010, 30) purposes to “extract from the biblical case study some qualities describing and defining a transformational church. …[The] intent is not to advocate an absolute list, [but to] describe and categorize principles emerging from careful consideration of a biblical model.” Among the numerous principles set forth by the author, most notable are: (1) The Holy Spirit is the power behind the transformational church. (2) Churches that are innovative in their approach to sharing the gospel see the lives of people changed. (3) Transformational churches do not compromise their doctrinal purity. (4) There are strong leaders and committed followers in transformational churches. (5) Transformation is evidenced by selfless service and generous giving to meet the needs of others.

The church of Antioch existed amidst a culture that bore similarities to many urban centers of today’s world. Racial tension, moral depravity and materialism was prevalent. Yet, a great movement of God began in Antioch which was carried throughout the world as the message of Christ was spread by those whose lives had been transformed, and the message was life changing for those who accepted it.

Lifeway researchers, Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainier, began in 2009 to develop a means of assessing transformation in congregations throughout the US. The goal was to discover the characteristics and practices of transformational churches (TCs) that resulted in, “More people becoming Christ followers, more believers growing in their faith, and more churches making an impact on their communities” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 25). Their research commenced by interviewing nearly 7000 protestant pastors. From these initial interviews a more focused group of 250 churches was selected based on the criteria of church growth (ten percent growth over a
five year period of time) and high percentage of congregational commitment to a small group of some form (e.g. community groups or Sunday Schools). From the 250 churches studied interviews were conducted with their pastors and 20,000 members were surveyed. From these interviews and surveys, common themes emerged that helped researchers develop core qualities of transformational churches. The results were published in Stezer and Rainier’s (2010) book, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*. Through their study the authors identified six common characteristics of churches that met the established criteria of transformational churches. (1) These churches are led by teams that demonstrate an infectious passion for God and for people. (2) A strong emphasis is placed on relationships for the purpose of reaching others with the truth of Christ. (3) Prayer is central to every facet of church life. It is practiced from the highest levels of leadership through the ranks of the congregation. (4) Worshipers come together with the anticipation that they will encounter God during the corporate gathering. (5) There is a commitment to spiritual accountability through the vehicle of small group ministries. (6) Evangelism is a strategic component of the ministry of a transformational church. These churches make it a point to go beyond the four walls of the church in order to make an impact upon the lives of others locally and globally.

In a day where many churches give lip service to the gospel Stetzer and Rainier (2010, 230) challenge the church to be transformational and “work for nothing less than the church’s mission to see people transformed to look like Christ, act like the body of Christ, and [see] communities changed to reflect the kingdom of God.”

**The Convergence of Worship and Transformation**

Transformational worship as a lifestyle means being obedient to the will of God and recognizing the connection between worship and evangelism. This is the theme of Vernon
Whaley and David Wheeler’s book, *The Great Commission to Worship: Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism*. The authors accurately write, “In most cases, Christians will admit their need to worship, but they will do so to the exclusion of becoming radical and passionate followers of Christ” (Wheeler and Whaley 2011, 7). Many misconceptions exist in the church both about worship and evangelism. This confusion can be cleared up as the church applies the teachings of Christ in Matthew 22:36-40.

If an individual falls in love with Christ and seeks to glorify His name, he or she in turn expresses that same love for people (neighbors) who invade their lives on a daily basis. In addition, it must be noted that for either command to be fulfilled, it is required that “self” must fall to the bottom of the list when it comes to daily priorities. Worship therefore is not an impotent act or staged event. Rather it is a passionate response to the heart cry of God that includes active participation in the Great Commission. (Wheeler and Whaley 2011, 22)

As believers worship either in the assembly or in private, God promises that He indwells the praises of His people. He shows himself as Mighty God, Righteous Judge, Prince of Peace, transcendent, yet near to all who call His name. In worship God shapes His people and conforms us into His image. This is the essence of transformation. “At the end of the day, the church does not need another song book, worship set, worship video, or praise team. ...[It] doesn't need another event or goal driven evangelistic program. ...[What it needs is] men and women totally devoted to Him, full of love for God because of what Christ has done on the cross, transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit.” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, 195).

In the world of science, a neutrino is a subatomic particle that is electrically neutral and able to pass through a solid with no consequence. Similarly, an individual can participate in worship yet evade any transformation whatsoever. Noland’s (2009) article, *From Neutrino Worship to Real Transformation*, identifies such an occurrence to be false worship. Instead, the author states, “True worship will awaken in us a desire to be transformed and it will facilitate
that transformation through the revelation of God to us, the revelation of ourselves to us, and the invitation to be more than we already are” (Noland 2009, 60).

Richardson (1999) indicates that to a degree spiritual formation and transformation is often considered to be private. He counters in “Spiritual Formation in Corporate Worship” that the experiences of corporate worship are highly formational. “Worship has a distinctive role, for, while it will contribute to the health of every other aspect of the church’s life, worship will surpass all of them in forming Christian community” (Richardson 1999, 520). He provides and describes characteristics of formative worship. It must be intentional, theological, relational, biblical, counter-cultural, functional, ordinance-al [sic], logical, dialogical, integrative, ethical, inclusive and liturgical. As congregants are drawn in as participants rather than spectators, the goal of worship is “to make ourselves more vulnerable to being transformed” (Richardson 1999, 532).

The role of worship in the Christian life is further discussed by Miyamoto (2010) in “Mission, Liturgy, and the Transformation of Identity.” This journal article contends that “Mission is to be seen as a call and invitation to participate in the encounter with God and the transformation of life in worship” (Miyamoto 2010, 61). While doctrine and teaching are necessary in spiritual growth, the Christian faith is much more than knowledge. Knowledge without worship is hollow. In worship there is renewal and hope. Worshipers encounter God’s grace that strengthens faith and changes lives. Step by step believers come to understand their identity as a child of God.

Gathered Before God: Worship-Centered Church Renewal, is a case study of eleven liturgical congregations of varying sizes. Based on extensive field research among the participating churches, Jane Rodgers Vann (2004) contends that congregational renewal is
advanced through worship rather than through the various programs of the church and that worship “sets a pattern for the Christian life and for congregational life in its orientation toward praising, thanking and beseeching God” (Vann 2004, 34). Emphasis is placed upon the value of experiential learning in the context of worship, and the author describes a cycle of concrete experience followed by active reflection that is formational in nature. In worship centered congregations, experience is emphasized. Therefore, the liturgies of these congregations are designed “to enable the worshiping assembly, both leaders and people, faithfully to enact the worship of God [in a way that is] adapted to their particular needs and special circumstances” (Vann 2004, 84). By valuing the worship experience and expecting to encounter God during worship gatherings, the churches studied cultivate deeper relationships with fellow church members, seek the presence of God in all of their activities, and consider their ministry and mission to be of great importance.

The study of the worship “experience” is further advanced in Worship That Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregation Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation. This book, edited by Alexis Abernethy (2008), is the collaborative effort of numerous authors to establish a connection between worship and spiritual transformation. Depending heavily upon personal testimonies collected during field research and the interpretation of this data, a number of relevant themes emerge.

The first of these themes challenges churches and their leaders to consider some means of measuring the degree of transformation taking place in the lives of worshipers. It is suggested that indicators of transformation can be noticed through personal accounts and by observable changes in behavior. Many times these changes take place over a lengthy period of time. In each
instance it is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings transformation whether immediately or progressively.

Though the Holy Spirit is the agent of change in a person’s life, the “[d]ramatic arts can be used to provoke a change in the hearts of those who watch” (Farley 2008, 61). This is the second theme that emerges from the study and is articulated in numerous essays in Abernethy’s (2008) book. Through performing, visual, and cinematic arts people can be brought to an “agogic moment” or moment of change. This is further illustrated through experiences that extend across cultures. Whether the emerging church of the UK and the US, or the native worship of African Tribes, the symbolic expressions of the arts touch the emotion and intellect and have the potential to move a person to action.

In the last section of this book a stronger emphasis is placed upon the ethnographic data collected through the research of the contributing authors. The testimonials provide an underscore for the salient points made throughout the essays and heighten the need for worship designers and leaders to consider the importance of selecting and using meaningful expressions and tools of worship.

**Leading Congregational Worship Designed to Encourage Transformation**

In order for worship to be life changing it must pass through the believer's mind on its way to the soul. The weekly task of presenting God's revelation and calling the congregation to a response, is a high calling for pastors and worship leaders. It requires thought, preparation, and careful design to produce a meaningful worship experience. “To speak of the meaning of worship is to simultaneously refer to what we find and what we make when we gather to glorify God and sanctify humanity” (Walters 2006, 146).
If congregants are to find meaning in worship, they must be led toward discovery. *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship*, by Michael Walters (2006), addresses a number of important insights for those who lead in worship. Walters believes that the pastor and worship pastor must ensure that worship meets the authentic needs and preferences of the congregation. He states, “To construct good liturgy, pastors must constantly evaluate the liturgical life of their churches. Worship is the people's work. Giving them tools for it and a structure in which to do it is a most caring and loving act by a pastor” (Walters 2006, 92).

While he advocates creating worship that is meaningful, the author also addresses potential pitfalls of allowing culture to shape worship.

Accommodating culture does not equate to permeating culture, and our attempts at playing ball with the dominant values of the age have often blown up in our ecclesiastical faces. The danger is especially real when dealing with the younger generation, which seeks radical authenticity and a countercultural approach to religious life. So while the attempt to engage culture is admirable, [it] has been mixed at best. Our efforts have generally lacked missional and ecclesial clarity at the denominational level and local congregations have tended to adopt cultural trends and values for pragmatic reasons without subjecting them to critical thought. (Walters 2006, 20)

If worship is to be meaningful to congregants, it is far more likely to occur when leadership places a high priority on their own worship. “We must model for our people the proper approach to worship, providing for them an example to follow and not a mere order of service” (Walters 2006, 203).

Mark Harris’ research (2008), *The Search for Meaning in Congregational Worship*, considers the subject of meaning in a local church environment. He questions why some choose to gather their families and head to church services week after week when instead they could choose from many other activities. He stated the answer as “They come in the hope that the gathering and singing, praying and listening, bathing and eating and sending, might touch them with a sense of wholeness and holiness, such that they will be able to see themselves and the
world in a new and life-giving way” (Harris 2008, 4). Harris’ qualitative research questioned focus groups within his congregation to reflect upon a designated worship service that Harris led. Participants were called upon to “identify the salient aspects of their experience, to reflect upon why these particular recollections were remembered, and to explore the significance which such recollections held for them” (Harris 2008, 107). What he concluded was that meaning is uniquely determined in each individual. Meaning was found in lyrics and musical devices. It was also found in structured liturgy and symbolism. Others found meaning through the expression of their hearts through song and other actions of worship. “To speak of the meaning of worship is to simultaneously refer to what we find and what we make when we gather to glorify God and sanctify humanity” (Harris 2008, 146).

The dissertation written by David Pendleton (2000), “Worship as an Expression of the Word: Finding a Common Ground for Christ-centered Worship,” is an interesting study conducted among a Nazarene congregation by their pastor. Having encountered the pattern of worship used in a fellow Nazarene church, Pendleton himself found meaning in their liturgy. He saw members of the sister congregation engaged in worship and considered how following their pattern might impact his church. Pendleton's church worshiped using the four-fold pattern of worship for a period of six weeks. The four-fold pattern of worship includes: (1) Acts of Entrance, where the people enter into worship, (2) the Service of the Word, where God speaks through Scriptures, (3) the Service of the Table, a response to the Word with communion and thanksgiving, and (4) the Acts of Dismissal, as worshipers are sent forth to love and serve the Lord.

Members of Pendleton's church were interviewed at the conclusion of six weeks of services following the fourfold pattern. What he discovered was that though the congregation
found the experience to be enlightening, they were more comfortable with their historical form of worship. This was partly due to the fact that in addition to the structure of the services, personnel and musical styles were foreign to the church. Their pastor was the only element in common between their traditional worship and the trial worship format. Pendleton shared in reflection, “[There is] need for further education not only on the four-fold pattern of worship, but further education on what it means to be a Christ-centered worshiping community, and specifically what that looks like in the history of the Christian Church as a whole” (Pendleton 2000, 96). He also indicated that it would be interesting to see study results if it were conducted among a younger congregation with a higher level of education.

Regardless of paradigm, if worship is not considered relevant or meaningful to participants, little hope exists for transformation. Nelson Searcy and Jason Hatley (2011) state the need for pastors and worship leaders to answer the question of “why” before the question of “how” in worship. Their book, Engage: A Guide to Creating Life-Transforming Worship Services, goes much deeper than providing checklists for worship planning. It challenges church leadership to consider that every time a congregation gathers for worship it should be viewed as a significant event. It is worthy of careful planning and excellence. “One of the most basic requirements for being a teaching pastor or worship leader is that you love Sundays. God has entrusted you with people who will walk through your doors on Sunday morning (or whenever you have your services) looking for a connection to him. You are responsible for upholding your end of the deal and creating the best worship service possible” (Searcy and Hatley 2011, 37). Planning on the part of the leadership team begins by answering the question, “What should people know, feel, and do as a result of participating in the worship service?” The most critical element of public worship is a call to respond. Searcy and Nelson emphatically stated, “Never
end a service without giving people specific next steps they can take in response to God's teaching” (Searcy and Hatley 2011, 40).

Nancy Beach (2004), from Willow Creek Community Church, offered solid ingredients for crafting meaningful worship services in her book, *An Hour On Sunday: Creating Moments of Transformation and Wonder*. Her premise is, “When Scripture is skillfully communicated, people far from God are drawn to know him, and believers are built up in the faith” (Beach 2004, 231). The same is true in each aspect of the worship service and leaders should develop worship in the best way possible in order to have impact. Much of her book dealt with the more pragmatic aspects of worship planning, but Beach also took time to relate her principles to actual ministry experiences that validated her insights.

Regardless of the approach a church uses in worship, if it desires to challenge the congregation and prove meaningful, five common denominators need to be in place. First, worship must be biblical and must include the whole of Scripture. Picking and choosing favorite passages does not give a congregation a healthy spiritual diet. Next, worship must be passionate. “Every time a teacher [or worship leader] takes a deep breath and begins to speak, listeners wonder how much that teacher really cares about the subject matter...Passion doesn't come out of every speaker in just the same way. But we recognize its presence (or lack) no matter what” (Beach 2004, 234). A third common denominator is that worship must be relevant to the lives of congregants. The Word of God has as much to offer to the contemporary culture as it did thousands of years ago when it was read in the early church. If worship is to prove meaningful in people's lives, it must not only be biblical, passionate, and relevant, it must also be creative, the fourth denominator. Why? “Because we increasingly communicate to a culture overwhelmed by information; and we communicate to generations who learn as much by seeing and experiencing
as they do by listening....Words simply aren't enough, much of the time” (Beach 2004, 237). Finally, worship must be honest. In preaching and in song we must move beyond “pat answers” and platitudes and deal with hard issues. “Those of us entrusted with the responsibility to teach must resist the temptation to make life sound easier than it really is. God will show us how to bring hope and healing without being dishonest” (Beach 2004, 241). Leaders who practice such principles when preparing worship will likely create meaningful moments and call congregants to worship that can be life changing.

Though addressing persons who communicate through spoken word, Stanley and Jones’ (2006) book, *Communicating for a Change*, is applicable to those who are involved in other methods of communication. In the first portion of this book, an allegory is presented that centers around a young preacher and an unlikely mentor, a truck-driving preacher. Through creative storytelling, the reader is introduced to the significant points that are elaborated in the second section of the book.

Stanley and Jones (2006, 100) are very clear when they state that the goal of Christian communication is, “life change. [And more] specifically to teach people how to live a life that reflects the values, principles and truths of the Bible.” Reaching any goal is the result of following a set of action steps. The steps outlined by the authors include: (1) Pick a single point for an audience to take away. (2) Establish a relationship with the audience as a foundation, then build upon it with content. (3) Internalize the content of a message and own it before it is ever presented. (4) Engage listeners at a healthy pace so that they do not get ahead or lag behind. (5) Strive for excellence, but do so in a way that is authentic. (6) When challenged or unsure of what needs to be communicated, go to God in prayer.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

Research Methodology

The research conducted in advance of the writing of this thesis is literary in nature and includes (1) biblical study, (2) case studies, (3) documented quantitative research, (4) ethnographic research, and (5) works authored by worship practitioners.

The biblical study began with the identification of key scripture passages. Once these passages were selected they were more closely examined. Word studies, commentaries, and journal articles authored by Bible scholars were used in the exegesis of these passages. As a result, key principles for understanding and practicing life-changing worship were established as the foundation for the remainder of the thesis.

Building upon this biblical foundation, several case studies demonstrate the potential for life change on the personal and congregational level. The study of change that occurred in the lives of Isaiah and the Woman at the Well respectively, as a result of their encounters with God the Father and Son, is based upon the accounts of Scripture. Additional insights were provided through commentaries, articles and published sermons. The Church of Antioch is the subject of Iorg’s (2010) research. His study of the Antioch church in the book of Acts, identifies numerous characteristics of a transformed church body and serves as a model for congregations today. The dissertations of Harris (2008) and Pendleton (2000) serve as case studies depicting how congregations find meaning in the liturgy, or components, of worship.

The research of Stetzer and Rainier (2010) is a quantitative and qualitative study that employed a three phased methodology. In the first phase, phone interviews were conducted with pastors from over 7,000 Protestant churches in the US. Researchers sought to identify churches
that met a predetermined criteria of a transformational church (see appendix 2). As a result, 298 churches were targeted for further study. Phase two consisted of face to face interviews with the pastors of 250 churches. In the interviews pastors were asked to talk about the “activities of the church, why it is working, and how it is effective. Each pastor was given the opportunity to provide additional facets of ministry they considered vital to effective ministry.” (Stetzer and Rainer 2010, 236). Common denominators of the research during this phase were used to formulate the final phase of study, an assessment tool for church leaders and their congregations. The assessment yielded quantitative data and validated the results of previous phases of study.

Ethnographic findings reported by Vann (2004) and Abernethy (2008) are reflective of the various components that shape a congregation’s worship service and the reported impact that the liturgy has upon the life of the worshiper. Participants in Abernethy’s (2008, 217) research were asked to reflect on a worship experience, aside from the conversion experience, that was life changing. Once this was determined, participants were asked a number of reflective questions related to the experience. Responses were noted and were used by the research team to substantiate overarching themes of the contributions of worship in producing spiritual transformation, the role of the arts in worship that encourages transformation, and the value of learning from diverse worship populations.

Through the comparative study of writings from leading worship practitioners, principles emerge that may be applied to the practice of private worship and public worship. The authoritative insights offered in these writings enable those involved in the planning and leading of worship to better move participants toward a transformative experience with God.

Upon analysis of the pertinent literature that gives shape to the study of transformational worship, the findings can be categorized as follows: (1) the scriptural foundation for worship, (2)
transformation in private worship, (3) transformation in public, or corporate, worship, and (4) the convergence of transformation and worship. These findings are expanded in subsequent chapters. After careful analysis of research findings, a summative synthesis is formulated and presented in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Assumptions

The outcomes of research presented in this study are predicated on a number of assumptions. First, the subject of the study is assumed to be Christian worship and not related to worship practices stemming from other world views, cults, or pagan practices. A second assumption is that it is the responsibility of church leadership to lead congregations in worship that encourages life change and living worship in all areas of life. Third, church leaders are not responsible for the personal choice of each congregant. Each individual is responsible to act upon the encountered Word of God. Finally, a neutral stance is taken regarding worship methodologies. It assumes that unless the method violates biblical principles, it is viable and can be used by God to produce change in the hearts of believers.
CHAPTER 4: A SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

The Word of God is central in providing a necessary groundwork for research in all matters relating to worship that is transformational. “Change is used as a verb 26 times in 23 verses in the Old and New Testaments…. The word changed is used 43 times in 42 verses in the Bible. The Greek transliteration of changed simply means ‘to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place’” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, 81). Amidst the numerous mentions of life-change found in the Bible, four passages will serve as the foundational passages undergirding this study.

A New Creation: The Case for Immediate Transformation

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun. (2 Corinthians 5:17 [NLT])

The immediate transformation that Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is the product of salvation. “Paul too had experienced the reality of this new creation first-hand, having been forgiven by Christ on the road to Damascus. Hence, his equating being ‘in Christ’ with participating in the ‘new creation’ reflects his own experience of the fact that Christ’s death inaugurates the eschatological new creation in the midst of the old” (NIV Application Commentary, [accessed January 19, 2015, http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3A17&version=NLT#]).

The phrase “in Christ” is a recurring phrase throughout the New Testament that indicates a covenantal relationship between the Savior and His people that gives them a new identity. Before salvation man is “in Adam” and is identified with the sin nature that brought death to every man. Through faith in Christ man is transformed and given eternal life. The old way of life is replaced. “Old opinions, views, plans, desires, principles and affections have gone; new views
of truth, new principles, new apprehensions of human destiny, and new feelings and purposes fill
and govern the soul” (Hodge 1995, 115).

In regard to transformation,

There is a change so deep, so clear, so entire, and so abiding, that it is proper to say, here
is a new creation of God--a work of the Divine power as decided and glorious as when
God created all things out of nothing. There is no other moral change that takes place on
earth so deep, and radical, and thorough, as the change at conversion. And there is no
other where there is so much propriety in ascribing it to the mighty power of God. (Albert
Barnes’ Notes on the Whole Bible, [accessed January 19, 2015,
http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=46&ch=3])

The immediate transformation that occurs at the moment of salvation is the starting point
for the transformation that God desires to take place in the lives of His children. The same Spirit
that immediately transforms and regenerates, also enables the “new person” to continue on in
progressive transformation and the pursuit of Christ-likeness.

**Shaped by the Creator: Progressive Transformation**

Being changed from glory to glory. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the
glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the
Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18 [KJV])

The imagery used by Paul in this passage compares the Scriptures to a mirror. It is an
appropriate metaphor because it reminds the believer that God's children were created to be a
reflection of their heavenly Father and His glory. Prior to salvation the person standing before
the mirror was veiled and could not see the glory of God. Because of the transforming work of
salvation, the veil is now lifted and the child of God is able to observe his own spiritual condition
in the light of God's glory. This leads man to realize his need for ongoing life-change. It is
through progressive transformation that the believer grows in his pursuit of Christ-likeness and
brings glory to God.

The idea is, that by placing ourselves within the light of the gospel-by contemplating the
glory that shines there-we become changed into the likeness of the same glory, and
Becoming more and more like the Heavenly Father is progressive. In other words, the believer engages in the process one step at a time. Christlikeness is the goal of transformational worship. The Apostle Paul urges the Christian to worship in a manner that produces genuine life change. Though he is writing to the church in Rome, he presents an action plan that all believers can follow to experience transformation.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2 [NLT])

It has been previously stated that the English word “metamorphosis” is derived from the Greek word “metamorphoo.” Barton (2010, 12) describes this process as one “by which a caterpillar enters into the darkness of the cocoon in order to emerge, eventually, changed almost beyond recognition. This change is so profound that the caterpillar transcends its previous existence to take on a completely different form with a completely different set of capacities.” Just like the various stages of the caterpillar’s metamorphosis, Paul describes the transformation that God desires as a progressive process that takes place in the life of the believer. “The first verse calls for an explicit act; the second commands a resultant lifelong process” (Hiebert 1994, 312).
As Paul begins his discourse he pleads with his brothers and sisters to remember the “mercies of God” that make new life possible. After laying this foundation Paul describes what is to be man’s response to God’s great mercy. This progressive response brings significant change in the life of the obedient follower of Christ.

The first step in this journey of transformation is sacrifice. The concept of sacrifice was not foreign to Paul’s audience. The practice of offering sacrifices has origins dating back to Cain and Abel. It was an integral part of worship in the tabernacle and later in the temple. Paul’s audience understood the practice of sacrifice, so he used this imagery of sacrifice intentionally as he talked about being a “living sacrifice.”

In the modern world, especially in the West, we tend to think of religion in terms of a system of belief or a way of living. But ancient people were obsessed with sacrifice. The killing and offering of animals (and even occasionally humans) to their gods was the focal point of their worship. Thus, when Paul uses the metaphor of sacrifice in Romans 12:1, he is picking up an idea that all his readers understood, not only from the Old Testament but from their everyday lives as well… As new covenant Christians, we no longer offer animal sacrifices; we now offer ourselves as “living sacrifices.” “Living” perhaps has a theological meaning: We offer ourselves as people who have been brought from death to life (see 6:13). This may however be reading more into the word than we should. Paul probably wants us simply to contrast ourselves with the dead animal sacrifices of the Old Testament (see also John 6:51). But God demands sacrifices that are “holy,” that is, apart from profane matters and dedicated to his service. (Moo 2010, 394-395)

The Greek term “parastēsai” (παραστῆσαι) is translated “to offer,” means “to place or stand alongside of.” It also means “to place at someone’s disposal.” No longer are animal sacrifices required in worship. Now it is a life that is pure in thought, motive, and character, and completely yielded to God that He seeks. When God finds a heart that is fully emptied of self and placed on the altar of sacrifice, He chooses to use that heart to make a spiritual impact on the world. The believer’s presentation to God of his body “is acceptable to [God] as the expression of giving God His true place, and of man, the believer, taking his” (Hiebert 1994, 317).
A variety of nuances exist in relation to the concept of sacrifice. These are fleshed out by Osborne (2010, 321-322) as he elaborates:

There are three aspects of our sacrifice: (1) It is living, denoting not only the dynamic nature of the sacrifice but also the spiritual state of the “new life” in Christ and the Spirit (2) It is holy, meaning that the person is wholly dedicated, “set apart” from the world and belonging to God. (3) It is pleasing to God, building on the Old Testament concept of the sacrifice as pleasing God (Ex 29:18, 25, 41; Num 15:7-14; Ps 51:19) and common in the New Testament as well (2 Cor 5:9, “we make it our goal to please him”; cf. Eph 5:10; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20; Heb 13:21).

The sacrifice described by the Apostle Paul is the believer's spiritual act of worship. Every aspect of the Christian life, including acts of serving and celebrating God, is worship. The term “worship” is described by Osborne (2010, 320) as, “a strong cultic term describing the corporate experience of worship, but here it is applied metaphorically to the daily life of the believer [and] combines the idea of rational thinking with spiritual living to describe the 'reasonable' nature of serving God at all times.” One might presume that a living sacrifice is a one-time event that is private in nature. However, the “offering of the believer’s body as an act of spiritual worship does not preclude further participation in ‘worship services’ but that participation should be continuous with the commitment that has been made” (Hiebert 1994, 317-18).

Kruse (2012, 462-463) suggests that “spiritual worship” is consistent with the idea of thoughtful service. His conclusion is based on the phrase “renewing the mind” found in Romans 12:2. An intelligent comprehension of worship is “consonant with the truth of the gospel...indeed nothing less than the offering of one’s inward thought, feelings and aspirations, but also in one’s words and deeds.”

To this point worship has been described as a living sacrifice of one's life as opposed to the sacrifices in the worship of the Old Testament. Moo (2010, 367) reminds readers that “Paul deliberately uses the word “body” (soma) to describe what we are to offer God. …By using this
word, the apostle emphasizes the degree to which our worship should involve even the very prosaic parts of life.”

Though the believer does interact with a material world, he is cautioned against allowing the world to shape his system of values. If he compromises and allows the pressure from a godless culture to conform him, he thwarts the working of the Spirit of God in his life, denying the opportunity for transformation. Conformity is defined by Hiebert (1994, 320-321) as follows:

It means to pattern oneself after another and is stated well by the Phillips translation, “Stop letting the world squeeze you into its mold.” The forces of this “age” (the time in which sin reigns; cf. [Rom.] 5:21; 7:17, 20, 23) are forcing the believer to conform to its ideals. There are so many areas where this is true—consumerism, power politics, the success syndrome, sexual immorality, the pleasure principle and so on...we all too often cave into the pressure and follow our worldly friends into sin.

In a culture consumed with self-indulgences of every kind, vigilance is required if the believer wants to experience genuine life change. Noland (2009, 62) writes, “Whatever receives more of our devotion than God, whatever dominates our thoughts or controls our behavior more than does the Holy Spirit, is an idol.” The Psalmist warned of idolatrous pursuits when he said, “Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more” (Ps. 16:4a [NIV]).

Having been cautioned against following the behaviors and customs of the world, the believer is admonished to live differently and experience transformation.

The verb “transformed” [greek] denotes a change more inward and complete than the preceding verb. ...The present passive verb notes that this transformation is not a change produced by one’s own efforts; it is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as Paul notes in 2 Corinthians 3:18. And the present tense emphasizes that this transformation is progressively realized, not a single crisis experience. Further the second person plural imperative “be transformed” indicates that believers have the volitional responsibility to maintain the conditions under which God brings about the transformation. (Hiebert 1994, 321)

The transformation that Paul is calling for is a product of a “renewed mind.” In this context the mind “[is] speaking [of] the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging and determining” (Hiebert 1994,
321). As the believer focuses his thoughts upon Christ and meditates upon His revelation, there is a change that takes places in the mind as it is made new.

Moo (1996:756-57) calls this a “‘re-programming’ of the mind,” a lifelong process in which the mind is taken from the world and more and more made to “have in mind the things of God” (Mk 8:33). …It is clear that the mind is where spiritual growth occurs, and in the mind decisions are made that determine one's spiritual direction and destiny. Paul’s focus is inner, spiritual transformation, and the locus is in the thinking process. In other words, the ongoing conduct of the believer is based on input from the world (v. 2) or from God (v. 2). This will determine whether one lives the victorious Christian life (8:1-8, 37) or a life of spiritual defeat (7:14-25). In fact, that is one of the major purposes of Christian fellowship, providing a counter to the mind-control of the world. (Osborne 2010, 321-322)

Though an individual is responsible for the focus of his mind, there are also other factors that are at work as the mind is renewed. Stoessel (1963, 167) indicates that mind-renewal is a work of the Holy Spirit that not only occurs in times of personal communion with God, but also in fellowship with other believers. He further notes that it is an ongoing process which leads to action.

With regard to “renewing of the mind,” Moo (2010, 399) raises the question, “What are we feeding into our minds? …Our job is to cooperate with God’s Spirit by seeking to feed into our minds information that will reprogram our thinking in line with the values of the kingdom. …If renewing the mind is as important as Paul says, then the goal of ministry should be to form Christian minds in people.”

A mind that is renewed by the Holy Spirit will produce actions that are in keeping with the plan of God for that person's life. This is what Paul speaks of in the phrase, “that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2 [NKJV]). The verb “prove” means to have a deep understanding of something so as to be able to act upon it. As the believer strives to live his life demonstrating the transformation that has taken place inwardly, he is doing so in a manner that is “good, acceptable, and pleasing” to God.
The adjective “the good” [greek] indicates that the will of God for the individual believer is morally good and beneficial in its nature and its impact on his life. What is acceptable and pleasing to God the transformed mind of the believer also finds acceptable and pleasing...The third adjective affirms that God’s will for the believer is “perfect” [greek] or complete, lacking nothing. (Hiebert 1994, 323-24)

In Romans 12:1-2, spiritual transformation and worship converge. “Paul is describing a worship experience that is much deeper than some “warm fuzzy” that wears off within seconds. Worship is inherently and ultimately transformational” (Noland 2009, 61). In its entirety, this passage of Scripture challenges the Christian in every aspect of life. On the personal level it is a “voluntary, love-prompted acceptance of the divine call to presentation and transformation [that] results in the progressive renewal of their minds, enabling them to discern what is God’s will for them and to commit themselves to personal obedience to God’s good, pleasing and perfect will, viewed in the light of God’s blessed purpose for them in time and eternity” (Hiebert 1994, 324).

Transformation is not exclusively reserved for the individual who worships in God's presence in solitude. The Body of Christ, the church, is transformed as well when it incorporates the truth of Romans 12:1-2.

The worship we offer corporately in a worship service must be “informed”. ... Verse 1 makes it clear that God-pleasing worship, however expressed, must engage the mind. It must be logikos worship, worship appropriate for rational creatures, worship that arises from understanding something about God and his truth... Emotions must, of course, play a role in worship. But it is both easy and tempting to focus too much on an emotional reaction to music, bypassing the mind entirely. ...Worship that pleases him and that truly leaves a mark on a believer always engages the mind. ...By the “renewing of [the] mind” we transform ourselves and prove in practice God’s “good, pleasing and perfect will.” When we change the way we think, we change the way we live. (Moo 2010, 398)

**Future Hope: Completed Transformation**

The process of transformation, as presented in Romans 12:1-2 is progressive, but the Word of God points to a great destiny that awaits those “in Christ.” It is the culmination of the believer's transformational journey.
But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. (1 Cor. 15:51-53 [NLT])

The glorious transformation that takes place at Christ's second coming, impacts the redeemed for all of eternity. Sin is destroyed and the souls of the saints are torn from death's clenched hands. Christ’s work is victorious.

What a glorious deliverance is that which is wrought by the resurrection of Christ, who-sin entirely blotted out, righteousness divinely glorified and made good, Satan's power destroyed-transports us by virtue of an eternal redemption, and by the power of a life which has abolished death, into an entirely new sphere, where evil cannot come, nor any of its consequences, and where the favour [sic] of God in glory shines upon us perfectly and forever! It is that which Christ has won for us according to the eternal love of God our Father, who gave Him to us to be our Saviour [sic]. (John Darby's Synopsis, [accessed Feb. 21, 2015, http://www.christnotes.org/commentary.php?com=drby&b=46&c=15])

God's past, present, and future work of transformation in the life of the believer fulfills His divine purpose and brings glory to Himself.
CHAPTER 5: EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION IN PRIVATE WORSHIP

Personal transformation is the work that God produces in the life of a believer who prepares and participates in the life-long process of change. Numerous examples can be found in the pages of Scripture. These biblical examples, along with the research of godly scholars, provide insights that portray the preparation, process and product of transformational worship.

Portraits of Personal Transformation

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah there lies a powerful account of the personal transformation of the prophet, Isaiah. The account begins with mourning of Judah's king, Uzziah, who had passed away. Many historical accounts indicate Isaiah grew up in proximity to the palace and was connected in lineage to royalty. He had great respect for the office of the king. Though the reign of Uzziah began well, over time the king began to spiritually compromise. His arrogance and disregard for the worship of the temple was demonstrated as he usurped the duty of the priests and offered unholy sacrifices. God's anger was against Uzziah. “And then the chilling tragedy: over the face of the king there appeared the tell-tale spots of leprosy. Judah's most illustrious monarch since the days of Solomon has been branded with the dread disease that becomes readily the symbol of sin, the leprosy of the soul” (Love 1957, 283). This establishes the context for what is to follow.

Mourning the spiritual tragedy of Uzziah, Isaiah is in the temple. In that moment, God reveals Himself to Isaiah. The prophet records this revelation:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isa. 6:1-4 [KJV])
With this multi-sensory display of God's resplendent glory, Isaiah clearly sees a King worthy of worship and devotion. Isaiah's response results in a worship experience that is transformational. Whaley and Wheeler (2011, 85-89), provide a seven step progression in Isaiah's transformation:

1. **Isaiah recognizes God.** He sees how God's glory fills the whole of the earth. Isaiah marvels at how the temple trembles when the sovereign voice of God speaks (6:1-4).

2. **Isaiah is struck with a spirit of conviction.** He perceives his own sinfulness. His response is personal...He wants to do something about his helpless condition--no matter the cost. He knows the first step is repentance (6:5a).

3. **Isaiah makes a profession of faith.** Isaiah confesses his sin. ...[The prophet] took a hard look at himself and in essence said, “God, I am not worthy to be in your presence, I'm a sinner” (6:5b).

4. **Isaiah seeks forgiveness and cleansing.** Once Isaiah confessed his need for forgiveness, God took over. The task of cleaning, purifying, and purging of sin was all God. So it is with you and me....We only need to confess our need and submit to His authority. He does the rest (6:6-7).

5. **Isaiah [receives] the call.** He hears God's voice, perceives the need, and recognizes a calling from God.... God gave Isaiah the responsibility of proclaiming judgment and blessing, justice and righteousness, punishment and hope, devastation and salvation. No other prophet had ever been given such a daunting task (6:8).

6. **Isaiah answers God's call.** Isaiah gives God total dedication and devotion. He makes a pledge to God. He consecrates his confession by responding, “Here am I! Send me” (6:8).

7. **Isaiah receives his commission and charge.** Isaiah captures a sense of his task and immediately obeys. This job is not going to be easy, but Isaiah receives his instructions, accepts his duty and serves the Lord with passion (6:9-10).

Isaiah's worship is a portrait of transformation that demonstrates the necessity of making God the focus of life. When man sees the holiness of God, he is reminded that he “falls short” of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). Spiritual conviction then gives way to repentance and restoration.

When man worships in this way, God sees His child's brokenness, transforms him, and makes him new.
A second portrait of God’s transforming power is seen in the New Testament record of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. John 4 indicates that Jesus was traveling from Judah to Galilee and needed a place to rest during the journey. He chose the unlikely stopping place of Samaria and found a resting place by the well in Sychar. It was highly unusual for Jews to travel through Samaria, much less to stop there for any reason. Jesus defied the conventional practice of His day when he chose to pause his travel plans. He sent the disciples away into the city to find food. As Jesus sat at the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. Jesus did not hesitate to engage the woman in conversation. The Son of God initiated what would become a transformational event in the life of this unnamed woman.

“What do we learn from her as we consider her in general? ...[We learn that] the great and glorious blessing of the Christian gospel is offered to all types of people” (Lloyd-Jones 2009, 10). Based on the time of day and the location of the well where the Samaritan came to draw water, it is obvious that her intention was to fill her pots without drawing too much attention to herself. In fact, later in the passage the reader comes to understand that this Samaritan woman had a tarnished reputation in the community. Nonetheless, “Jesus said, ‘Please give me a drink.’ Again, this statement reveals Jesus’ true humanity; he was really thirsty. Even though such a request startled her (4:9), it drew her into a conversation with Jesus” (Life Application New Testament Commentary 2001, 388). As the conversation progressed, Jesus used His request as an opportunity to offer the Samaritan woman “living water” (Jn. 4:14).

So, here is our Lord’s great statement that we must consider. He says, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” Now this is true of the entire personality. We have already seen that this power produces a total change, a change in the whole person. It is equally important to see that the satisfaction that it gives is a satisfaction that is likewise complete, and this, again, is one of the claims we make for the glorious gospel. ...When we are talking about the power working within, transforming and changing us, I said it changed our mind, our outlook, our heart, our sensibilities, our affections and our will. (Lloyd-Jones 2009, 238-239)
Jesus’ offer of “living water” was his invitation to experience significant life-change. He knew the depths of her heart and desired to meet her need. His subsequent turn of the conversation was an intentional effort to help the woman see and acknowledge her need.

“By asking her to go and get her husband, [the woman] must have realized that this was not a man who could be fooled, for she answered transparently, ‘I don’t have a husband.’ The woman spoke the truth without any explanation. Jesus managed to affirm her truthfulness. He did not accuse or excuse; he simply described her life so that she could draw some clear conclusions about the mess in which she was living. (Life Application New Testament Commentary 2001, 389)

She did not deny that she had lived sinfully with numerous men and was in a wrong relationship at that time. She also recognized that Jesus was different from any man she had ever encountered. Her conclusion that He was a prophet prompted her to raise an issue related to the location of worship. Lloyd-Jones (2009, 52) observes:

“The more she talks, the more she betrays herself and reveals the inadequacy and the wrongness of her ideas. She is a religious person, remember, in spite of her sin, and she is interested in this subject, and she has her point of view with regard to the God who is worshipped. But our Lord proceeds to show her the hollowness of her talk about worship and about god, and he makes it quite plain and clear to her that all she has is valueless and that she must think anew about these matters.”

Desiring to see this woman experience the life-change that He was offering, Christ addresses her question regarding worship. “Ye worship yet know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:22-24 [KJV]).

The Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus resulted in a radical transformation. She took immediate action, accepting the life-giving water that was offered to her by Jesus. She
forsook her old patterns of life and immediately began telling others about the transformation that Jesus offered. Lloyd-Jones (2009, 663-664) summarizes this account when he writes:

We have been considering together the reaction of the woman of Samaria to our Lord's conversation with her. We have seen that one of the first things that happens to her is a profound conviction of sin, and then that this overwhelming person, [Jesus Christ] becomes the dominating factor in her life--that is why she leaves her waterpot....The next step is that this woman invites her fellow townspeople to come at once and see this person who has made such a difference to her and listen to him....Here is this woman--she had the experience of meeting this blessed person, and her immediate response is to rush to the city to say to the people “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?”

Side by side, the portraits of Isaiah and the Samaritan woman paint a picture of transformation that is offered to Jew and Samaritan, royal and common, man and woman, saint and sinner. This life-change is offered by Christ and is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, but mankind is not without responsibility in the preparation and process of personal transformation.

The Preparation for Personal Transformation

The nature of progressive transformation is much like travel. There is a point of origin and a point of destination. When there is recognition of a person's present state followed by a desire to journey to a new place, the process of transformation begins. Barton (2010, 23) indicates that Jesus often asked provocative questions to those who were with Him. “Such questions had the power to elicit deeply honest reflection in the person to whom they were addressed, and opened the way for Christ to lead them into deeper levels of spiritual truth and healing.” By questioning His followers, He hoped to stir a desire within them that would lead to transformation. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God continues to call His children to a place where transformation can occur.

Nothing in the spiritual life originates with us. It all originates with God. ...So it is that the spiritual life begins in this most unlikely place. It begins with the longing that stirs way down deep, underneath the noise, the activity, the drivenness of our life. But it is not
always comfortable to acknowledge such longing, and the direction that such an admission takes us is different for all of us. (Barton 2010, 25)

Largely, the outcome of a person's life and the extent of transformation that he experiences is contingent upon his degree of desire, perseverance, focus, and tenacity. More times than not, “those who accomplish what they set out to do in life are not those who are the most talented or gifted or who have had the best opportunities” (Barton 2010, 27). Desire is an important first step in preparing the believer for God's transforming work. Closely following desire is a subsequent component of preparation known as discipline. “Desire makes us act and when we act what we do will either lead to a greater integration or disintegration within our personalities, minds and bodies— and to the strengthening or deterioration of our relationship to God, others and the world. The habits and disciplines we use to shape our desire form the basis for spirituality” (Barton 2010, 14).

Personal transformation requires designated time with God that is free of distractions. This becomes challenging as the culture of today is noisy and clamors for attention. Therefore, it is vital for a Christian to disconnect from the chaos of life in order to connect with God.

Solitude is a place. It is a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone, a time when we unplug and withdraw from the noise of interpersonal interactions, from the noise, busyness and constant stimulation associated with life in the company of others. Solitude can also be associated with a physical place that has been set apart for times alone with God, a place that is not cluttered with work, noise, technology, other relationships, or any of those things that call us back into doing mode. Most important, solitude is a place inside myself where God’s Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union. This place within me is private and reserved for the intimacies that God and I share. What happens between the two of us in that place is not meant for public consumption. It is a place where I can give myself with abandon to the Lover of my soul, knowing that I am completely safe from anyone else’s curious gaze or judgmental glance. (Barton 2010, 32)

Time and space for solitude is elusive. In today's culture greater value is placed on activity and productivity than on disconnecting from distractions. Without the discipline of quiet time, man is unable to focus on God and others in a meaningful way.
Thoughtful reflection is constantly sabotaged by the intrusion of cell phones, pagers and e-mail messages. No wonder our human relationships are so unsatisfying as they get reduced to snippets of interrupted, disembodied phone conversation. What feels like convenience is actually robbing us of those things we value most. …Solitude is an opportunity to interrupt this cycle by turning off the noise and stimulation of our lives so that we can hear our loneliness and our longing calling us deeper into the only relationship that can satisfy our longing. (Barton 2010, 35-36)

Rather than recognize and acknowledge the need for solitude and reflection, the tendency for man is to fill his free time with more noise and activity. He becomes trapped in a vicious cycle. A life that is filled with pursuit of activity, leaving no room for sacred space, will eventually experience spiritual erosion. Constant striving without the presence of God's Spirit, weakens and wearies the soul. Spiritual vitality gives way to hopelessness and defeat. The alternative to this defeated state is to be refreshed with the abundantly flowing streams of solitude.

The noise of the world wars against the believer from without, but battles from within are equally dangerous and are the enemy of transformation. Speaking first hand, Ingram (2005, 68) admits, “Instead of the Spirit’s being in control, helping me live out my new identity in Christ, I’ve allowed my flesh to be controlled by the impulses of sin. So, the real question in morphing turns out to be, ‘How do you deal with the problem of sin?’” The good news is that the believer is not left alone to handle the problem of sin. The power of God is the driving hope for transformation.

We must remember that we are able to be transformed because we have died with Him. Having died with Him, we know that the penalty of sin has been broken once and for all, and the power of sin has been broken in its reigning control over our lives. The enemy is now a defeated foe, subject to the authority of the Spirit of Christ and the Word of God dwelling within us. (Ingram 2005, 80)

Once a person has claimed the victorious power of God, he is freed from the entangling attitudes of sin and is able to display attitudes that lead to transformation. Ingram (2005)
proposes four attitude shifts that are essential to life-change. This first attitude shift is from self-centeredness to humility. Genuine humility is not concerned with an individual's own feelings but rather it is focused on the needs of others. As the believer strives to put others ahead of self, the power of God is free to flow into the selfless life. A life that practices humility will also demonstrate gentleness. This is the second attitude shift. “Developing gentleness will drive you back to your identity in Christ. You will rest in the fact that you are secure, loved, valued and already significant” (Ingram 2005, 42). Longsuffering patience is the product of a third shift in attitude. Many times the absence of patience stems from a need for approval or the need to feel better than another person. The final attitude shift is one that moves away from isolation toward developing relationships with others and genuinely caring about their needs. It is a decision to move away from a place of relational comfort in order to become the hands and feet of Jesus wherever God leads.

You have begun to morph when you can say with your whole heart, “I’m going to learn to be a servant. I’m going to learn to be gentle and give up my rights. I’m going to learn to be patient and have a long fuse. I’m going to learn to bear with other people. I’m not going to hang around only with people I like and who make me feel good. I’m going to reach out to other kinds of people with whom I am uncomfortable, and I’m going to treat them as Jesus would treat them.” (Ingram 2005, 43)

**The Process for Personal Transformation**

Preparation is the foundation for spiritual transformation, but there is much more to experiencing life change that must be built upon this foundation. The ongoing process of spiritual transformation is only possible through the diligent pursuit of spiritual disciplines or “spiritual rhythms.”

The phrase “spiritual rhythms” is another helpful way of talking about this important concept, because it provides relief from some of the heavy-handed and rigid approaches to the spiritual life that many have experienced. This language draws on the imagery of the natural rhythms of the created order: The ebb and flow of the ocean waves and tides, which come and go steadily but are full of infinite variety and creativity. The
predictability of the changing seasons but also the beauty and variance that captures us anew each and every time. The rhythm of a good beat, which makes music and dancing one of the most delightful and spontaneous experiences that we enjoy, yet mastery of the basic notes and moves is required if we are to enter into it fully. (Barton 2010, 15)

The spiritual rhythm of engaging the Scriptures is vital. However, it must be much more than an intellectual pursuit. It must be approached with the intention of developing a deeper relationship with the Author of Scripture that affects all areas: intellect, heart, emotion, body and will. “When we read Scripture for relationship we pay attention to our own inner dynamics and allow our response to take place in the deeper levels of our beings. We are open to a whole different set of questions—questions that promote primarily cognitive activity and allow us to remain firmly in control of the whole experience” (Barton 2010, 51).

*Lectio divina*, a Latin term meaning “divine reading” is an approach to the study of Scriptures advocated by Barton (2010, 54). “It is a very concrete way of entering into the rhythm of speaking and listening involved in intimate communication. It incorporates several spiritual practices that support and catalyze life-transforming relationship with God.” It begins by selecting a passage that is relatively short (six to eight verses) in length, followed by a season of deep quiet, or *silencio*. This is followed by a reading of the Scripture once or twice looking for a word or phrase that becomes prominent to the reader. This is known as *lectio*. The word or group of words may resonate with the reader or may challenge the reader. Rather than seeking to find meaning, at this stage it is important to savor and contemplate the word or word grouping. Then it is time to read the passage again with reflection, asking how and why the word is resonating with the reader. During the time of reflection, or *meditatio*, “There is a brief period of silence in which we stay present with God with whatever comes.” (Barton 2010, 57). In these moments the reader hears from God and becomes aware of what God wants to accomplish in the reader’s life. *Oratio* is the subsequent step in this process. It is man’s response to what God has revealed
through His Word. Most often it is a raw and gut level response that flows spontaneously from what has been encountered in Scripture. This is followed by reading the selected passage of God's Word again, allowing it to provide rest, or *contemplation*, to the soul that has been stirred up during the previous journey through the Scripture passage. It is a time for man to enjoy the joy and peace that comes as a result of abiding in the presence of God. His peace gives the believer the faith to accept the calling of God to go deeper in the Christian life. Answering the call of obedience and service to God is the act of *incarnatio* and is the outward display of an inward transformation.

Dynamic prayer is also a spiritual rhythm that brings transformation to the life of the Christian. However, maintaining a consistent prayer life is a challenge for many of God's people. They may talk about prayer or study prayer, but when it comes to having a healthy prayer life, there is disconnect or lack of spiritual intimacy with the Father. Intimacy is risky. It makes many uncomfortable and requires vulnerability. Ultimately it requires surrender and release of control. This is precisely what God wants from His followers. Barton (2010, 69) asserts: “We come to him with empty hands and empty heart, having no agenda...Eventually, when we stop the flow of our own words, another gift comes to us, quietly and imperceptibly at first: we find ourselves resting in prayer. Rather than working so hard to put everything into words, we rest from the noise and stimulation that are so characteristic of life in our culture.” Much like the practice of *lectio divina*, God works powerfully through silent and contemplative prayer. In fact, in the times of utter surrender, when man has exhausted all of his energies in prayer and is left with only the deep groaning within his soul, the Holy Spirit intercedes on the behalf of the believer, delivering man's prayer to God.
Developing a personal prayer life greatly strengthens the prayer life of the Body of Christ. The church experiences true community as believers spend time together worshipping, confessing sin to one another, and praying for the needs of brothers and sisters as well as praying for personal needs. Barton describes the transforming power of prayer when she states:

And so it happens that all of life becomes prayer. From prayers that are more formal and structured to those that are informal and spontaneous, from prayer with words to prayer that is beyond words, from the most intimate expressions of love expressed privately to God to words spoken in unison by God’s people when they gather, from the eloquent written prayers of the church to the breath prayer that is nothing more than a gasp of need or a sigh of love or a groan of longing, from the prayers uttered in beautiful cathedrals to prayers offered on the side of a mountain—every breath we take can be a prayer, uniting our heart to God and harnessing the energy of our life to his great purposes. (Barton 2010, 75)

Spiritual rhythms are connected to physical rhythms. Though an obsession with image and the body is detrimental, there is danger in neglecting to maintain healthy life practices. Integrating spiritual and physical disciplines leads to healthy balance and encourages transformation. Barton (2010, 89) writes, “As I care for my body more wisely, I am conscious of a life-giving energy that is always being renewed as a gift from my amazing Creator God. And as I have learned to listen to my body, I have grown in the capacity to discern God’s guidance and trust it, even in the midst of great complexity.” Thus, body and spirit are connected.

Likewise there is a connection between spiritual and mental rhythms. Transformation that comes from a renewed mind reveals how negative or destructive old thought patterns have been. “Having tried every self-help approach we know, we are devastated to admit that real, fundamental change is beyond our reach. The heart cry out to be free from its bondage” (Barton 2010, 93).

The solution to this dilemma is ruthless self-examination. A prominent Old Testament example of this practice is King David. In his great prayer of repentance he prays, “Search me, O
God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24 [KJV]). David’s practice of self-examination is a progression “from total lack of awareness to self-awareness, confession of sin, forgiveness, cleansing and real life change” (Barton 2010, 99).

Barton suggests that through the ancient practice called the “examen” of consciousness, a person should engage in an inventory that recalls the activities and events of everything that has taken place that day. The protocol of this inventory progresses as follows:

1. Preparation. Spend a few moments in silence, allowing yourself to be still and know how much God loves you.

2. Invitation. Invite God to go with you in your search for evidence of his presence throughout your day and in your search for self-knowledge.

3. Review the day. Identify the major events of the day (or the week, if you are doing the examen weekly)...Reflect on each of the events, noticing where God seemed to be loving you, speaking to you, guiding you or showing you something new about himself.

4. Give thanks. Thank God for each part of your day, for his presence with you in the midst of it, for those moments when you sensed a growing freedom from sin and a greater capacity to love God and others.

5. Confess. Using Psalm 139:23-24 as your prayer, invite God to bring to mind attitudes, actions, or moments when you fell short of exhibiting the character of Christ or the fruit of the Spirit.

6. Ask forgiveness. Also express your willingness to take any concrete steps needed to allow Christ’s character to be more fully formed in you (Barton 2010, 108-109).

Experiencing transformation through the renewal of the mind produces discernment in the believer. This enables him to better understand the will of God in all matters of the Christian life. A discerning person is able to say, “I have gotten to a place where I want God and his will more than anything— more than ego gratification, more than looking good in the eyes of others, more than personal ownership or comfort or advantage. I want ’God’s will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else”” (Barton 2010, 119).
In the rhythms of life, seasons of rest are necessary. Practicing the discipline of Sabbath follows the example of God who paused on the seventh day of creation to rest. It provides balance and purpose when a day is set apart for rest, for worship, and to focus upon God. “The point of the Sabbath is to honor our need for a sane rhythm of work and rest. It is to honor the body’s need for rest, the spirit’s need for replenishment and the soul’s need to delight itself in God for God’s own sake” (Barton 2010, 138).

Ingram (2005, 86-96) establishes three principles that are essential to transformation. (1) The foundation of transformation is truth, and the only reliable source for truth is God’s Word. (2) Building on the foundation of God's Word, transformation occurs when a person acts on truth. Faith is acting on the truth of Scripture. (3) Transformation is both a gift of God and a responsibility of man. Only God is able to bring about transformation. Yet, a person who desires change cannot be passive. He must bring himself before God in surrender.

The discipline required for personal transformation can be compared to a runner’s training regimen. Meyer (2010, 166-170) calls these disciplines “rules of life” and reflects on key principles requisite for personal transformation that he discovered.

1. **Slowing down.** The slower pace on the road put me in more of a reflective mood. I no longer had to worry about making up time for being late. I found myself becoming relaxed and less preoccupied. I used these times as openings to calm myself by being in God’s presence. I learned to take whole days to just “do nothing,” to rest, and I began to make more room for restorative slowing exercises.

2. **Paying attention to God.** I began to treat God like a friend who was always with me. Not just as a teacher for my morning devotions, a firefighter to put out the fires of crisis I got into or someone to acknowledge at worship services, but as my friend and teacher for every moment of life.

3. **Memorizing and meditating on Scripture.** When we take longer passages into our body, we are doing what Paul actually did himself, letting “the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16)...when we meditate on the passage and attempt to
live out it’s truth, there is a formational space created that brings kingdom realities into being in our life.

4. **Confession of sin and receiving forgiveness.** Unhinging confession from forgiveness and reconciliation with others has been a disservice. ...In his classic work, *Holy Living and Dying*, the seventeenth century Anglican Jeremy Taylor presents a picture of Christian fellowship where people are lovingly and graciously straight with each other, practicing biblical exhortation and encouragement. Unlike us, they expected others to rebuke them and speak the truth in love. This was practiced so they could become better friends in Jesus, not one-upping each other spiritually. Wouldn’t such a church be refreshing and inviting? Confession would not be a shameful practice to be avoided but a privileged soul-keeping exercise of love and care.

**The Proof of Personal Transformation**

Ingram (2005, 57-63) postulates that in the United States, the vast majority of those who claim Christianity have not embraced the full transformation that God desires to see take place. Several reasons are offered for this sad reality. The first is attributed to the plight of a biblically illiterate culture. This results in lives that lack spiritual depth and are easily swayed by falsehood. To experience significant spiritual change, Christians must do more than dabble in the Word of God. They must tenaciously study and apply the truths contained in Scripture.

Another reason that transformation eludes many Christians is because they do not associate with other believers and form deep relationships in community. Being connected in fellowship is more than just a “good thing to do.” It is an indispensable practice for those who desire change. Community provides an environment of safety, honesty, vulnerability, accountability and encouragement that nourishes life-change.

A final obstacle to spiritual life-change is “spiritual myopia.” This takes place when the believer's acumen is out of focus and his gaze is fixed on the distractions of the present world. It would serve well for the distracted Christian to disassociate from any influence that does not draw him closer to the reality of who God is and what He wants to do in that person's life.
In contrast to the deterents previously mentioned, Paul gives four indicators that are good benchmarks of transformation in Ephesians 4:14-16. (1) Doctrinal stability. By learning and practicing the truth of Scripture, faith is strengthened and a person gains a clear understanding of their position in Christ. (2) Authentic relationships. This involves being fiercely honest with others by being transparent about their own actions as well as having the courage to confront an erring brother. (3) Full participation. The believer must engage in community, his faith journey was never intended to be a solo quest. Serving alongside other believers to minister to needs inside and outside of the church is transformational. (4) A growing capacity for love. “At the end of the day, regardless of our spiritual background or practices, we can know how well we’re doing in our journey with Christ by honestly answering a very clear two-part question: Am I loving God more deeply as evidenced by my obedience (see John 14:21), and am I loving others more authentically?” (Ingram 2006, 145-146).
CHAPTER 6: EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

Personal transformation does not occur exclusively in the environment of private worship. Public worship is inextricably linked to personal transformation.

When we live in authentic community, we act as catalysts for morphing in each other’s lives. ...Life-change never happens in isolation. God wants to change you. The tools and resources He uses are the spiritual gifts of other people as you live in humility and love and genuine relationship together. It is their spiritual gifts and Christ in them that God uses along with the truth of His Word, empowered by the Spirit to bring about supernatural transformation. (Ingram 2005, 98-99)

The Church of Antioch: A Model for the Transformational Church

By studying the New Testament record of the church in Antioch, a strong case can be made for characteristics of a church that is transformational. Though the Antioch church was not perfect, it surpassed its imperfections in order to significantly transform the surrounding culture of its day and serves as a model for today's church. Much like the present day, Antioch was a stronghold of secular philosophy and debauchery. Idolatry was widespread. Yet the church of Antioch grew and the good news of Jesus Christ thrived. “We must have confidence that the gospel can change lives and transformational churches can grow. ...Sin abounds in [today's world]. Yet, where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. Where grace abounds, the gospel transforms. As the gospel transforms individuals, congregations form to celebrate and spread the gospel” (Iorg 2010, 15-16). Through a biblical case study of the church of Antioch, numerous themes emerge which provide principles of transformation that can be applied to the present day church.

A transformational church is powered by the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit was an active part of the worship within the Antioch church. Preachers spoke with great power. Worshippers responded to the truth of God's Word. Church members gave generously. People
were being called to spread the message of Jesus Christ through missions. Iorg (2010, 41-45) observes that the church was filled with the Holy Spirit and provides four aspects of this filling:

1. The first aspect of being filled with the Holy Spirit is conversion. ...As a believer, at your conversion you received the Holy Spirit as a permanent, indwelling presence that lasts a lifetime.

2. The second aspect of being filled with the Spirit is surrendering control of your life. ...It’s a willing choice to become passive, to submit, [and] to willingly cede control to the Spirit’s influence.

3. The third aspect of being filled with the Spirit is stopping, sinful behavior. ...The Holy Spirit is alive in you. Yet, you have the capacity to stifle or quench His influence. ...You quench the Spirit when you neglect spiritual disciplines like prayer and responding to prophetic (or preached) messages, Bible reading and worship attendance.

4. A final aspect of being filled with the Spirit is accepting His filling by faith. ...When ministry leaders are filled with the Spirit, their character development reveals spiritual growth or spiritual fruit. Christian leaders are role models. Their leadership competency is actually defined more by character than skill. ...Clearly then, one aspect of being Spirit-filled is demonstrating transformed character--change produced by the Holy Spirit’s shaping your mind, will and emotions so that you demonstrate being a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17) in Jesus.

Like the church of Antioch, transformational churches experience the power of the Holy Spirit during their times of worship. “Transformational churches and their leaders have a sense of expectancy when they gather for worship” (Iorg 2010, 52).

Through effective planning, worship leaders look for and prepare for ways to create an environment that encourages the worshipers to respond to the urgings of the Holy Spirit. Worship that includes personal and corporate prayers, testimonies, confession, public repentance, edification, and the offering of support, gives worshipers any number of opportunities to engage the work of the Holy Spirit. “Being filled with the Spirit doesn’t mean you will reach as many people as Billy Graham or Rick Warren. But...[t]he filling of the Spirit produces various supernatural results including the miracle of conversions happening through your preaching,
teaching, sharing, and/or modeling the gospel” (Iorg 2010, 46). When the Spirit works, there is transformation.

A transformational church is receptive to new approaches to ministry. The sustained health of a transformational church is linked to its attitude toward innovation. However, purposeless change will produce an unhealthy church no matter how well it is received by a congregation. “The best reason to introduce change to a church: to better fulfill the mission of getting the gospel to as many people as possible in the shortest time possible. Every new idea must be measured by that standard” (Iorg 2010, 58).

A number of innovations in the church at Antioch provide a model for healthy missional change. The first significant innovation was the spread of the gospel message from the Jewish community to the Gentiles. Acts 11:20 indicates that Cypriot and Cyrenian men came to Antioch proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus to the Hellenists. Another innovation was that Paul and Barnabas spent a year at the church of Antioch teaching the new Gentile converts. The Scriptures indicate that they taught “large numbers” (Acts 11:26). The third innovation was the labeling of the disciples as “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Fourth, was the inaugural missionary endeavors of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:2. (Iorg 2010, 60-62).

In each of these innovations the purpose was to spread the gospel and advance God’s work to expand His kingdom. The mindset of the Antioch church was to do whatever it took to accomplish their purpose. “Transformational churches often follow this pattern. They discern what is required to reach people in their community. Then they appraise their situation and strategize for necessary change. Usually, when this is done well, prayerful submission to the Holy Spirit is evident” (Iorg 2010, 66).

Sustaining ministry freshness and innovation is a challenge that every church must face.
Often churches that begin as a movement will over time become more institutionalized. A movement focuses upon their mission and values as a necessary part of their existence. An institution tends to be more concerned with maintenance. Focus on the mission becomes increasingly challenging. “Institutional development is not entirely a bad outcome! ...Problems arise, however, when preserving institutional structures at the expense of the mission becomes the priority” (Iorg 2010, 70). The question then becomes “What can a church do to maintain its missional focus and function more like a movement than an institution?” Three suggestions are offered:

1. Model the movement but manage the institution...Devote more time to evangelistic visitation than committee meetings. Magnify your mission and your investment in accomplishing it by communicating more about the missional aspects of your work than the institutional components.

2. Help followers remember when your church was a movement. Learn your church’s founding story and tell it from time to time...Remind your members of the spirit of sacrifice and adventure that created your church.

3. Celebrate achieving the mission of advancing the gospel....Followers watch what leaders celebrate and commemorate and then invest themselves in similar activities. Make sure you celebrate being a movement more than preserving an institution. Doing so will facilitate the entrepreneurial spirit necessary for embracing change in a transformational church (Iorg 2010, 70-72).

Transformational churches change lives. A short time after Barnabas left Jerusalem to serve the church of Antioch, it became clear to him that he would need to develop a plan of action to set the church on a proper foundation, and that it would be wise to include Paul in the process. Together, they spent an entire year teaching as many new Christians as they could. This teaching transformed those who were part of the church.

By any measure, the church at Antioch is a model of transformation. Through its teaching ministry, in obedience to Jesus’ instructions, disciples were made in Antioch. Doctrinal convictions were established, stewardship was learned and practiced, worship was cultivated, witnessing and missionary outreach flourished, and church problems were solved by applying principles of the gospel to interpersonal relationships. (Iorg 2010, 84)
Teaching is an integral component of transformation. It introduces new information and thoughts which lead to new attitudes that when internalized produce actions. When the subject that is being taught is biblical truth, this allows the Christian the opportunity to adopt “the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2:16). With this transformation comes a new way of looking at life. “This type of transformation--a renewed mind producing new choices based on an ingrained biblical worldview--should be a church’s goal for every member....While the results are individual, the ultimate conclusion is corporate--a transformed and transformational church” (Iorg 2010, 77).

A closer look at the Antioch model of instruction reveals three distinguishing characteristics. The teaching ministry of Paul and Barnabas was (1) Intentional. It was designed with a logical progression from conversion to spiritual maturity. (2) Comprehensive. Subject matter touched upon every aspect of the Christian life. (3) Repetitive. Biblical concepts were reinforced and reviewed consistently (Iorg 2010, 85-87).

Teaching remains a powerful tool for challenging the transformational church. There are many ways teaching can occur. A church that desires to see transformation in the lives of its members will include combinations of all of the following teaching approaches occurring simultaneously in their educational efforts.

- First, one on one pairs of same gender partners who commit to work together toward a specific training goal. ...The leader is usually a more mature Christian (in the case of helping a new believer) or a veteran leader (in the case of shaping a specific skill set).

- Second, “closed” small groups meet for a limited duration with a finite membership. They form for a purpose to work through a specific study or to meet a specific need.

- Third, “open” small groups meet regularly, in a continuing format, and welcome guests or new members at every opportunity. ...They work well for assimilating new people and helping them begin the process of spiritual growth in a less threatening environment than a closed group or one-on-one pair.
Fourth, seminars or conferences take many forms ranging from one-day workshops to weekend retreats to classes offered over a few weeks or months. ...The primary weakness for this approach is diminished accountability and coaching toward specific applications.

Fifth, preaching, declaring truth from Scripture is an important teaching tool. ...The strength of this tool is its ability to confront, sobering an audience with the power of the declared Word of God and the standard of living it demands. The only weakness of preaching as a teaching method is depending on it exclusively, without using the other approaches (Iorg 2010, 89-91).

While teaching for transformation is desirable and healthy, caution should be heeded. Information alone leads to a head knowledge that may masquerade as genuine life-change. It is equally important to allow this information to flow from the mind into the heart and thereby allow it to affect actions.

A transformational church is committed to doctrinal integrity. Though it was innovative in many ways, the church at Antioch remained steadfast in the essentials of the faith. “Paul broke new ground in contextualizing the gospel’s presentation but without compromising its message. ...Transformational churches stand for truth rather than dilute the message and explain away its requirements for holy living” (Iorg 2010, 95).

An issue arose over whether or not circumcision was a prerequisite for salvation. For centuries circumcision was a symbol of God's covenant with the Jews. The Gentiles did not believe that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Though it was a common practice in the church of Jerusalem, they addressed the question from the church of Antioch indicating that it was through faith in the resurrected Christ, not circumcision that brought salvation. By addressing the topic of circumcision, the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch demonstrated that churches who share a common belief on foundational issues of doctrine do not need to let lesser matters interrupt their fellowship and partnerships. “The overarching lesson we learn from this story is transformational churches, and their leaders, stand for doctrinal integrity. They are
willing to endure conflict, spend money to get people together to address important issues, allow (even encourage) leaders to devote time to the battle, and involve entire Christian communities in the process” (Iorg 2010, 105).

Transformational churches are able to differentiate between iron clad convictions and preferences. Iorg (2010, 110-113) describes three degrees of doctrinal positions. (1) “Convictions,” which are core beliefs and nonnegotiable. Regardless of the outcome or potential sacrifice, convictions are steadfast. A person or church will hold to them tenaciously without regard to the cost. (2) “Commitments” are common issues that individuals or organizations find to be common ground. An example of this would be a denominational association. (3) “Preferences” reflect personal and corporate ideals that reflect tastes, cultural influences, generational considerations, or other demographic factors.

In summary, “[t]ransformational churches model God’s love by how they handle doctrinal matters. These churches know the difference between convictions, commitments, and preferences. Healthy churches, imperfect because of human frailty, engage this process intentionally, knowing the outcome may be messy but the results are worth the effort.” (Iorg 2010, 113).

A transformational church will handle conflict effectively. In every family there will be disagreements. The same is true of a church family. Acts 15 details the events surrounding a conflict in the church at Antioch. As previously mentioned, a conflict existed over whether salvation was in Christ alone or in Christ plus circumcision. After the disagreement became controversial, Paul wasted no time confronting the issue. He arranged for a meeting between church leaders expecting them to travel whatever distance necessary in order to resolve their disagreement. Once assembled, they thoroughly discussed the matter and reached consensus.
“Members of strong churches still have conflict with one another and with their leaders and observe discord among their leaders. What differentiates these situations in healthy churches (from similar events in struggling churches) isn’t the nature of the disagreements but how they are handled” (Iorg 2010, 116).

Rather than allow themselves to get mired down in arguments and fighting among each other, transformational churches move through a process of conflict resolution that (1) anticipates conflict, (2) brings resolution to every conflict, (3) accepts mixed results from conflict resolution, and (4) moves on when resolution has been achieved (Iorg 2010, 128). Conflict is diffused when those involved are deftly led by strong leaders through a process leading to resolution. Often churches attempt to sidestep conflict by denying its existence. This approach strangles that church's potential for transformation. “Determine to manage conflict and trust God to bring your church through to better days with renewed focus on kingdom endeavors” (Iorg 2010, 136).

A transformational church follows strong leadership. The church at Antioch was led by Barnabas. Acts 11:24 identifies his as “a good man.” His character was steadfast and was clearly demonstrated over and over. It has already been established that he defended the Antioch church and its rejection of circumcision as a condition requisite for salvation. He stood beside Paul and endorsed his leadership. They stood together throughout Paul's first missionary journey, “and [Barnabas] was eager to go again until the flap erupted over Mark (Acts 15:36-41)” (Iorg 2010, 141).

Paul's influence and leadership was unsurpassed in that he was not only the premiere leader of the early church, but also His leadership influence extended far beyond his time period, forever transforming world history. Under his leadership the gospel was preached to the
Gentiles. He was fearless in many respects. “Paul’s willingness to confront others is further evidence of his ego strength and convictional fortitude” (Iorg 2010, 142).

Based on the character of Barnabas, Paul, and a handful of other church leaders in Antioch, Iorg provides three observations: “First, a transformational church has strong leaders. Second, a transformational church has a plurality of diverse leaders. Third, a transformational church has men in leadership roles. Each of these ideas is often resisted in churches today to our detriment” (Iorg 2010, 143).

Though strong leaders are necessary, they are not capable of accomplishing a God-given mandate alone. Therefore, leaders must surround themselves with competent individuals who are sound in balanced thinking and willing to bring new perspectives to the table for consideration. Iorg (2010, 152) notes, “At Antioch the named leaders were all men. This is striking given the prominence of women in Jesus’ ministry and their significant role in the church throughout Acts.” If men are to indeed be the leaders of the church, the church needs to effectively develop men. This will not only include training men, but also designing worship with men in mind, providing ministries that are exclusively for men, and creating opportunities for men to mentor and impact the next generation.

A transformational church gives itself away. Generosity was a trait of the church at Antioch. Even though it was a new work, it treasured the message of the gospel and wanted to see it spread. This passion was such a driving force in the life of the church that its members were extremely generous in their financial support of the mission of the church. “The Antioch Christians gave according to their ability or in proportion to their resources. Generous churches are made up of individuals willing to sacrifice so their church, in turn, can make a corporate impact with its giving” (Iorg 2010, 163).
Not only did the church of Antioch give out its financial resources, it strongly encouraged and supported the sending out of its most gifted leaders to advance the spread of Christianity.

Giving away resources, not hoarding them opens the channel of God’s blessing and assures adequate flow from His abundant provision. God prospers individuals and personnel, and money. ...Generous giving begets generous provision from God. ...Transformational churches are generous with their resources. They give themselves away. They give when they are struggling with ministry challenges, faced with many local needs, and when it’s economically difficult. They give out of conviction believing God will honor them for their generosity and meet any needs created by their giving. (Iorg 2010, 159-160)

A transformational church expresses generosity in many ways. It is sacrificial and knows if it is faithful in giving to other causes, God will take care of its own needs. The desire to see all nations come to a knowledge of the Savior drives its giving. There is also a practical side to their giving as well. “Generous churches care for people in practical ways. They provide food, clothing, and shelter for people in crisis, often people who might seem unlovable” (Iorg 2010, 172). The generosity of a transformational church goes beyond finances. It includes the commissioning of its own members to uproot and join the kingdom work of Christ through church plants locally and mission endeavors globally. In summary, “Healthy churches measure their financial strength by how much they give away and invest in others, not by how much they amass for themselves. Transformational churches are generous churches, with members committed to sacrificing for kingdom causes” (Iorg 2010, 177).

**The Contemporary Church and Transformation**

The church of Antioch provided a clear demonstration that God ordained the church to be a tool through which His message would reach to the corners of the earth. The believers of the early church were proactive and missional in their obedience to Christ's commission of Matthew 28. As a result lives were changed.
When people are changed, churches are changed and communities are changed. This is a stark and biblical contrast to merely changing gears in one's programming or systems, shuffling Christians around to new modes of activity. ...Gospel change has always lead to broader change. The gospel's power reaches into all nooks and crannies, soaks into all places, plants seeds, and bears fruit. It changes everything. ...The world will not only notice but also experience a change itself when God's people begin to act like Jesus, when God's church lives like the body of Christ. (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 10-11)

With the intention of discovering how the church “facilitates more people becoming Christ followers, more believers growing in their faith, and more churches making an impact on their communities,” (Stetzer and Rainer 2010, 25) a national study of churches was conducted to identify common characteristics and evidences of transformation. Stetzer and Rainier’s research resulted in a paradigm they have termed, “The Transformational Loop” (figure 6.1). The loop is comprised of three overarching components with several sub-elements. “Each element stands on its own as an idea but it is dependent on the other elements in order to take effect in the church” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 33).

![Figure 6.1: Stetzer and Rainier’s (2008) Transformational Loop](image-url)
The initial theme, “Discern,” revealed that transformational churches (TCs) carefully look at their communities. They seek to understand the dynamics of their local culture. Their purpose is not to merely gather information. They gather and analyze data in order to make informed ministry decisions and develop action-oriented strategies for reaching the surrounding community. TCs are externally focused. “Moving to an external focus pushes the church from doing missions as some second-mile project into being on mission as a way of life” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 34).

An intermediary theme, “Embrace,” is the necessary process that drives TCs toward their goal of changing the lives of individuals, communities, and ultimately the world. In this intermediary process, there are three pillars, (1) vibrant leadership, (2) relational intentionality, and (3) prayerful dependence. Stetzer and Rainier (2010, 35-36) define these pillars stating:

The vibrant leadership seen in our top-tier churches did not have such a pedestrian understanding. The leaders in these churches showed passion for God. …The church was designed by Christ as a collection of people participating in one another's lives [relational intentionality]. We see it as a critical step in the development of the church to help Christians deliberately connect with one another….The third element of Embrace is Prayerful Dependence. When we entered the study, we knew that any truly transformational work is done only by God Himself. The churches we encountered believed that as well. But more than believing, they showed a natural disposition of communicating with God about the hope for transformation.

The distinguishing factor between transformational churches and many churches today is that TCs move beyond catchy slogans, slick websites, and church growth campaigns to a deeper level, calling their congregations to true life change through Christ and mobilizing them for community action. “In our study's top tier churches, they engaged the right actions that led to transformation. The focused activity of these churches led to making disciples” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 36).
The resulting theme in the Transformational Loop is “Engage.” Transformational churches engage with God, with those inside the church, and with those outside the church. Engagement with God is worship. Christian worship is foundational for transformation, and when worship is properly focused on God, He moves in the lives of His people to produce change. “The worship in TCs contains an element that stood out to our research team: expectancy. When people arrived for worship, they knew something was going to happen. They trusted God to deliver transformation rather than musicians to deliver a good show” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 36). Engagement with those within the church is community. Relationships within the local church body are an essential part of the transformation process. TCs are very intentional about connecting their people “to one another through ministry systems such as home Bible studies, small groups, Sunday School, and service groups” (Stetzer and Rainer 2010, 37). Engagement with those outside the church is mission. Mobilization is the culmination of God-focused worship and Christian community. God’s people are changed in His presence, and are commissioned by Christ to carry this life-changing message to others. It is the normative practice of Transformational churches and their people to carry out the gospel mandate.

Having given an overview of their study, Stetzer and Rainier (2010) elaborate on their findings specific to each of the previously mentioned sub-elements. Many of their study findings are pertinent to establishing the relationship between worship and transformation.

Transformational churches are both intentional and relational. Relationships are vital. Churches expend time, budgets, and energy to create environments that encourage people to fellowship and move beyond superficial acquaintances and into deeper relational levels. This may be the way they seek to carry out their church mission and reach others. Others churches may be more driven by missional or project-based initiatives to perpetuate the spread of the
message of Christ. “Neither should be compromised, but both should be embraced, becoming complimentary. The marriage between relational and intentional will produce transformed people who will populate Transformational Churches” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 106).

Though intentional relationships are valuable as tools for promoting life change, there is a tension that exists. On one hand, a church may be so “seeker sensitive” that the message of the gospel is eclipsed. On the other, a church may be so full of “religiosity” that it creates obstacles to the message of the gospel rather than being a highway that leads to grace of God. “The cross should be the only stumbling block any ‘outsider’ would ever face when entering our churches” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 111).

Scripture records numerous occasions in the life of Christ where He demonstrated the effectiveness of one-on-one encounters. Though people were astonished and amazed by His public preaching, His ability to speak straight to the heart during personal conversations seems to have had an even greater impact on people. He embraced young and old, healthy and diseased, sinner and pure of heart alike. Following Christ's example, “TCs have discovered that welcoming in the broken is a blessing and not a curse. They have made a decision to care for those in trouble because they want the broken to become the sons and daughters of God” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 117).

Transformational churches have a clear sense of their calling and intentionally filter their programming decisions through the sieve of purpose. Otherwise, programs run the risk of simply becoming activities that lack the power and presence of God's Spirit.

Intentional relationships are at the heart of the gospel. Notice the welcoming environment surrounding Jesus: “All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to Him. And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!’” (Luke 15:1-2). Our mission is not an activity but a relational engagement with God. ...Transformational Churches get relationships and do them intentionally
because relationships are the platform through which people find and follow Jesus. (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 122)

Transformational churches are prayerful. Stetzer and Rainier (2010) indicate that a significant number of churches fail to place a priority upon prayer. Some are focused on programs, facilities, or other peripheral issues. As a result these churches make little impact on the lives of those who attend. In transformational churches prayer is the very foundation of their ministries. “TCs pray before they serve because they want God to work through them and never in spite of them... In a TC, prayer happens out of a history of what has been seen as its result. People pray in TCs because they have seen prayer bring about transformation. Efficiency and excellence are worthy pursuits in ministry. But, there is no substitute for prayerful dependence upon God” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 128-129).

God desires His church to be a place of prayer and inextricably links prayer to transformation when He states, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14 [NIV]). Prayer establishes a direct connection between God and man. Those who develop a prayerful dependence upon God experience a deep connection with Him. They are transformed because of their obedience to His leading. “TCs have watched lives change after they prayed. From prayer in the past, they received leadership from the Spirit for their church. They pray expectantly that God will continue to respond to their requests for guidance, empowerment, and change in their community” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 135).

Further study into the prayer practices of transformational churches produced numerous common denominators. (1) Prayer holds a central place in every aspect of church life. (2) Church leadership practices and models prayerful dependence on God. (3) As God answers the prayers
of His people, the church intentionally celebrates His work. (4) Transformational churches have systems in place that challenge people to grow in an understanding of prayer and to practice a disciplined prayer life. (5) Not only is private prayer encouraged, opportunities abound for people to pray in community. (6) Prayer is offered for the physical and the spiritual needs of others. Not only are the needs of fellow believers brought before God, but also the needs of those who are yet to encounter the good news of Christ. (7) Prayer events are a consistent and significant part of church life. “Research supported the significance of a church that not only valued prayer but practiced prayer. When you find those churches, you will find Transformational Churches” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 137-143).

Transformational churches actively embrace Jesus in worship. When a church moves beyond a preoccupation with worship styles and the packaging of its Sunday morning gatherings to a point where it is more concerned with celebrating God's glory and presenting the person and work of Jesus Christ, the worship life of that church experiences transformation.

In TCs people gather with the expectation that something amazing will happen. In many churches—too many churches—the leaders and people gather without such anticipation. They have grown accustomed to the service (as the old joke goes) beginning at 11:00 sharp and ending at 12:00 dull. In a TC the people arrive with expectancy and leave with excitement. ...A TC expects God’s presence to be real and transformative in their worship experiences. Knowing this, they look for and ask for people to change because of God’s gift of mercy. (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 150)

God is pleased and glorified when He is the focus of Christian worship. Without an authentic encounter with God, transformation is unlikely. As a believer worships in God's presence, and experiences His work in a personal way, God will reveal His purpose for the worshiper's life.

Real worship will transform the worshipper. Transformed worshippers will change the world. God asked Isaiah two questions. “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: ‘Who should I send? Who will go for us?’ I said, ‘Here I am. Send me’” (Isa. 6:8). For Isaiah, real worship produced transformation. In the church today transformed worshippers join...
the mission of God to change the world. …Transformation by the gospel results in a sent life. (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 156)

The principal purpose of worship should declare the truth of Jesus Christ and edify the body of Christ to live in such a way as to honor God and bring Him glory. The practice of worship should encourage genuine and varied expressions of worship that are inclusive of both time-honored traditions and contemporary declarations of God's glory. With this in mind the church is cautioned against allowing worship styles to replace God in worship. Yet, debates over worship styles are prevalent in churches today. This becomes a source of conflict “because we choose to emphasize man-centered preferences. Focusing instead on the clear revelation of God and the authority of His Word will lead to the liberty brought by the Spirit” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 157). Musical skirmishes have long been a part of church history and have been used by Satan as a tool to divide and detract from the true purpose and object of worship. The transformational church recognizes the strategy of the enemy and combats it by encouraging worship that humbly casts aside personal preference. It distances itself from stylistic debates and looks for ways to inspire as many as possible to participate in corporate worship. As leaders plan worship for their congregations, Stetzer and Rainier (2010, 165) ask, “How can worship be planned to lead people in this time and place to worship an eternal God? …How can our worship be planned so people can focus on God and give Him praise, glory, and honor?”

Considering these questions in lieu of stylistic concerns and preferences leads to worship that is transformational. It should be the goal of the worship leader to declare who Christ is and tell what He has done each time the church is gathered in worship.

There are eight principles based on Stetzer and Rainier's (2010, 169-171) research that can guide worship leaders and pastors when planning worship services.
1. *Ask the Lord.* Prayerful dependence converges with our activity of worship. With so much at stake, engage the beauty of simple dependence on God for answers.

2. *Involve people.* Transformational Churches let leaders lead…When engaging in the dialogue, make worship issues a spiritual choice not a musical choice.

3. *Study Scripture.* Define the biblical values that will drive your worship decisions. Often the debate becomes emotional and self-centered. The conversation needs to revolve around the question, “What does God want here and now?”

4. *Die to self.* Churches seeing transformation die to their preferences. Better yet, they are living in God’s preference: to see the people in the community understand His revelation and submit to Christ.

5. *Avoid “truces.”* Truces are temporary solutions to long-term issues.

6. *Study the community.* Every community is unique in its makeup. Expressions of worship that are practiced in one location are not universally accepted or beneficial elsewhere.

7. *Focus on revelation.* Be intentional about spending more energy building worship experiences replete with the message about the Messiah than on the debate around stylistic preferences. In other words, spend more time on what you are doing than how you will do it.

8. *Design new scorecards.* Are people being changed through your public worship? Are they learning how to worship in a way that will carry over to their personal lives? Are they observing worship teams and leaders modeling genuine worship?

   Remember that the ultimate purpose of worship is transformation. Therefore, the more accurate assessment of life-change takes place after corporate worship has concluded. “Measure your worship not at 11 o’clock on Sunday morning but 8:30 on Monday morning in the cubicles where your people go to work” (Mike Harland, 2008, 132).

Transformational churches practice life together in community. While corporate gatherings are valuable and encourage transformation, life change is also fostered in the context of smaller groupings known as communities. Here people can develop deeper and more personal connections. There is a greater degree of transparency, vulnerability, accountability, and encouragement that helps people experience life change in the day-to-day of the Christian walk.
Small groups are the best way to generate life change through the local church…But just any group of people meeting together does not constitute a transformational small group. …Relational intentionality is the key to transformational small groups. So whether the structure is a Sunday School church or home-based small-group church, the reason TCs emphasize community is life transformation. (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 178)

The research conducted by Stetzer and Rainier (2010, 185-189) identifies five deliverables (or benefits) of small communities and explains how they transform lives and advance the cause of Christ?

**Figure 6.2: Five Deliverables of Small Communities**

- **Deliverable 1:** Small group communities deliver deeper friendships. …As our churches continue to grow larger, they must also grow smaller to connect people on a transformational level. …For transformation to take place, we must know and invest in relationships with one another. By joining other Christians in small-group communities, believers can find the environment where life change can often occur most readily.

- **Deliverable 2:** Smaller communities deliver accountability relationships. …The most valuable takeaway in a smaller community is the person sitting beside me. Our lives become a weekly narrative to one another of God’s faithfulness and our response. …Smaller communities must be part of a commitment to spur one another on in our Christian life.

- **Deliverable 3:** Smaller communities deliver environments for spiritual growth. …Churches have never been better at producing solid Sunday morning environments. But relational connection and life transformation in small groups will move them beyond the spectator level. …In Transformational Churches there are no stands but all fields. The small groups in the TC serve to help people change, grow, and become more like Jesus.

- **Deliverable 4:** Smaller communities deliver maximum participation. …Transformational small groups require more than just attendance. Attendees must take responsibility for the long-term functionality of the group. The more responsibilities can be distributed, the healthier the group becomes.
• Deliverable 5: Smaller communities deliver missional opportunities. ...To keep the members ever transforming to look like Jesus, they must be given the opportunity to help the community reflect the kingdom of God. The goal of a group must be the multiplication of disciples for Jesus.

God is fully capable of producing change in the lives of people and does so through the person and work of the Holy Spirit. However, He allows His people to be involved in the process through the gift of community. He refers to His church in terms of community with words such as “body,” “household,” and “family.” It is His desire for the church to be relational and work together in community to advance His kingdom here on earth.

Transformational churches are actively involved in mission. Churches in the study were found to create various opportunities and platforms to share the message of salvation and to actively invite non-believers to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. In fact, transformational churches see that reaching the unchurched is essential to the mission of their church. This becomes a measure of success, and it is communicated from the top levels of leadership down to those in every other level of ministry involvement. Churches equip and mobilize their people in a variety of ways. “Most of them create organic environments that include ongoing conversations. ...Preparing believers to make disciples was an obvious priority for the TCs we discovered through our study. Though their methods varied, it serves as an invaluable tool for moving members from campus gatherings to mission in the community and world” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 213-214).

In order to carry out their mission, transformational churches work to build bridges with their towns and communities. As they successfully partner with civic causes, doors for evangelism are opened. Having earned a hearing, the gospel is presented not only in deed, but also in word. Members of transformational churches are prepared and are not afraid to share their
personal stories of transformation. As new lives are transformed, they too are then equipped to become agents of transformation. “In a TC, the influence is on moving people from new to the mission to active on mission to leader in the mission. …Close relationships and clear vision will help produce missionary members who actively share good news through word and deed” (Stetzer and Rainier 2010, 221).
CHAPTER 7: THE CONVERGENCE OF TRANSFORMATION AND WORSHIP

To this point, research has primarily focused on spiritual transformation and the evidences of transformation in the lives of believers both individually and corporately. Attention is now dedicated to research that connects worship and transformation. Specific areas of consideration will be transformational worship and theology, the value of the arts in transformational worship, liturgy and transformational worship, and designing worship that encourages transformation.

Transformational Worship and Theology

Smith (1991, 348) writes, “Our worship as Christians is the mutual presenting of ourselves before God in the act of gathering around Word and sacrament. Whenever we do this, we open ourselves to the possibility of transformation and renewal.” He goes on to say, “Worship is a context for integrating our thinking about God and our prayer. Whether we recognize it or not, worship is always in the process of transforming us.”

Far too often, however, the believer makes a casual commitment to the very activity that encourages ongoing transformation. Research conducted among Lutheran congregations revealed that 50 percent described their worship services as mundane.

Gathering to praise and thank God should not be boring, but it should be work. Engagement and commitment in worship are part of what transformation is. Sometimes this is signaled by a powerful moment (a ‘conversion experience’). Often it occurs over a long period of time in which our hearts and minds are “persuaded” by the truth of the story we are living. (Smith 1991, 349).

Worship that transforms establishes a connection between the worshiper and God so that the challenge of His divine message is revealed. This revelation calls the worshiper to respond in a way that is significant and sacrificial. Though this is a paradigm for transformational worship, it should be noted that the outworking of this model will be unique to every worship community.
Though diverse, Christian worship has a single purpose. “If worship does not ‘convey Christ’ as Luther expressed it, it is inappropriate. ...All that we say and do in worship should help, not hinder, the voice of the gospel. ...Diversity is God’s gift, and it opens ever new windows on the world to stretch us beyond the limits of our own horizons--it can transform us” (Smith 1991, 350).

Beyond cultural differences and the attempts of leaders to create a spirit of worship in which transformation occurs, the Holy Spirit is the agent of change. Those responsible for the leading of worship must keep a balance between planning and flexibility. “No single model can suffice to tell us ahead of time how we ought to worship, for our gathering, too, is constantly being transformed as are we within it” (Smith 1991, 350).

Noland (2009, 63) notes that God calls people to embrace a transformed life by revealing Himself and then revealing the person's self. This revelation is culminated by an invitation which calls the person to experience a life of transformation, making that person more than what he previously was.

1. Worship awakens a desire to change by challenging our spiritual status quo.

2. Worship challenges us to take an honest look within.

3. Worship also affirms our intentions to obey God. Spiritual formation is something God initiates and does in us through the Holy Spirit (Phil. 1:6; 2:13). However it is our responsibility to co-operate with his work in our lives.

4. Frequently the Holy Spirit uses worship to convict us of sin.

Though the Spirit of God is at work in worship, His movement does not always produce transformation. Each person is given the choice of how they will respond to what God has revealed. Whenever a person chooses his own way over God's will, the Holy Spirit's power is quenched. The choice is left up to each individual.
For those who respond to God's invitation to live a transformed life He promises future glory. Paul speaks of this transformation when he writes, “That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15 [NKJV]). This is the life that God desires for His children. “So worship that doesn’t eventually motivate us to do something is sentimental gibberish. We are to be doers of the Word, not let it go in one ear and out the other (James 1:22)” (Noland 2009, 69).

One context in which God reveals Himself is through Scripture and its teaching. Having a strong knowledge of Scripture and theology is a vital part of the Christian life. “However important it may be, the biblical and doctrinal knowledge becomes hollow as soon as it is separated from a worship-centered life” (Miyamoto 2010, 59). Therefore, worship becomes a significant activity for the believer that has life changing potential. And when believers are faithfully committed to the regular practice of corporate worship, “God renews our lives and gives us a new hope even in the midst of the deeper darkness. [He] gradually infuses us with divine grace, strengthens our faith, and transforms our lives, and we little by little develop identity as members of God’s people” (Miyamoto 2010, 60).

The Value of the Arts in Transformational Worship

In addition to the theological research related to transformational worship, there is a correlating aspect of spiritual transformation examined by Abernethy (2008, 15). She refers to this transformation as “that experience which a person labels as transforming, [frames] linguistically as spiritual in nature, and [results] in significant behavioral change.” Noting that Christians assemble corporately, it is acknowledged that they often do so for personal reasons. Many state that their primary reason for joining with others in worship is because the experience
of corporate worship “draws [them] closer to God. ...Through engagement with the body of Christ, bathed with God's Word, nourished by the sacraments, people of faith become more like the One in whose image we are made” (Schmit 2008, 26). This is not to say that corporate worship is the single means of producing life-change. Nor does it guarantee that every person who attends a worship service will experience transformation.

But those who are engaged in mere spiritual experiences, such as regular attendance at worship and a habit of prayer and devotion place themselves in the path of the Spirit's wind. As it blows in and around them, they stand a chance at having their own lives changed. ...The Spirit blows where it will and reshapes the lives of those encountered. This is the kind of spiritual transformation that leads people to imitate Christ and to participate in the life of God. (Schmit 2008, 37)

Through actions of worship, prayer, and the written Word, worship is formed. There are other elements of worship that are impactful. The arts serve as more than just an aesthetic backdrop for worship. They are a powerful means of communication that speak to those assembled. Schmit (2008, 39) writes, “Because art speaks deeply and more profoundly than ordinary speech, we rely on art in worship to be the vehicle of communication between persons and between God and God's people.” He is quick to add, “Adoration without action is meaningless. Worship that does not evoke discipleship is no sure locus for transformation.”

Transformation producing worship is utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Worship is not something that man can produce nor is its purpose to entertain God. “When we worship in concert with scriptural commands, we can take confidence that worship is an event in which the Spirit is working to scrub us up, to make us holy, and to help us bear the fruit of the Spirit. In the drama of worship, the Spirit has the leading role” (Witvliet, 2008, 42). As the Spirit works in worship, He is at will to work however He may choose in order to produce transformation. At times His work may be immediate and conspicuous and at others protracted and stealth. Especially in American Christianity there is a tendency to overlook the progressive inward work
of the Spirit in pursuit of His dramatic work. For those who seek the spectacular work of the
Spirit and do not see what they expected, “[they] quickly assume that the Spirit was not at work.
This can leave [them] unaware -- and thus ungrateful for -- the work of the Spirit over time to
hone, sharpen, and form us into the image of Christ” (Witvliet 2008, 44).

The arts represent one means through which the Holy Spirit is able to impart the truth of
God. Because the arts are experiential and God has equipped man with the ability to learn
through sensory observation, the power of the Holy Spirit is free to work through the arts to
bring man into a deeper relationship with God. “We are formed with certain capacities and
certain deficiencies that, in part, define how we perceive God, how we express our faith, and
how we live out our calling. …When the Holy Spirit is working to help us hear God's Word and
to prompt our prayers, the Spirit can work through multiple dimensions of our experience on
multiple levels” (Witvliet 2008, 46-49).

Witvliet (2008) emphasizes three art forms that are fundamental in worship and are
vehicles through which the Holy Spirit is able to speak truth to worshipers (figure 7.1). The
visual arts are full of imagery and symbolism. This communicates truth to the worshiper who
observes and internalizes what his eyes have seen. Aurally, the ears process the sounds of
worship and truth is relayed through song. Truth that is communicated through music is often
deeply rooted in the mind and can be readily accessed. “When we are old and can remember
little else, we are still likely to recall the songs learned in our childhood. Music has the uncanny
ability to burrow its way into our spiritual bones” (Witvliet 2008, 46-47). Language is an art
form that the Spirit uses as a tool for transformation. Words are full of meaning. The words
spoken in worship will affect daily living. Conversely, words spoken in daily living will affect
worship.
It is incumbent upon those who lead and design worship to (1) Realize that power for transformation comes from the Holy Spirit. (2) Fervently pray for the transformative power of the Spirit to reside in the worship of the congregation. (3) Seek and encourage long-term transformation in the lives of worshipers. (4) Exercise discernment in selecting imagery, sounds, gestures and language in worship (Witvliet 2008, 54-57).

Farley (2008, 63) employs the term “agogic moment” and identifies it “as [a] human and personal encounter, whether ordinary or extraordinary, that releases a motive power that generates change.” He also leans upon Firet (figure 7.2) to illustrate a progression of the “agogic moment.”

The use of the performing arts in worship can be a useful vehicle to facilitate life-change when it elicits an emotion that leads the worshiper toward an agogic moment. “Emotions, thought (cognition), and action (motivation) are all interrelated. This interrelationship is key to understanding why emotional responses are an important part of the arts and part of the agogic moment. The emotion created in artistic productions help people to think and respond,
opening the way to the agogic moment” (Farley 2008, 65). The arts in worship should have a higher purpose than mere entertainment.

Farley (2008, 61-62) specifically points to drama as a means of “provoking change in hearts.” It models change through the actions of characters that are portrayed. Though drama itself does not change lives, “The motive power of the symbol or symbolic action (drama) is empowered by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.”

Dance is a combination of visual and physical artistry and “participates in God's work of transformation when an individual or community participating and/or observing worship dance is changed” (Ragin, Farley and Hoye 2008, 82). God’s story, brought to life through movement, is able to draw worshipers closer to God as they identify with the dancers and the story they depict.

In the practice of Christian worship, music plays a significant role in liturgy. Among the Senufo people of South Africa, the power of song in worship illustrates the potential that music has to encourage transformation:

Worship-music events last throughout the evening and into the early morning hours, ending with the serving of breakfast. ...During the celebration, significant moments allow for the processing and reintegration of teaching into the people's lives. Songs function as major mechanisms for this process, taking place within the local group setting to which they belong. In the midst of singing, dancing, eating, and fellowshipping, Senufo believers regularly experience a compelling paradigm shift as they make decisions.
impacting their feelings, understandings of new truths, and behavior that leads to transformation. (Abernethy 2008, 155).

As a result of her study Abernethy (2008, 156) identifies what she terms, “the pathway of a song.” The pathway progresses from the affective (feeling) to the cognitive (thought) and finally to the behavioral (action) domains of a person. “It is a pathway that creates a conduit for transformation in the midst of worship.” (figure 7.3). The study also concluded that the songs of worship used by the Senufo Christians presented the gospel of Christ. Though at first non-believers were removed from the message of song, the music was winsome. Often by the end of worship the connection with the music became a conduit for the gospel message resulting in transformation by conversion. “For Senufo believers, the same songs that influenced the conversion process continue to ‘give life like food’….Believers consistently indicated ways in which Christian songs influenced their lives. These included (1) fostering continued commitment to Christ, (2) calming emotions, and (3) applying Scripture to their lives” Abernethy (2008, 163).

The pathway of song draws listeners in a way that affects them emotionally. When emotion is engaged, the mind cognitively is prepared for the delivery of truth. Transformation then occurs as a decision is made to behave in such a way as to be obedient to the will of God.

As the worship leader incorporates artistic elements into weekly services he must remain aware that the ultimate responsibility is to point worshipers toward God. This is accomplished through the crafting of the various components of worship: art, music, actions, and message, carefully creating an atmosphere that is joyful and life-giving. “The journey of worship should always culminate with the revelation of the presence of the living God. It is there in God's presence that God speaks and heals and saves and delivers. It is there that the heavy baggage of burdens is lifted. Every element of the service must have the motive of moving the people of God into the presence of God” (Ulmer 2008, 190).
Figure 7.3: Abernethy's (2008) Pathway of a Song

While the destination of worship is always the presence of God, Ulmer (2008, 191-192) does indicate that entertainment in worship should not be ignored. The tension between performance and the journey of worship is mitigated when God the Father serves as “producer,” Jesus Christ stars in the “leading role,” the Holy Spirit is the “director,” the Word of God is the “script,” and everyone else serves as the “supporting cast.”

The efforts of Abernethy (2008) in building a case for the arts and their value in creating transformative moments in worship culminates by challenging those who sing, preach, or have
any role in the weekly gathering of God’s people to view their role as a worship leader. The question is raised, “How might the training of worship leaders, pastors, and church leaders change if they viewed the central task of their job description as leading in worship? This would mean that preaching was designed to give God glory, and the leading question for church leaders would be how God might be glorified” (Abernethy 2008, 276).

**Liturgy and Transformational Worship**

Vann (2004) identifies characteristics of churches that value and practice worship as the center of church life. These “worship-centered” churches understand that the purpose of worship is to divinely encounter God and experience Him in a life-changing way. It is formational in the structural shaping and culture of its members and understands the value of community. “In worship-centered congregations, even while the presence of God is the focal point for worship, the experience of worshipers is taken seriously. …Worship is understood as a concrete experience on which people can reflect and makes worship paradigmatic for reflection in all other aspects of congregational life” (Vann 2004, 2).

Indicators of a worship-centered congregation described by Vann (2004, 22) echoes the findings of previous research. Worshipers in these churches (1) come with anticipation that as they gather God will be encountered, (2) prepare their hearts for an encounter, (3) actively participate in the liturgy of worship, and (4) allow their worship to fuel every aspect of their missional activity. “To say it another way, all actions and theological reflections of communities of faith are subject to the principal action of the assembly gathered to ‘joyfully [ascribe] all praise and honor, glory and power to the triune God.’” The result of the worship-centered congregation is a unified congregation that is committed to the spread of the Gospel and the building up of one another in the Christian faith.
Parallels exist between Christian worship and education. Worship, rooted in truth, not only forms, but informs.

“Liturgy in the life of Christians should be both an expression and a source of faith, hope and love. From this perspective, we recognize the “educational” power of liturgy. To nurture people and communities in Christian identity and living is the learning outcome for Christian education. ...Though the primary intent of liturgy is to worship God, it always has existential impact on the lives of participants that is profoundly educational.” (Vann 2008, 33)

Based on the Experiential Learning Theory of David A. Kolb, Vann (2004, 38) unfolds a “four-part cycle of action and reflection that is the natural progression for adult learning:

concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.” As the learner tangibly participates in an activity, his senses are awakened to his surroundings. Moving through the cycle, he then is asked to recall the details of his experience and reflect upon what he has previously encountered. Next, the learner is called upon to find meaning and applicable concepts that emerge from his experiences. In Christian worship much of the “conceptualization” that occurs finds its basis in the Word of God and in the teachings of historic church leaders. In the fourth phase of the cycle, there is a deep “appreciation for previous experience and [anticipation of a] future encounter with similar circumstances. We plan for participation in worship, prayer, and spiritual disciplines. We prepare for engagement in instruction, ministry, mission, and leadership within the church and in the world” (Vann 2004, 39-41). Churches that are worship-centered follow Kolb’s paradigm as they emphasize reflection through prayer, meditation, and other spiritual rigors. Bible study becomes opportunity for conceptual formation and ministry opportunities provide safe zones for active experimentation. “In addition to requiring opportunities for worship, prayer, and spiritual disciplines, study and instruction, ministry and mission, and leadership, experiential learning in the church requires
three further ingredients: enduring relationships, a climate of questioning, and a vocabulary for naming the many dimensions of the Christian spiritual life” (Vann 2004, 58-59).

Transformative experiences are the result of active participation. It is through liturgy that congregations are brought into this experience as they respond to the revelation of God. Experience in liturgy also serves as a catalyst for transformation that can take place in any number of dimensions.

- **Physical/Sensory Dimension** – Worship does not only engage the mind but also involves the body. The physical action of participating in the ordinance of communion or baptism brings worshipers to a point of identification with the person and work of Christ. This identification has the power to bring transformation both individually and as a congregation.

- **The Affective Dimension** – Emotion is part of the human experience. Research indicates that cognitive and behavioral activity is first routed through the brain sector that controls emotion. Emotion in worship is not a trivial matter. In fact, a deep affection for God should be a natural sentiment in the life of the Christian.

- **The Narrative Dimension** – The stories contained in Scriptures and in the history of Christendom have the ability to transcend the past, present, and future. The believer dwells both in the world of “now” and the world of “not yet.” When narratives are a part of worship, those who have gathered as worshipers realize their place in God’s redemptive story.

- **The Cognitive Dimension** – Experience apart from a doctrinal knowledge of God is depthless. The worship of the church should be informed worship based on the truth of Scripture. Through the worshiper’s quest to know God better, propositional knowledge leads to a relational knowledge that calls the worshiper to a deep commitment to love God and to love His people.

- **The Social and Relational Dimensions** – Worship-centered churches value relationships. There is a correlation between spiritual vitality and the depth of community. Loving, serving, and caring that is fostered in intimate friendships forge relationships that encourage accountability, spiritual growth, and transformation.

- **The Imaginative Dimension** – The use of symbolism and imagery in worship allows for creative expression in the actions of worship. The arts become means of worship through dramatic, gestural, musical, visual, narrative, and other imaginative activities. Liturgy that is infused with innovation points worshipers toward the realization of the presence of God (Vann 2004, 66-76).
Though the arts have a significant function in the worship liturgy of the church, they should not be considered a performance in the typical sense of the word. Worship is a performance, but not a “show” designed to entertain an audience. In this case, “The performance of worship’s actions and gestures by leaders and people is for the sake of the worship of God. In worship centered congregations musicians, presiders, readers, and other worship leaders are conscious of their roles in the communal performance of worship even while they reject the notion of worship as ‘their’ performance” (Vann 2004, 81-82). It is incumbent upon worship leaders and church leaders to keep before their congregations the reality that the purpose of the liturgy is for people to encounter God.

As worship leaders embark on the process of designing liturgy that encourages the transformation of congregants, the focus should be more upon preparation than upon planning.

What is it that these worship leaders do, or do differently that gives their worship leadership its spiritual valence? Gilbert Ostdiek offers a helpful starting point when he makes a distinction between “planning” for worship and “preparation” for worship. “We easily lose ourselves in the nuts and bolts of ‘planning’ and begin to think of our task as one of designing the liturgy from scratch, rather than one of making ourselves, the rituals, the space, and the liturgical objects ready for the moment of public prayer.” Rather he says, preparation includes planning but primarily seeks to enable the worshiping assembly, both leaders and people, faithfully to enact the worship of God adapted to their particular needs and spiritual circumstances. ...Spiritual preparation for worship leadership is essential, and includes: prayer, Scripture study, and reflection on the pastoral priorities of the liturgy. It also includes careful planning, rehearsal, and preparation of liturgical space, objects, and vestments. The importance of spiritual preparation, which includes but goes beyond practical preparation, cannot be overstated. All aspects of planning and preparation are given priority in worship-centered congregations. (Vann 2004, 84)

Spiritual preparation is a prerequisite for transformation and worship leaders guide congregants both through modeling and through edification. After the foundation has been laid through preparation, then the subsequent plans can be implemented.
Leading and Designing Worship that Encourages Transformation

Church leadership that desires to see their congregations experience life-change are intentional in the planning and design of their liturgies. While information, knowledge, celebration, and song may be valuable components of the worship service, the ultimate goal of corporate worship is “to connect God's truth to real life in a way that leads to radical transformation” (Searcy and Hatley 2011, 52-53). Transformational worship produces people who are more Christ-like when they leave the worship gathering than they were at the onset. If not, leadership may not be doing everything that it should to facilitate change.

Searcy and Hatley (2011, 36-114) offer a number of principles that church leaders can employ to lead people toward transformational worship encounters. (1) Outline your preaching calendar. When the pastor plans out a schedule of his sermon topics, he empowers his staff and lay teams. With a healthy amount of lead time, teams can work creatively to prepare worship components that support the sermon and advance a central concept. (2) Make repentance the goal of worship. Often repentance is equated with kneeling before God at an altar and the shedding of tears. This may be a valid response to God when He convicts His children of wrong behaviors and destructive life patterns. However, conviction also occurs in still, small ways. Repentance occurs any time a person acknowledges their sin and realigns with God’s plan (Searcy and Hatley 2011, 36). (3) Sundays are a priority. With each and every Sunday that God gives to church leaders, there is a tremendous responsibility to communicate and connect with the people who have gathered for worship and to connect them to God. (4) Do everything with excellence. There must be a commitment to offering God the very best that person has to bring in worship. God doesn’t demand perfection, but He is honored by the sacrificial actions of His children (5) Call people to make a commitment and provide next steps. Just like James 1:22 admonishes the
believer to be active and not passive hearers of God’s Word, worshipers need to be challenged by leadership to engage in the activity of God. In churches today there is not a lack of knowledge, experience, or feeling. Action is what is missing. (6) God is honored through planning. Scripture supports the wisdom of planning and warns of the dangers related to a halfhearted approach to life. (7) Consider what elements will best enhance the communication of the message. The music and message integral components of every worship service. Other creative elements may include testimonies, movie clips, original media creations, drama, and dance.

Whatever the approach leadership embraces in the designing of worship, the most significant factor is to acknowledge that the product and purpose of the work belongs to God.

In the case of your worship planning system, success is measured in terms of RTLs - radically transformed lives-that have been touched and changed by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the earthly details of your worship services. As you put the worship planning system in place, you will be doing your part to engage and change the eternity of every person who walks through the doors of your church. What a responsibility; what a calling. May we never take it lightly. (Searcy and Hatley 2011, 177)

Beach (2004) considers transformation to be the culminating goal of the worship service and life-changing communication (teaching) to be foundational to the process. Scriptures indicate the early church was dedicated to the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42). As a result of the transforming truth that was proclaimed, non-believers came to a saving knowledge of Christ and believers grew in their faith. Over time the New Testament example has been adapted to accommodate cultural shifts. “Today some churches devote the majority of their attention to worship or experiential interaction rather than to teaching. I believe this is a serious error. While we always need to discern cultural trends, there will forever be a need for teaching that God uses to transform lives” (Beach 2004, 231).
There are five core propositions that support the planning of impactful worship services. The first is that worship services must be biblically rooted and must present the entirety of truth found in the Word of God. Congregations need to experience the variety of life-changing messages contained in Scripture. Teachers need to provide a balanced diet of content as opposed to selecting favorite parts of Scripture and favorite topics. It is further noted, “Teaching is not fundamentally about information delivery. Accumulating biblical knowledge does not necessarily result in meaningful life change” (Beach 2004, 233).

God’s truth must also be passionately presented. When it is obvious to an audience that the speaker not only knows his material but also deeply believes and lives his message, the audience engages with the speaker more substantially. “Passion doesn’t come out of every speaker in just the same way. But [an audience will] recognize its presence (or lack) no matter what. …Teachers become passionate as a result of intentional study, personal discoveries of biblical truth, and living their message material all week long” (Beach 2004, 234).

When biblically-based teaching is passionately delivered, it has a strong potential for impact. However, if it is to be transformational, it must also be relevant. It is important to know God’s Word and understand how it practically relates to the day to day life of the believer. Relevant teaching is central to developing a Christ-like congregation.

Unless listeners are becoming more and more like Jesus Christ - more loving, kind, patient, generous, humble, peaceful, and joyful - our teaching is truly a waste of time. The prophet Ezekiel described the tragedy of messages that fail to transform. “My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain…for they hear your words but do not put them into practice” (Ezekiel 33:31 - 32). (Beach 2004, 235)

Another core proposition of transformational teaching is creativity. In today’s culture that is fueled by information overload and is heavily influenced by every imaginable form of media,
the challenge that faces communicators is how to present their material in ways that an audience will be informed and challenged yet fully engaged. In a world that consists of communications via 30 second sound-bytes, speakers “must embrace the value of creativity. Words simply aren't enough, much of the time” (Beach 2004, 237).

Honesty is the final core principle of transformational teaching mentioned by Beach (2004). Authenticity is necessary because audiences need the message of God’s Word communicated from those who work to apply biblical truth in their own lives, understand the challenges that face their congregations, are transparent in their personal struggles, and do not address the most difficult issues with clichéd phraseology, “In his classic book Telling the Truth, Buechner offers this wisdom to teachers of God's Word: ‘Those of us entrusted with the responsibility to teach must resist the temptation to make life sound easier than it really is. God will show us how to bring hope and healing without being dishonest’” (Beach 2004, 241).

Being biblical, passionate, relevant, creative, and honest as a teacher is a significant mandate. “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (I Tim. 4:15-16 [NIV]).

Beach (2004) does not speak exclusively to those in the church with teaching roles, but expands her message to others involved in the presentation of the corporate worship gathering.

Whether your Sunday services sowed or watered the seeds, God used you and your team to impact people in ways that count for eternity. Nothing matters more. If your contribution is playing an instrument, running the sound board, setting up the stage, writing scripts, leading worship, arranging music, aiming lights, acting in a drama or delivering a message - you contributed to the advancement of God's kingdom on planet Earth. As we turn the pages of the scrapbook and look at each persons' eyes, we're reminded of his or her story, of the impact of our church on that individual's one and only life. Life change. There's nothing more rewarding. (Beach 2004, 254-255)
Communication is “the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else” (Webster’s Dictionary [accessed February 24, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication]). How a person communicates should be predicated upon the purpose or goal of the communication.

Particularly in the church setting, there are a number of communication approaches, each with a specific purpose. Some pastors/communicators see their role as a Bible teacher with the goal of only explaining what the Bible means. Others put a slightly different spin on the role and see it as teaching people the Bible. The purpose here is to “impart biblical truth into the mind and heart of the hearer” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 94). Another model advocates communicating so as to encourage life change. “Preaching for change requires a different approach to communication than either of the previous two goals we discussed. …Preaching for life change requires far less information and more application” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 96).

The model also challenges the communicator to consider two fundamental questions, “What is it that the audience needs to know?” and “What does the audience need to do?” Once these framing questions are answered, preparation can begin. Many communicators begin by outlining a multi-point lesson, but “If life change is your goal, point by point preaching is not the most effective approach. …Every message should have a central idea, application, insight, or principle that serves as the glue to hold the other parts together” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 103).

Once the single point has been determined, then the message can be built around that one big idea. This involves a process of sifting through much study to determine what best supports the central idea and what needs to remain on the editing floor. It may be contrary to tradition but carefully vetting supporting information “is like narrowing a channel of water. You end up with
a much more focused and powerful message [that] people are able to follow, tracking with you as you lead them along” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 110). Determining a single point, followed by strategically building a supporting message is rounded out by developing a “memorable statement” that remains long after the message is concluded.

Coming up with a single point and a “catch phrase” can be challenging, but the in between step of creating a structure that supports the big idea can be more daunting. A formula practiced by Stanley and Jones (2006, 122-129), “ME – WE – GOD – YOU – WE,” can be a helpful device in assisting communicators:

- **ME – *Orientation***
  Find common ground with the audience. Common ground is essential to any relationship. The audience has to buy into the messenger before they buy into the message.

- **WE – *Identification***
  In this section the speaker needs to spend some time applying the tension to as many areas as feasible so as to spark an emotion in as broad an audience as possible. One of the advantages to this approach is that it wraps the entire message in application. Application isn’t a section of the message. It is the context of the message.

- **GOD – *Illumination***
  The goal here is to resolve the tension, or at least some of it, by pointing people to God’s thoughts on the subject at hand. Engage the audience with the text. Don’t just read it. Don’t explain it to death. Engage the audience with it. Make it so fascinating that they are actually tempted to go home and read it on their own.

- **YOU – *Application***
  This is where the presenter tells people what to do with what they have heard. This is where the answer to the questions, “So what?” and “Now what?” is provided. Look for the single application that has a wide path so that everybody can get on board.

- **WE – *Inspiration***
  This is really about vision casting. It is a moment of inspiration. It is the point in the message that paints a verbal picture of what could be and should be. In this closing moment the audience is called upon to imagine what the church, the community, families,
maybe even the world would be like if Christians everywhere embraced the one idea that was presented.

Having spent time in the trenches of planning, the communicator makes himself ready for the presentation. If he has internalized the message he is about to share, he has greatly enhanced his potential for effectiveness. When a message flows naturally from within, it communicates a confidence and sincerity that connects with others. “The secret is to reduce your entire message down to five or six pieces. Not points, pieces or sections or chunks of information [sic]. If you can remember the big pieces and the order in which they come, you are ready to go” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 137). If there are pieces that don’t seem to fit or flow well, omit them from the presentation. By keeping the topic to a few big internalized pieces, the audience will have greater connection and will remember what was said much longer.

Connection with the audience is vital to the communication of a message. The message is secondary. Whether or not the speaker engages the group is a higher priority. “When we are engaged, time flies. When we are not engaged, time stands still” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 147). It is inaccurate to think that the information is king. From the audience perspective presentation trumps information. The only time this is not true is “when an audience is absolutely convinced that you are about to answer a question they’ve been asking, solve a mystery they have been unable to solve, or resolve a tension they have been unable to resolve” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 152). Even then, presentation must still be a strong consideration.

Engagement is strongest when a communicator answers questions that are on the mind of the audience. If the point that is being made is irrelevant or doesn’t meet a perceived need, there will be no connection between speaker and audience. Stanley and Jones (2006) present five rules that speakers should follow when seeking to engage their audiences (figure 7.4).
Figure 7.4: Stanley and Jones' (2008) Five Rules of Engagement

If communicators wish to influence their audience in a way that encourages change, authenticity is a significant characteristic that must be present. If a communicator is believable and sincere, people tend to overlook his idiosyncrasies. Part of communicating with authenticity requires that a presenter negotiate a balance between personal style and good communication principles. “Don’t dismiss principles of communication in defense of style. If you want to be an effective communicator, you must allow communication principles to shape your style. At the end of the day, principles win out over style” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 175).

Just like no two presenters are alike, there is no single “proper style.” When a speaker takes the time to consider the questions, “What works?” and “What works for me?” he is poised
to learn new approaches for communication and make improvements in the delivery of his message.

The weight of communicating God’s message to His people is heavy. A pastor or leader may at times find himself at an impasse, unsure of the direction that God would have him proceed as he prepares to stand before a congregation. Stanley and Jones (2006) share their approach to overcoming communication obstacles:

I ask God to show me if there is something He wants to say to prepare me for what he wants me to communicate to our congregation. I surrender my ideas, my outline, and my topic. Then I just stay in that quiet place until God quiets my heart. It may be a few minutes. It may be much longer. There are times when absolutely nothing changes other than a decrease in my anxiety level. On some occasions something I need to deal with in my personal life will surface…Many times while praying I will have a breakthrough thought or idea that brings clarity to my message. (Stanley and Jones 2006, 184-185)

In the environment of prayer God is invited to speak and the person seeking direction has humbled himself in such a manner as to be sensitive to the voice of God. All of a communicator’s education, experience, and eloquence does not guarantee life change in those who hear his message. “At the end of the day, it is God who empowers people to change. It is the Holy Spirit who opens the eyes of the heart. It is our Savior who gives men and women the courage to love and forgive. I, like you, am simply a mouthpiece” (Stanley and Jones 2006, 185).

Though the Holy Spirit is the agent of transformation, it is wise for leaders to grow in their abilities to plan worship that points their congregations toward Jesus Christ and challenges them to experience the life change that God desires for each of His children.
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Study

It has been the intent of this thesis to consider the broader topic of spiritual transformation as a foundation for a more intricate examination of transformation in the context of worship. As was mentioned in Chapter One, God desires that His people be changed to become more like Him and to reflect His glory in this present world. One means of producing life change in the Christian is through worship. Therefore it is important that worship and transformation be understood and that a correlation be established between them. In the process, the following questions provided a guide for research: (1) What biblical mandate exists regarding transformation? (2) How does transformation integrate with the study of worship? (3) What evidence demonstrates that the Word of God, work of God, and worship of God is transformational? (4) How does biblical transformation manifest itself in the life of a believer and in the assembled body of believers? (5) Are there identifiable worship methodologies, for both private and corporate worship, that specifically encourage and produce transformation? (6) How can churches effectively leverage these methodologies to challenge congregants toward transformation?

Transformational worship affects the heart, mind, soul, will and spirit of God’s people and causes a dynamic metamorphosis. The redeeming work of Christ makes new life possible and the Holy Spirit works within the soul of the child of God to bring about Christ-likeness. Through the study of transformation and its relationship to worship, this study has endeavored to present research and conclusions that add clarity to this relationship, provide a theological foundation, present several biblical models, and provide specific approaches to guide private and corporate worship.
Summary of Procedure

In Chapters Two and Three a review of pertinent and applicable material was rendered along with the methodological approach to the study of the subject. The findings presented were the result of extensive literary research based on biblical study, qualitative research, quantitative research, case studies, and first hand experiences of Bible scholars, theologians, research analysts, and worship practitioners. Comparative study and analysis of available literature revealed the common themes of the scriptural foundations for transformational worship, principles and practices of transformational worship for private and public worship, and methodologies for leading congregations through worship that encourages life change.

Summary of Findings

Scripture is the bedrock in the study of transformational worship. Chapter Four of this thesis has endeavored to establish the biblical foundation for worship that produces life change.

In the discussion of life change, three forms of transformation were presented: (1) instantaneous transformation, which occurs at the moment of salvation, (2) progressive transformation, a lifelong and ongoing process that takes place in the life of the believer, and (3) final transformation, when God’s children meet Him in eternity where all things will be made new. For the greater part, this study focused upon the process of ongoing transformation.

Attention has been given to the writings of Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and in Romans 12:1-2 to develop the scriptural basis for progressive transformation. Beyond the writings of Scripture, additional sources (commentaries and articles) authored by biblical scholars provided expositional insight into the meaning of the biblical texts.

From the aforementioned scripture passages it can be concluded that the process of transformation is a work of God’s Spirit whereby He facilitates change in the life of the desirous
believer; a change that produces Christ-likeness and reflects the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 3:18). Paul’s earnest appeal to the Christians in Rome was to worship the Lord by becoming a “living sacrifice.” Such actions are holy and pleasing to God when the offering is pure and unblemished. For this reason Paul went on to admonish the church to avoid the sinful habits of the world. He called his audience to experience a transformed life and contended that such a life is the product of a mind focused upon God. Today, when a believer surrenders to God’s purpose and develops the mind of Christ, he is changed in ways that are observable to the world around him. God receives the glory and accepts the offering of the worshiper with pleasure.

One means of producing life change is through actions of private worship. The findings presented in Chapter Five provide examples of personal transformation as demonstrated in the biblical accounts of the prophet Isaiah and the Samaritan Woman at the well of Sychar. While the two instances have their differences, there are similarities. They both share an encounter with the self-revelation of God. They are convicted of their sins and demonstrate repentance. Their lives are transformed. They are invited to join the work of God in calling others to repentance and a life of worship. Each responds to their divine invitation, affirming the work God called them to do. Both are instruments of God for advancing His kingdom.

Most often in the life of the believer, transformation takes place only after the person recognizes a need for change and consciously acts upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The degree of desire, perseverance, and discipline possessed by an individual will dictate the degree of transformation he encounters. Establishing “spiritual rhythms” (Barton 2010) are an essential part of the private worship life of the person who strives for spiritual life change. Breaking away from the busyness and chaos of life to find time alone with God is essential for establishing the rhythms that Barton describes. The practices of “lectio divina,” along with dynamic prayer, and
daily personal inventory are avenues that lead the Christian in “mind renewing” personal worship encounters with God that are transformational. Similar findings were prevalent in the writings of Meyer (2010). But, he expands his list of disciplines to include memorizing and meditating upon Scripture as another means of mind renewal. Practicing spiritual rhythms and disciplines are necessary for spiritual growth. But the actions of discipline are more than an exercise of the mind. Ingram (2005) concludes that knowledge of the truth requires acting upon that truth. While the Spirit of God is the only agent of change, He only works in response to man’s surrender. As the Spirit brings about transformation, the believer will demonstrate his love for God through his obedience to God and will demonstrate a genuine love and concern for others through selfless service.

Corporate worship is also a means through which God enacts change in the heart of His people. Chapter Six presented findings relevant to the New Testament church of the past and present and helps to provide a benchmark for churches who desire to see transformation in the lives of their congregants.

Based on the biblical account presented in the book of Acts, Iorg (2010) presents a case study that identifies characteristics of the Antioch church that allowed them to have a profound impact for the cause of Jesus Christ and the spread of His gospel. (1) The power of the Holy Spirit was working in the church. New believers were added to the church, and existing believers were living lives of surrender to God. (2) The church of Antioch was innovative in its methods of presenting the gospel. These innovations were motivated by a genuine desire to see the kingdom of God expand. (3) They were witnessing life change in those who were part of the church. In their context this was accomplished through discipleship and teaching. (4) Their teaching was committed to doctrinal integrity and they were able to distinguish between convictions and
preferences. (5) The church of Antioch mediated conflict well. Differences were quickly resolved rather than allowed to fester or be passively covered up. (6) Its leadership was capable and strong. Character and integrity mattered. (7) The church was a model of generosity. It gave of its financial and people resources.

The traits of transformational churches presented in the research of Stetzer and Rainier (2010) are the outcome of extensive study conducted among churches throughout North America. The research findings create a new measurement for evaluating a church’s effectiveness as it guides congregants toward transformed living. Three elements, “discern,” “embrace,” and “engage,” create what is termed by the researchers as a “transformational loop.” Within each of the three stages of the loop, further distinctions are made that formulate seven key indicators of a transformational church.

1. TCs study and develop strategic action plans to reach their communities.
2. TCs follow passionate leaders.
3. TCs are intentionally relationship oriented.
4. TCs rely heavily upon the power of prayer.
5. TCs gather to worship with an expectancy of encountering God.
6. TCs are committed to small group communities.
7. TCs mobilize to share the gospel locally and globally.

The research in Chapter Seven is representative of the specific study of transformational worship. From a theological perspective, Smith (1991) proposed that worship has the potential to transform a person who participates in the liturgy of the “Word and sacrament” whether he realizes it or not. In the context of worship a connection is established between God and man that transforms the life of the worshiper as he receives revelation from God and responds in
commitment. This change is made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. Noland’s (2009) perspective supports the pattern of revelation and response, but submits that in revelation, God not only shows His glory and goodness, He also reveals man’s sinful condition and need for change.

As a means of revelation, the arts play a significant role in the communication of truth. Abernethy et. al. (2010) demonstrated that the performing arts, visual arts, and cinematic arts all possess communicative qualities that connect with the affective domain to potentially spark an “agogic moment” or moment of change. While the arts do not produce change, their purpose in worship should be much more than entertainment. Abernethy’s recollection of the music used during the worship of the Senufo people group in Africa illustrated how song can be leveraged to go beyond the affective domain to travel through the cognitive domain and move worshipers to respond in the behavioral domain resulting in life change.

Including the arts to communicate truth is a viable and necessary component of corporate worship. However, worship that is transformational invites congregants to be active in the work of worship, the liturgy. Experience plays a central role in life change. By applying the experiential learning theory of Kolb in a liturgical setting, Vann (2004) concluded that the action of the liturgy brings congregations into worship experientially by encouraging participation. When worshipers participate, they move through the stages of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This process serves as a catalyst for transformation.

As church leaders develop weekly worship encounters with God, the goal is to create an experience for worshipers to engage with other believers and experience life change that is evident. Searcy and Hatley (2011) encouraged leaders to realize the weight and responsibility
placed upon them to lead worshipers into the presence of God, to practice healthy worship habits in their own lives, to plan systematically, and to fully rely on the Holy Spirit to produce change in the congregation. Beach (2004) placed heavy emphasis upon the need for biblical life-changing teaching presented passionately and with integrity. The message being communicated needs to be relevant and is greatly enhanced by creative presentation.

Placing emphasis upon the communicative elements of worship, Stanley and Jones (2006) encouraged church leaders to practice transformational communication. This is best accomplished by determining a single central point and then bringing in the strongest elements that support the point. Content is better received when listeners know that a speaker lives what he declares and when he takes time to build rapport with his audience. He should always communicate at a pace that does not leave his followers behind. The leader should be dedicated to excellence, but more importantly to prayer.

**Limitations**

Though scripture speaks of transformation in the context of worship and provides examples of those who have been transformed by the power of God, it is a relatively new topic of discussion in the broader context of worship. Therefore, there is not a significant degree of research and writing specific to transformational worship.

In designing research methodologies, any attempt to quantify transformational worship is complicated and would require a long-range approach. Though a regenerative transformation is immediate, progressive transformation spans a lifetime.

The aforementioned ethnographic research may be the best means for obtaining data that is relevant to the study of worship and transformation, but it is not failsafe. Perception can be skewed and can distort reality. This does not mean that field research and surveys are invalid
methodologies of study. It does mean that studies will need to be designed creatively and intentionally.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

While the research and analysis presented in this thesis has taken a look at significant aspects of transformational worship, the potential for additional study on this subject matter is limitless.

Though three biblical accounts of transformation were presented early in this work, there is significant evidence throughout the pages of Scripture of lives that have been changed as a result of an encounter with God in worship. An examination of these experiences are worthy of future study.

Another potential area of study could be to conduct a survey of worship leaders of churches in the United States to determine perspectives on transformational worship. It would be of particular interest to see how they define “life changing” worship, how they develop it, and how their churches demonstrate it.

A final recommended path of future study would be to research the need to add the practices of thanksgiving and praise as spiritual disciplines of private worship. Often Bible study, prayer, meditation and Scripture memory are emphasized as vital practices for spiritual growth. While these are indeed essential components for transformation and necessary habits for the believer, the biblical protocols of thanksgiving and praise are lesser emphasized, despite being the gates through which the Christian enters into God’s presence where transformation occurs. A greater awareness of these protocols would be beneficial to the private worship of the Christian.
Implications for Practice: A Model for Transformational Worship

It has been said that worship is a dialogue between God and His children engaging in a two-fold pattern of revelation and response. As God reveals His glory and character, man is invited to respond in worship. Worship that is transformational expands upon the model of revelation and response to create a new paradigm of revelation, reflection, renovation, response and realization.

Revelation

The only being worthy of man’s worship is God. Throughout time, God’s desire has been intimate communion with His creation. Though His creation fell into sin, God’s purpose has been redemption and restoration. Scripture recounts God’s relentless pursuit of mankind and His self-revelation. His ultimate revelation was the sending of His Son, Jesus to redeem man from the sin that separated him from a holy God. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross revealed God’s mercy and grace to a lost world.

Paul reminds the church in Rome of the demonstration of God’s mercy when he makes his bold appeal in Romans 12:1. In the preceding passages of his letter, Paul spends a great deal of time reminding readers of the work that was accomplished by Jesus Christ. He reveals the message in theological terms. His preaching is an extension of the message of the Christ and is a vehicle for revelation. This revelation is necessary in order for Paul to continue in the following verse to challenge the church to live a life that is transformational. In no uncertain terms, revelation precedes transformation.

This is illustrated in the Old Testament account of Isaiah’s encounter with God. Standing in the temple, he is permitted to gaze upon the resplendence of God’s glory. This revelation of the Almighty becomes the causational moment for the prophet’s transformation in Isaiah 6.
Further demonstration is seen in the New Testament account of John 4 where Christ encounters the Woman at the Well. The Savior’s desire to engage in conversation with a Samaritan woman of questionable reputation reveals the heart of Jesus and His desire to redeem those living in sin. He revealed Himself not only by actions, but also through words. His offer of “living water” further revealed the purpose and plan of the Messiah to “seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). The Samaritan woman came face to face with the Savior, who was unlike any man she had ever met, and her life was changed.

Transformational worship begins when a person has an encounter with God. The same God that demonstrated His glory before Isaiah and invited the Woman at the Well to experience the “Living Water,” reveals Himself to every man. It is up to the individual to accept God’s revelation, His invitation to experience a transformed life.

Those who accept God’s invitation to experience positional transformation, made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ, are placed in the family of God and begin the ongoing journey of progressive transformation. The believer has much to discover about the character and work of God. For the person who desires to know more about God, there is assurance that He continues to reveal Himself.

Farley’s (2008, 63) discussion of the “agogic moment” reminds readers that God’s means of revelation today is through the reading and teaching of His Word and the symbolic acts of corporate worship that are illuminated by the Holy Spirit. This indicates the need for private worship as well as corporate worship in the life of the Christian. Personal time in God’s Word seeking revelation yields a greater understanding of God’s character and work. Gathering with fellow believers in worship and coming with the expectancy of meeting with God results in an encounter with the presence of God. “For where two or three gather together as my followers, I
am there among them” (Matthew 18:20, [NLT]). It is a promise of God to reveal Himself in the assembly of His people.

A poignant question is posed by Stetzer and Rainier (2010, 153). “Do we lead people into the throne room of a generic god, or do we draw them into the presence of the One revealed and made eternally accessible to us through Jesus Christ?”

Transformational worship gatherings can only exist when those leading worship have structured the liturgy in such a way that it celebrates and reveals the person and work of Jesus Christ. There are a multitude of ways through which this can be accomplished. The research of Abernethy (2010) establishes a strong case for the use of the arts as a vehicle to support the truth of Scripture. Because the arts appeal to the affective, they become an introductory step toward change. It is necessary to keep in mind that the arts, in and of themselves, do not transform lives. They must be a vehicle that points worshipers to the One who transforms lives. It is an unfortunate reality that in many churches today, the arts have been venerated to a place of superstar status. It is entirely possible for worshipers to gather in an aesthetically pleasing venue with great music and the best that technology has to offer, yet miss out on the most glorious of all encounters, the presence of Almighty God. It is incumbent upon all who take part in the leadership of worship to make every possible effort to reveal Jesus to those gathered.

Reflection

In God’s presence man not only captures a glimpse of the glory of the Almighty, but he also is confronted with his own sinful condition. Paul writes in Romans 3:23 that all of mankind has “fallen short” of God’s glory. In other words, man does not measure up to God’s example. It is man’s failure to live up to God’s standard that created the need for divine mercy that is referenced in Romans 12:1. This is also why Paul urged the Roman believers in the following verse, not to be “conformed” to the behaviors and customs of the world.
Isaiah’s self-reflection is articulated when he makes the statement, “‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty’” (Isaiah 6:5, [NIV]). The prophet then begs that his lips be cleansed with a burning coal to purify him before God. A similar sense of conviction was experienced by the Samaritan woman when Jesus indicated His awareness of her sins. She then embraced the Living Water that Christ offered.

Barton (2010, 103) encourages healthy self-examination that leads to confession. “Confession requires the willingness to acknowledge and take responsibility not only for the outward manifestations of our sin but also for the inner dynamics that produced the sinful or negative behaviors.”

Reflection and awareness of the need for change is a necessary part of the transformational process. “The first step into holiness [is] an intentional decision to leave your old life behind you” (Ingram 2005, 178). Once a person comes to a point where he recognizes and acknowledges his spiritual need, God’s grace makes transformation possible.

This requires building quiet time into private and public worship. Oddly enough, it is more challenging than it may appear. In daily life there are pressures to perform and excel vocationally, educationally, physically and socially, and there are many commitments that consume vast amounts of personal time. For Christians, there is the added dimension of Church life participation, which in some instances is so activity driven that it makes as many demands as the other areas of life stated above.

“Solitude is an opportunity to interrupt this cycle by turning off the noise and stimulation of our lives so that we can hear our loneliness and our longing calling us deeper into the only relationship that can satisfy our longing” (Barton 2010, 36). There is a need for church leaders to
recognize the value of reflection, model it in their own lives, and build times for it in the liturgy and activities of the church.

Response

As God reveals himself and man is brought to a point of personal reflection, revealing his need for change, he is called in response to offer up a sacrificial response or “act of worship” that Paul mentions in Romans 12:1. Remembering that sacrifice was central to the worship of the Old Testament and was radically altered by Christ on the cross of Calvary as a final atoning sacrifice for all of mankind. The Apostle Paul calls Christians to submit their very lives to God. There is no acceptable response to this plea other than complete surrender to the will of God.

Having been cleansed by the burning coal from the altar, Isaiah receives the call from God to be His messenger. Without hesitation, Isaiah willfully responds, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8, [NIV]). With similar abandon, the Samaritan woman responds to the Savior’s call to live a transformed life. She left her jar and returned to her village. Her response was symbolic, as the jar represented her identity before she met the Savior. She left both her jar and her old way of life at the well.

If the believer is to experience true life change he must surrender to the will of God and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. “Such a definite yielding of the body to God is a God-pleasing ‘religious service’ enabling the believer to lead a life of acceptable service to God. A life of service through a consecrated body is the true sequel to its presentation to God as an act of worship” (Hiebert 1994, 318).

As God speaks to the hearts of His children during times of personal and public worship, He invites them to experience transformation. It is when a person surrenders to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, that change takes place. In corporate worship, leaders serve their congregations well when they purposefully craft opportunities that call worshipers to take specific steps of
action in response to the message of truth. In some worship traditions this is associated with a
time of invitation at the conclusion of the sermon, but this does not prohibit opportunities to call
worshipers to a response during other portions of the liturgy. It is important to remember that the
process of transformation may be accelerated in certain situations. In others, the journey of life
change is a series of small steps.

Renovation

“The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, [NIV]). The extreme makeover
that transforms the life and worship of the child of God is no small renovation. It is progressive
and can only commence when sinful affections and pursuits have been demolished and removed
from the worksite. Just as Paul pleaded with the Roman believers to avoid conformity with the
sinful practices and entanglements of this world, he encouraged the church to “let God transform
you into a new person by changing the way you think” (Romans 12:1, [NLT]).

Mind-renewal is a process that requires significant spiritual discipline. Barton (2010)
indicates that the practices of solitude, meditation on God’s Word, intimate prayer, maintenance
of physical health and stamina, observance of “Sabbath,” and spiritual discernment all contribute
to the process of spiritual transformation. “Over time, as we surrender ourselves to new life
rhythms, they help us to surrender old behaviors, attitudes and practices so that we can be shaped
by new ones” (Barton 2010, 148). It is worthwhile to mention that renewing the mind must be
much more than an intellectual pursuit. It is vital that the truth of God’s Word go beyond gaining
knowledge and gathering facts. “We can be dead wrong in life while being right about the Bible.
Most of our church programming involves teaching of right beliefs. Even our application of
doctrine more often boils down to more information about what to do and rarely offers an actual
plan on how to live” (Meyer 2010, 52).
Transformational worship encompasses the aforementioned spiritual disciplines, but it also includes the disciplines of thanksgiving and praise. As believers cultivate the practice of giving thanks to God, not only do they acknowledge God’s past work in their life, but they demonstrate faith by thanking God in advance for the work that they trust Him to accomplish. Praise celebrates who Christ is and ascribes glory to His work. It is entirely God directed and God focused. It does not make any mention of self.

The practice of spiritual discipline is an integral component of the process of transformation. It is greatly enhanced when the believer engages in Christian community. “Having a few close friends with whom you share your heart and your life at the deepest level [and] centered on the Scriptures doesn’t represent a ‘nice idea,’ they are core components of a healthy life. They are the prerequisites for holy transformation to occur” (Ingram 2005, 60). Meyer (2010, 115) emphasizes the significance of Christian community when he writes, “Friendship is the most undervalued practice in view of its formational effect. Relationships are the context for transformation.” The case study of the church at Antioch (Iorg 2010) ascribes the church’s effectiveness to their commitment to the study of God’s Word, prayer, and authentic relationships. Stetzer and Rainer’s (2010) extensive study of transformational churches found that a commitment to prayer, expectant worship, relationships, and connecting people in community were significant in producing life change. Real transformation demonstrates a renewed mind that is the result of personal spiritual discipline and encouraged by the community of faith.

Community is the greenhouse of spiritual growth and transformation in the believer. When there is a common denominator between individuals, there is a high degree of relatability. They often share similar joys, aspirations, fears, and challenges. Journeying together through life
experiences, believers can, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15, [NIV]). It is important to build opportunities for community within the body of Christ. One natural place for finding community is within the worship arts community. Worship teams (vocal, instrumental, visual, cinematic, technology) find commonality in their unique skill sets. This provides fertile ground for growing and maturing in Christ as members not only serve together but edify one another.

*The End Result*

The outcome of transformational worship is a life that “prove[s] what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2b, [RSV]). Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus, transformed his life and in the days that followed he spread the message of the Gospel to the nations. After accepting God’s call upon his life, Isaiah foretold of the coming Messiah and boldly called the nation of Israel to repentance. The Samaritan woman ran to her village inviting everyone to meet Jesus.

“[God] desires that we live in such a way that we share the wonders of His person, presence, power, peace, and promise. He wants us to take every opportunity to reach out to those who are hurting and share His physical, spiritual, and emotional power to heal. He wants us to share the good news and tell the world that God is good” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, 49).

When individuals and churches engage in life changing worship, it produces transformed behaviors that glorify Christ and advance the work of God’s kingdom here on earth. In Iorg’s (2010) case study of the church at Antioch there is clear evidence of transformation. There was a commitment to the advancement of the Great Commission. The church fulfilled their God-given calling as they dedicated themselves to innovative evangelism, discipleship, authentic fellowship inside the church, and generosity outside the church. The research of Stetzer and Rainier (2010)
indicates that similar missional qualities are found in the churches they consider to be transformational.

Ultimately, the object of a person’s worship will shape his life to the extent that he takes on the character of the worshiped object. When God is worshiped privately and publicly, the person will be transformed to become more like Jesus Christ. Authentic Christian worship transforms the worshiper by helping him to love God in every imaginable way. At waking, He should be the first thought, and He should be the final thought before eyes close at night. In Christian worship, the believer learns to love the things that God loves and despise the things that He despises. The things that break the Father’s heart should cause heartbreak to the worshiper as well.

Authentic Christian worship should also change the horizontal relationships of the worshiper. As an outflow of love for God and the things that He loves, a transformed individual loves people the way God loves people. This means that the worshiper will have a heart for all people, not just for people like himself. Such love will require the worshiper to step outside of his own comfort zone to meet the humblest of needs. He will be asked to stand against injustice. Such love will compel him to share the gospel message with those who do not know Christ. Those within the body will recognize the worshiper’s love for others as he serves the needs of the Christian community, lovingly confronts the sins of a brother, or pours his own life into the spiritual development of others. This is what it means to experience transformational worship. It is a radical departure from selfish desires to a life that loves and follows God and demonstrates that love to all men. At the end of the day, this is the true measure of transformational worship.
Conclusion

The believer is called to live a life of worship. This call has come from none other than the Almighty God of this universe, the Creator of everything that lives and breathes. This truth is worthy of reflection. A call to worship from the Heavenly Father is a call to a deep and intimate relationship between Himself and His beloved children. Whether in solitude or en masse with other believers, God invites His people to come “take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17 [KJV]). As illustrated in the account of the Samaritan woman at the well, drinking that water radically changed her life. Drinking from the well of God’s greatness will have the same effect upon any life. This is the relationship that God wants for all of mankind.

If all of God’s people would embrace the dynamic and vibrant relationship that He longs to have with them, the kingdom of God would experience a spark of renewal starting in the heart of the believer and spreading to families, churches, communities, and regions, ultimately igniting a world ablaze for the glory of God. It would result in a transformation unlike any that has taken place in recent history, perhaps second only to the days of early Christianity.

Transformed living is offered to us by God and is exclusive through Him. Paul’s appeal in Romans 12:1 serves as a reminder that life change is possible only because of the “mercy of God.” There is no degree of activity that can, in and of itself, produce the spiritual transformation that God wants to accomplish in His people. Spiritual routines without a spiritual relationship with God produces mere ritual. There is no amount of planning and rehearsing that will have an impact on church attendees apart from the power and presence of God. Innovation and creativity will gain an audience, but it will not produce lasting change. Powerful rhetoric may inspire temporarily, but inspiration without the infusion of God’s Spirit will never produce life change.
Lord, we don’t need
More weekend services or multi-sites with preaching and
teaching for the same old incomplete gospel and additional head knowledge,
More weekend worship productions for disembodied
emotional responses of the lips and waving hands masking the same mainly
unchanged and non-worshipful everyday lives,
More 24/7 programmed church activity for a double life
that doesn’t transform people in their real lives for
their real worlds but actually keeps people busy,
driven, in quiet desperation for you .
Lord, we need more of your life in our real life,
in our life together
in our real worlds.
Lord, we need
More who are becoming the good news, everyday
sermons demonstrating in our lives your life and love,
More who worship with our very bodies as living
sacrifices, embodied proof of your kingdom on earth,
More whose life influence on others is the “program,”
by the catching force of a real difference seen in us
not perfect, but being perfected and glorifying you .
Lord, we need more of your life in our real life,
in our life together
in our real worlds. (Meyer 2010, 96)

God grant that the life of this author be more consumed with the pursuit of spiritual
transformation. May all who read the content of this research be challenged in their own worship
to respond to God’s invitation of an intimate fellowship with Him and to experience a life that
demonstrates God’s “good, acceptable and perfect will” to the world. Lord, may the worship of
Your people be used by Your Spirit to transform others until the day of Your imminent return.
To You alone be the glory. Amen!
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APPENDIX I

Stories of Transformation

A total of 69 responses were classified in terms of central context in worship that contributed to transformation. In terms of word count, pastors were mentioned thirty-six times, songs twenty-seven, and prayer-related content was mentioned sixty-six times. The sermon or message was the major contributor: twenty-six narratives referred to the message or sermon. Song and sermon were noted in three narratives. Nine participants referred to an experience with God that was the central focus rather than a specific worship experience. One mentioned a movie, The Passion of the Christ, as a trigger, and nine participants noted other triggers including death, rituals (baptism), or Lenten service. An experience of conflict, struggle or difficulty before the worship experience was described spontaneously in fifteen of the narratives, but difficulty was the trigger in only two narratives. (Abernethy 2010, 218-219)

The following are excerpts from Abernethy’s ethnographic research.

Word of God

I was visiting this church with my husband, and we were thinking about separating. So at this church service the word for the day was, it just hit towards me and doing what you have to do and what you have got you into the circumstance and not what people say. It was like a confirmation of what we were going through and what we needed to do. That's what I experienced. It's something I'll never forget. It was through the sermon that there was confirmation of our marriage. (Abernethy 2010, 219)

[The Pastor] gave a mission-related sermon. On top of that, missionaries came and gave their testimonies. They talked about what our life's purpose/goal should be...At that time, it felt as if I had lived so far for myself, but after hearing them speak, I was convicted that I needed to change myself. (Abernethy 2010, 220)

In God's Presence

This was in the mid '90s, and there was a real breeze of the Holy Spirit blowing through the church at that time...We were worshiping and just a tremendous sense of the holiness of God came. It was so powerful that everyone went totally silent, and we were on our faces before the Lord for, I think, a half hour or forty-five minutes. Nobody said a word, and there were three hundred or so people there...After that time, I think there was a strong prophetic word that came forth about what God was saying to us. (Abernethy 2010, 223)

Spiritual Presence in a Person

There was an evangelist, I was at a church. I used to go off and on for a while. She was speaking and I responded without being conscious of it. It was interesting for me because I wouldn't think that I would have responded but it got a response. It was just when she
was speaking. She was from back East. And she was an evangelist and she came and she spoke. But she had a very, very powerful presence, and she was good. Generally, I would go to church every Sunday no matter what at that time. I must have been maybe twenty-one or twenty-two or something like that. (Abernethy 2010, 224-225)

**Song**

About a year ago, I found out that I might have to have surgery...and I just remember being in church, and we were singing this one song, and in the song while it had different words the one word was peace, and I was just...I could feel the peace too...I just had peace that God...about having surgery. (Abernethy 2010, 225)

We were singing Vineyard songs, and the pastor came to a point where between the songs everybody was just praying, and he said, “Just close your eyes and draw close to God.” I closed my eyes and I didn't feel close to God. Silently, I cried out. I said, “God, I feel so far from you. I feel like I'm out in the middle of the woods and nowhere near you. I'm lost and I don't know where you are.” As clear as can be, a voice said, “I haven't moved.” It was just that simple. Just instantly, boom, I was back where I needed to be. The transforming part is that it was suddenly very, very clear to me that anytime that I don't feel close to God, he hasn't moved. That stayed with me. (Abernethy 2010, 227)

**Prayer**

Following another period of feeling far from God, after changing churches we ended up at our current church, and I wasn't completely mentally or spiritually in good place. But one morning after we'd been there, maybe eight weeks,...and I don't think it was during worship so much [but]...something in the sermon...more from the preaching, and I actually went forward to ask for prayer from somebody I didn't know, which was an out-of-the-ordinary response for me anyway...and really feeling, while the person was praying for me, in some ways like a the conversion experience but definitely not as strong...very positive energy, a little quickening, I would say an intense feeling of peace, comfort and joy, and “There really is a God,” and “He really does care,” and “Things are going to be OK,” and it stayed with me for probably the rest of the day. It was just a positive and powerful feeling, but more probably from the prayer of the other person. (Abernethy 2010, 229)

**Visual Creation**

It was Easter Sunday, I went to the Crystal Cathedral, and there were all these beautiful flowers, the scent of the flowers, just taking in all the beauty of being there and just truly enjoying that. The singing and everything was just uplifting. I was there with my friend, and she said, “Well, where is the pastor going to come from? Right up front there were flowers and trees and everything, and I said, “He'll come from right there.” And she said, “Where?” Then all of a sudden, he just popped up behind the flowers, and she started being able to smell all those flowers and see the beauty of God's creation. You know, he created each and every one of those flowers and just what an awesome God we serve.
Movie

That happened during Holy Week, by seeing the drama, by seeing the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. I felt such a love for God, but by watching the movie that moved me more; it helped me to see how much God had forgiven us, how God carried all of our sins, and iniquities. God had forgiven us and that had opened up for me more understanding that if he forgives us, why can't we forgive? And what he suffered for us. In the church. Yes. Yes.

This Pentecostal woman describes the powerful influence of the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. She does not describe a specific change that occurred, but her understanding of God's love and forgiveness deepened. (Abernethy 2010, 230)

Summary Thoughts

In conclusion, for the process of transformation, surrender, spiritual revelation, and immanence have distinctions, but they are interrelated and may occur in a single transformational event. On the other hand, in light of these narratives, important insights may be gained from the distinctions. Surrender highlights the yielding of the individual and can involve emotional turmoil and a battle of the wills. Revelation underscores the cognitive aspects, but it is not necessarily and exclusively a cognitive process. As we see here powerful emotional feelings may occur with this revelation. Immanence highlights the relational dimension of transformation, where the person finds change in the presence of God. (Abernethy 2010, 233)
APPENDIX II

Stetzer and Rainier’s (2010, 234-235) Criteria for Transformational Churches

- The pastor must strongly agree that “our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives.
- The church must have grown at least 10 percent comparing the church’s current worship attendance to five years prior.
- Because of the volatility in church growth numbers among small churches (e.g., one family coming or going has a large impact on percentage growth), the church must have a minimum of fifty in current worship attendance.
- The church could not have more than one missing response among the ten questions in the survey.
- The church gave us permission to contact them for further research on church health.
- The remaining criterion was a score based on rankings on each of the following seven areas:
  1. Percent growth in worship attendance (current vs. five years prior).
  2. Percent of worship attendance involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar group.
  3. New commitments per attendee (new commitments to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church in the past twelve months divided by current average worship attendance).
  4. Percent of new commitments to Jesus Christ who have also become active in the life of the church (last twelve months).
  5. Percent of adults who attend your church at least once a month who have regular responsibilities at your church.
  6. Percent of adults who attend your church at least once a month who are involved in ministries or projects that serve people in your community not affiliated with your church.
  7. Level of agreement with the statement, “We are consistently hearing reports of changed lives at our church.”