WORSHIP RENEWAL THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP:
HOW DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION AFFECTS OUR WORSHIP

By
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A MASTER’S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN DISCIPLESHIP AND WORSHIP AND THE IMPACT ON
CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

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On May 15, 2007, I was on a staff retreat when I received the news that Dr. Jerry Falwell had passed away. Over the next few days and weeks, I began to reflect on the tremendous impact Dr. Falwell had made with his one lifetime and it caused me to reflect and pray about the impact God wanted me to have with mine. It was these times of reflection and prayer that led me to pursue my graduate studies. I will forever be grateful for the impact that Dr. Jerry Falwell and two of the institutions he started—Liberty University and Thomas Road Baptist Church—for how they have shaped and continue to shape my life and ministry.

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Most of all, I thank my Savior Jesus Christ for becoming sin for me so that I could be made right with God. The mission he has given to me has not been easy, but it has been filled with purpose, adventure, and, most importantly, his presence. I hope and pray that this thesis will shed additional light on how the Church, his bride, can more effectively equip worshippers who will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.
Abstract

Numerous articles, blogs, and books have been written in recent years about the lessening of congregational participation in singing and many have called for a renewal of worship and changes in worship practice within the church. Yet, most of the solutions offered are aimed at bettering what happens inside the worship event—singing songs with more theologically rich lyrics, incorporating more scripture and prayer, striving for more creative ways to engage the congregation, more resources and training for worship leaders, and many other valuable ideas. As excellent as those solutions may be, they are incomplete unless we also focus on that which happens outside of the worship event. This study examines the impact that discipleship has on participation and perceptions during congregational singing. Results indicate that those who have been discipled to actively participate in God’s mission of redemption in the world are less dependent on that which occurs inside the worship event to engage them in singing because of what they have experienced outside of the worship event—namely, God using them in his mission of redemption. Conversely, those who have not been discipled to actively participate in God’s mission of redemption in the world tend to be more dependent on that which occurs inside the worship event to engage them in singing. Clearly, discipling people to engage in God’s mission holds great possibilities for a renewal in worship and congregational singing.

Keywords: Discipleship, worship, mission, missional living, congregational singing, worship renewal
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... iii

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iv

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................ v

List of Tables ................................................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures ................................................................................................................................ viii

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction .......................................................................................................... 1

- Background ................................................................................................................................. 1
- Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................................... 2
- Statement of the Purpose ........................................................................................................ 4
- Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................... 7
- Research Questions and Sub-Questions ................................................................................ 9
- Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................ 11

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review ................................................................................................. 12

- Section One: Discipleship Literature .................................................................................... 12
  - Transformational Discipleship Study by LifeWay Research ........................................... 12
  - *Real-life Discipleship* by Jim Putman ............................................................................ 17
  - *Building a Discipling Culture* by Mike Breen ................................................................. 20
  - *Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt .......................................................................................... 25
- Section Two: Worship Literature ............................................................................................. 28
  - Faith Communities Today – *American Congregations 2015* by David A. Roozen .......... 28
  - Pew Research Center .......................................................................................................... 30
  - LifeWay Research ................................................................................................................ 30
  - Observations from worship trends and statistics .............................................................. 32
  - *Worship Old & New* by Robert E. Webber ..................................................................... 32
  - *Emerging Worship* by Dan Kimball ............................................................................... 35
  - *Worship Matters* by Bob Kauflin ................................................................................... 37
  - *The Great Commission to Worship* by Vernon M. Whaley and David Wheeler ........ 39
## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1 - Question 10</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2 - Question 20</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1 - Question 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2 - Question 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3 - Question 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4 - Question 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5 - Question 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6 - Question 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7 - Question 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8 - Question 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9 - Question 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10 - Question 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11 - Question 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12 - Question 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13 - Question 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14 - Question 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15 - Question 16</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16 - Question 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17 - Question 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18 - Question 19</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 19 – Correlation #1: Questions 11 and 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 20 – Correlation #2: Questions 15 and 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 21 - Correlation #3: Questions 14 and 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 22 - Correlation #4: Questions 17 and 7 ................................................................. 74
Figure 23 - Correlation #5: Questions 13 and 3 ................................................................. 75
Figure 24 - Correlation #6: Questions 17 and 1 ................................................................. 76
Figure 25 - Correlation #6: Questions 11 and 1 ................................................................. 77
Figure 26 - Correlation #7: Questions 16 and 6 ................................................................. 78
Figure 27 - Correlation #8: Questions 17 and 16 ................................................................. 79
Figure 28 - Correlation #9: Questions 1 and 3 ................................................................. 80
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Background

Congregational singing has been a part of the worship of God’s people at least since the crossing of the Red Sea. Exodus 15 records the first song mentioned in Scripture. Moses and his sister Miriam sang a song of praise to God for their miraculous exodus out of slavery in Egypt. Music and singing in worship is evident throughout Scripture culminating with worshipers from every nation gathered around the throne giving their worship to the Lamb. Certainly, music has been a vital part of the Christian church for centuries. “The New Testament relationship of music to worship was established by our Lord when he and his disciples closed the celebrating of the first Lord’s Supper with the singing of a hymn. The early church sang hymns to Christ in the catacombs. Ever since that day music has held an important place in the worship of the church” (Owens 1999, p. 105).

Throughout the ages, congregational singing has endured ebbs and flows. During the Middle Ages, congregational singing was almost entirely snuffed out and music was relegated primarily to clergy members. “During the Reformation, Luther sought to restore congregational singing, which he saw as a means of indoctrination as well as a source of joy” (Segler 1996, p. 89). Innovations in music and changes in the culture at large tend to affect worship practices in one way or another. Reformations and awakenings were often accompanied by renewals in congregational singing as hymn and song writers set lyrics to the music of the day. When congregational participation waned, worship renewal sometimes came through concerted human efforts such as music instruction and singing
schools. “In North America, all music genres used in worship trace their heritage to the early eighteenth-century singing school” (Towns and Whaley 2012, p. 152). At other times, cycles of renewal came through revivals and new moves of God’s Spirit among his people. “What one generation finds meaningful and significant can become stale and sterile to a later generation. Eventually, new liturgical and musical forms emerge to challenge and replace older ones” (Redman 2002, p. 176).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, many books, blogs, and articles have been written regarding the decline of participation in congregational singing in many churches in America. In a recent article entitled “The Sound of (Congregational) Silence” appearing in Choral Journal, composer Bob Burroughs warns of this disturbing trend:

“Plenty of sounds fill every sanctuary or worship facility: choir, organ, piano, handbells, instruments, praise band, even conversations. But congregations as a whole are just not singing. Many simply stand, look around with their arms folded, shift their feet, and do not sing the hymns or praise choruses. This sad phenomenon has happened gradually, and congregational singing has fallen off to an astounding silence. Too many do not sing, do not care to sing, and do not feel the need to lift their voices in praise” (Burroughs 2014).

Some blame the lack of music education in public schools (Music Education: Developing Musical Skills is Key to Congregational Singing 2004) while others blame the music itself that is being utilized in our churches and those who plan and lead it (Lamm 2014).

All these are likely contributors to the decline in participation of our congregations to one degree or another. While there might be different opinions about the cause of the decline, few would argue that a renewal of congregational singing is needed. We must find a way to re-engage the congregation in singing.
Consumerism is a major contributing factor to the decline in congregational participation in singing. The Church Growth Movement, largely credited to have been begun by Donald McGavran, came to the forefront during the 1950s and 1960s. “As a missiologist, when [McGavran] suggested the need to transition our strategy from ‘people’ to ‘peoples’ in his work *Bridges of God* in 1954, it impacted his views (and the Church Growth Movement) in big ways. His study of groups (or peoples) on how they respond, undergirded the movement’s emphasis on statistics, sociology, analysis, and more” (Stetzer, What's the Deal with the Church Growth Movement? 2012). In fact, in the preface of Elmer Town’s *10 of Today’s Most Innovative Churches* published in 1990, he writes, “The future-oriented Church will be consumer oriented, which means it must understand and follow marketing principles” (E. L. Towns 1990, p. 16). Many churches across North America have fully embraced a consumer oriented or “attractional” model of ministry that markets the church and its programs (music, teaching, age-graded ministries, facility, special events, etc.) to the unchurched in hopes of attracting them to hear the Gospel. It can be quite effective, but this approach also has a down side. “How we appeal to someone—churched or unchurched—will ultimately affect how we retain them” (Bird, Stetzer and Towns 2007, p. 228). In other words, what we win them with, we win them to. There is also the danger of sending conflicting messages by appealing to felt needs when the Gospel is about denying ourselves. “We are settling for Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves” (Platt 2010, p. 7).

The marketing and consumer-oriented strategies of today’s typical North American church has affected worship—specifically, congregational participation in
singing. “While consumerism impacts many areas of church life, it has significantly affected how most churches perceive and understand worship. All too often, the intended time of communion with God becomes something relegated to a methodology for church growth” (Gray 2014, p. 37). As the pressure increases on the worship leader and his team to produce a quality worship experience to attract more people, a greater emphasis on production and performance ensues and the congregation is often left to observe. “The benchmark of success in church services has become more about attendance than the movement of the Holy Spirit. The ‘entertainment’ model of church was largely adopted in the 1980s and ‘90s, and while it alleviated some of our boredom for a couple of hours a week, it filled our churches with self-focused consumers rather than self-sacrificing servants attuned to the Holy Spirit” (Chan 2009, pp. 15-16).

Statement of the Purpose

This study is about worship renewal through discipleship. Most of the worship renewal resources focus exclusively on the worship event or the leaders who plan and lead them. They focus primarily on the sixty to ninety minutes of our week inside the worship event and mostly neglect the portion of our lives that occurs outside of the worship event. At the risk of over-simplification, it is as if we believe that if we just had better worship services, we would have better Christians—Christians who would look and act more like Jesus the rest of the week if we just sang more theologically rich songs, recited the Apostle’s Creed together, or had better worship planning. That is a lot of pressure to put on the pastor, the worship leader, and all those involved in the planning and execution of one sixty- to ninety-minute worship service per week! We cannot expect people to engage in meaningful worship inside the worship event if they have not been
trained and equipped, that is discipled, to be engaged with God and what he is doing throughout the rest of their week outside of the worship event. If we only focus on what happens inside the worship event, we are missing a crucial part of the equation.

“The book of Psalms has been for centuries the primary resource for the liturgical and devotional life of the people of God” (McCann, Jr. 1993, p. 13). Throughout the Psalms are exhortations to praise God for his mighty acts or deeds. Psalm 145 is one such psalm.

“One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness” (Psalm 145:4-6 ESV).

All through Psalm 145, there are references to God’s works, his mighty deeds, and how we should praise Him and tell others about what he has done. In fact, the very first song mentioned in the Bible in Exodus 15 is a song of praise to God that recounts his mighty acts on behalf of his people.

Where do God’s people experience his mighty works today? In church? Perhaps. However, the question must be asked—is it really happening? Are people experiencing mighty acts of God on Sunday morning in our churches or is it just goose bumps from a well-executed performance or tears from emotional manipulation? What would happen if people were experiencing the wondrous works of God throughout the rest of the week? What if instead of focusing the vast majority of our resources solely on Sunday programming while the church is gathered, we trained and equipped them to scatter and join God in his mission of redemption in the world? In their book And: The Gathered and Scattered Church, Hugh Halter and Matt Smay speak to this shift:
“At some point, every leader questions their methods, laments how slow it is to produce a disciple, and wrings their hands over indifference and lethargy. Whether you are a mega-church pastor or a bi-vocational leader (or an unpaid saint), we all worry about resources. We get depressed that so much is spent on buildings and salaries (even if it is our own). We struggle to see how our biblical teaching makes any sense to a world that isn’t really looking to come to church. We silently question our own calling, and although we can sound confident about our vision for our church, we still wonder from time to time if what we’re doing is really what Jesus would do” (Halter and Smay 2010, p. 26).

In most North American churches, the evangelism and discipleship process looks like this: the primary role of church members is to invite an unsaved guest to a church service or event so he can hear a paid professional member of the clergy present the Gospel. Hopefully, the guest will “pray the prayer” and make a profession of faith, soon afterward get baptized, become a church member, and join a small group or Sunday School class. If we want to keep him at the church, we find him a place to serve in a ministry—greet people at the door, serve coffee, or sing in the choir. Short-term mission trips are like graduate level Christianity. Evangelism and discipling others are for the “paid professionals” like pastors and missionaries. In some churches, discipleship is a program. There is a neat progression of classes or a slate of electives and Bible studies one can take. But the Great Commission to make disciples was not given to the church. It was given to individual followers of Jesus. “We need to understand the Church as the effect of discipleship and not the cause. If you set out to make disciples, you will inevitably build the Church. If you set out to build the Church, there is no guarantee you will make disciples. It is far more likely that you will create consumers who depend on the spiritual services that professionals like yourself provide for them” (Breen 2011, p. 11). Many of our churches have calendars that are filled with activities and events—and many of these are good things. Yet, activity does not necessarily equate to spiritual
growth. In their book *Transformational Church*, Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer talk about our propensity for activity rather than mission:

“As leaders, we sometimes fool ourselves into thinking that just managing the status quo is good enough. Some leaders take the merry-go-round approach to church. They think if they can just keep everyone moving, the flashing lights shining bright, and the music happy, they won’t get complaints… Rather than missionary disciples for Christ going into the world, we have a group of people content to go in circles. God calls us to make a transformational impact on the world, not provide a carnival of frenetic activity for ourselves. But to make this impact, we must engage in his mission for his sake and on his terms” (Stetzer and Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* 2010, p. 3).

When we become a follower of Jesus, we get to join God in his mission of redemption in the world. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us… (ESV)” We have been commissioned to make God’s salvation appeal to others. It is my belief that perhaps the most powerful yet overlooked path to worship renewal is through equipping and training people to make disciples. When we see God using us to draw people to Himself, we experience his mighty acts firsthand. Instead of relying on a sixty- to ninety-minute worship event to trigger something inside of us to engage in worship, we will come ready to burst into songs of praise because of what we have experienced God doing in and through our lives all week long. A church full of people that make that kind of discipleship a priority in their lives will undoubtedly experience a renewal of worship and renewed participation in congregational singing.

**Significance of the Study**

Most of the efforts in bringing about worship renewal have focused almost exclusively on the worship event itself. Many excellent books have been written in recent
years calling for worship reforms. Some, such as the late Robert E. Webber advocated for the convergence of liturgical and contemporary forms and experiences of worship (Webber 1994, p. 132). Others, like Dan Kimball, propose a more holistic and multi-sensory approach to worship that engages the whole person especially for reaching emerging generations (Kimball 2004, p. 5). Worship leader and author Bob Kauflin focuses his efforts in worship renewal on equipping and training other worship leaders through his book *Worship Matters* and a website by the same name because he recognizes the important role that worship leaders have in teaching and training others in worship (Kauflin 2008, p. 54). Still others argue that the biggest contributor to ineffective worship within the church is the lack of serious planning (Segler 1996, p. 217). There is no shortage of materials and resources on worship and worship renewal.

There are also numerous books, resources, and research projects on discipleship. Lifeway Research recently released a massive, multi-year research project studying the topic of discipleship—what it is and how it happens. The findings of the study have been published in the book *Transformational Discipleship* and is an excellent resource for churches desiring to see discipleship take place. While worship and congregational singing are not the primary foci of the book, it does touch on the subject:

“A church leader attends a worship gathering at a conference and perceives the people are more passionate than the people in his church. So he takes mental notes of the hungry expressiveness and the postures of reverence. he comes back to his church with a conclusion that worship "looks this way" so he teaches people to act a certain way in a worship gathering. Instead of reminding people of the greatness of God and his goodness expressed to them in Jesus, he paints a picture of what worship should "look like." Instead of trusting that as God refreshes hearts with what Christ has done authentic worship will flow, he gives specifics on what people should do in the worship gathering. Instead of teaching for heart transformation, he teaches for behavior. It is easier to measure, and the immediate result is tempting” (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, p. 89)
In their excellent book *The Great Commission to Worship*, David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley connect worship with the Great Commission to make disciples.

“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… so-called believers appear to be content with this disconnect in reference to their faith, thus allowing for outward expressions of worship with little regard to what it means to be a multiplying disciple of Christ. After generations of allowing this anemic expression of worship to exist with little or no challenge from Christian leaders, the result has been the normalizing of an impotent faith that ignores the Great Commission in favor of reducing worship to an emotional act of personal expression” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, pp. 7-8).

The premise of the book is that a Great Commission worshipper will be totally and equally devoted to evangelism and worship.

The truly significant part of my research project is that it attempts to identify a cause and effect relationship between discipleship and worship—specifically, congregational singing. My research examines the worship experiences of 167 unique individuals and attempts to draw comparisons of these experiences between those who indicated that they have been discipled and those who indicated that they have not.

**Research Questions and Sub-Questions**

This leads to the primary research question: Is there a cause and effect relationship between discipleship and worship—specifically, congregational singing? Through my research, my objective is to show that discipleship can and must play a vital role in worship renewal. As we disciple people to join God in his mission in the world, they will experience God using them to draw people to Himself and experience firsthand the mighty acts of God which have always fueled the worship of God’s people.
1. Do you find it difficult to engage in corporate worship due to
distractions/busyness of life? Or do you regularly experience so much of God’s
activity in your life that you look forward to worshiping and praising Him?

2. Do things like worship style, quality of the vocalists/musicians, music volume,
etc., distract you from worship? Or, because you regularly experience God using
you to accomplish his mission during the week, there is rarely anything that can
keep you from engaging in worshiping Him?

3. Which impacts your engagement in worship most—what happens inside the
worship event (songs, prayers, scripture readings, etc.) or what happens outside or
leading up to the worship event (God’s activity in my life, personal times of
worship, etc.)?

4. Have you ever had someone disciple/mentor you (one-on-one or one-on-few)?

5. Have you been discipled/mentored in missional living (living like a missionary
where you live, work, and play, living out the gospel and looking for
opportunities to share it as God provides)?

6. Do you have a strong sense of calling as to your role in advancing God’s
Kingdom? Is God currently using you in the life of at least one unsaved person to
help them take steps toward faith in Jesus?

These and other questions were part of my research questionnaire. The next chapter will
look more closely at the literature reviewed while determining the scope of this project.
Definition of Terms

Worship/Worship Renewal – While worship encompasses much more than music, for the purposes of this research project, the terms *worship* and *worship renewal* generally relate to the musical or congregational singing portion of a corporate worship service.

Discipleship – This is a very broad term used among churches and denominations to refer to spiritual growth and practicing spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, fasting, etc. For the purposes of this research project, discipleship refers to the act of becoming like Jesus in his character *and* in his competency—doing the kinds of things he did. There is no shortage of discipleship curriculum available today, but most of these tend to focus on character and practicing spiritual disciplines. True discipleship must also equip and train the disciple to make disciples, otherwise, the multiplication of disciples does not occur.

Missional/Missional Living – This term is used to describe a follower of Jesus who is engaged in God’s mission of redemption in this world. He lives as a missionary where he lives, works, and plays living out and sharing the Gospel as the Holy Spirit gives him opportunity.
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Since my research topic seeks to investigate the relationship between two distinct areas—discipleship and worship—my literature review falls into two broad categories: discipleship and worship renewal. Each of these broad categories breaks down into smaller subsets. In the arena of discipleship literature, first, I will examine the data from the Transformational Discipleship research study conducted by Lifeway Research. Second, although there are no shortages of excellent books on discipleship, I will review three recent, prominent books written on the topic of discipleship: *Real-Life Discipleship* by Jim Putman, *Building a Discipling Culture* by Mike Breen, and *Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt. For the worship literature, I will examine some data regarding attitudes toward and national trends in worship from Faith Communities Today, the Pew Research Center and LifeWay Research. As in discipleship, there are no shortage of excellent books written on the topic of worship and worship renewal. I will review four prominent books offering different approaches for worship renewal: *Worship Old & New* by the late Robert Webber, *Emerging Worship* by Dan Kimball, *Worship Matters* by Bob Kauflin, and *The Great Commission to Worship* by David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley.

Section One: Discipleship Literature

*Transformational Discipleship Study by Lifeway Research*

When it comes to research about religion, the Church, and social issues that affect Christians, Lifeway Research is one of the best sources for scholarly research and statistical information. According to their website, “Lifeway Research assists and equips church leaders with insight and advice that will lead to greater levels of church health and
effectiveness” (Lifeway Research n.d.)\textsuperscript{1}. In 2008, Lifeway Research conducted a massive research project to identify the key attributes of healthy churches (LifeWay Communications Staff n.d.).\textsuperscript{2} The findings of this study were published in the book *Transformational Church* written by Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer. The research published in *Transformational Church* served as a foundation for LifeWay’s biggest study to date on discipleship which launched in 2011 and included interviews with discipleship experts from eight countries, surveys with 1,000 pastors, and more than 4,000 Protestants across North America (LifeWay Communications Staff n.d.).\textsuperscript{3} The study’s findings were published in the book *Transformational Discipleship* by Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation. Although this research does not explore the relationship between discipleship and worship, it appears to be the largest study of its kind on discipleship, and is therefore an extremely important part of the body of literature on discipleship.

Since the research in *Transformational Discipleship* is closely tied to the research in *Transformational Church*, it is no surprise that the two place a high degree of importance on involvement in a local church as a significant part of discipleship. “God shapes congregations through the shaping of individual lives. Further, this shaping of individuals doesn’t just happen; it’s through intentional effort on the part of both leaders and church members” (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, iBooks p. 9). The study found

\textsuperscript{1} From LifeWay Research website http://www.lifewayresearch.com/about/

\textsuperscript{2} Article rom LifeWay website http://www.lifeway.com/Article/news-massive-lifeway-research-project-identifies-eight-measures-of-personal-discipleship

\textsuperscript{3} Article from LifeWay website http://www.lifeway.com/Article/transformational-research-attributes-of-growing-disciples
that church involvement is very closely tied to discipleship, and as such, attending and participating in worship services is an important part of the discipleship process. The book goes on to state that “disciples are being made in the same way they’ve always been made—by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the church. It is when the people of God engage in the mission of God through the Spirit of God” (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, iBooks p. 10). In a separate article regarding the Transformational Discipleship study on LifeWay Research’s website, Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research states, “Making disciples is the work of the church” (McConnell 2012).

I believe it is crucial to make an evaluative statement at the onset. It may seem like a minor issue, but churches do not make disciples. People make disciples. The Great Commission was not given to the Church. It was given to every person who is a follower of Jesus. For too long, the Church has addressed discipleship through programs—Awana, Sunday School, small groups, etc. The Church has adopted a one-size-fits-all, Henry Ford-esque, mass production approach to discipleship in hopes of making disciples like new Ford trucks rolling off the assembly line of the Ford F-150 plant in Dearborn, Michigan. The programmatic approach to discipleship has largely failed and there seems to be a lack of consensus as to what true discipleship entails. According to their own research, the majority of pastors disagreed with the statement “I am satisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in our local church” including 18 percent who strongly disagree and 34 percent who somewhat disagree with the statement. Yet, nine out of 10 of these same pastors surveyed believe their congregation is making significant progress in spiritual development (McConnell 2012). What? How can we say
that the people in our congregations are making significant progress in their spiritual development yet be dissatisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in our churches? It is because people make disciples, not programs. The Church must preach the gospel and be the gathering place where followers of Jesus worship God together and develop discipling relationships, but the actual work of discipleship is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus and not a program of the Church.

As the title of the study reveals, discipleship is about transformation. “The word from the Scriptures often associated with transformation is ‘metamorphosis.’ It communicates lasting and irreversible change at the core, not merely external alterations or tweaking the appearance” (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, iBooks p. 90). This transformation happens purposefully. “The LifeWay Research team discovered that certain factors are at work in the lives of believers who are progressing in spiritual maturity. We refer to them as the attributes of discipleship: Bible engagement, obeying God and denying self, serving God and others, sharing Christ, exercising faith, seeking God, building relationships, and unashamed authenticity (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, iBooks p. 96). The research further suggests that there are three factors that align to create an ideal environment in which this transformation occurs. “The Transformational Sweet Spot is the intersection of truth given by healthy leaders when someone is in a vulnerable posture” (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, iBooks p. 100).

The research questions in the Transformational Discipleship study have similar themes to my own research questions regarding discipleship. When asked about sharing the Gospel, “Almost three-quarters agreed with the statement, ‘I feel comfortable that I can share my belief in Christ with someone else effectively’” (31 percent strongly and 43
agree somewhat)” (Geiger, Kelley and Nation 2012, iBooks p. 284). Yet, in another question, “80 percent of those who attend church one or more times a month, believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith, but 61 percent have not told another person about how to become a Christian in the previous six months” (LifeWay Research 2014). Clearly, belief has not made its way into action or obedience.

When it comes to discipleship and the relationship with other believers, “the survey also shows churchgoers often leave important elements of faith unspoken. Nearly a third (29 percent) agree ‘Spiritual matters do not tend to come up as a normal part of my daily conversations with other Christians,’ while 50 percent disagree this is the case” (LifeWay Research 2013). “Almost three out of every four churchgoers say they have significant relationships with people at church, but less than half are intentionally helping other believers grow in their faith… Results of the ‘Building Relationships’ questions reveal a seeming disconnect between churchgoers actually pressing into new relationships or participating in discipling other Christians” (LifeWay Research 2013).

It is clear from this study, at least in the North American Church, that we are not clear on our understanding of discipleship—what it is, when it is occurring, and how to accomplish it. Pastors say they are not pleased with their church’s discipleship efforts, yet confidently declare that spiritual transformation is happening. The majority of believers are not investing in other believers or sharing their faith with others. In fact, in another LifeWay Research study released in the book The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship by Brad Waggoner, “only 17 percent of Protestant churchgoers in America demonstrate a ‘decent’ level of spiritual maturity” (Waggoner 2008, iBooks p. 43). While there is much in this research about the status of
discipleship, none of the research seeks to explore the potential of a relationship between discipleship and worship or worship renewal in the church.

*Real-life Discipleship by Jim Putman*

Several years ago, while serving at a church in Corbin, Kentucky, I attended a discipleship workshop led by a group of leaders from Real Life Ministries in Post Falls, Idaho. They presented a very informative and thorough discipleship process and I have used several of their resources in various churches I have served. As I began to sort through literature on discipleship, I knew Jim Putman’s book would need to be a part of this project.

Real Life Ministries started in 1999 with two couples and, by 2010, had grown to over 8,500 people (Putman 2010, p. 17). The church’s focus on equipping and growing up leaders from within has resulted in many of its ninety-plus pastors and staff members being hired from within. All but seven worked their way up from volunteer leaders to lower level staff positions before assuming higher levels of leadership (Putman 2010, p. 18). This is not the norm among churches. In fact, Putman says, “So why don’t most American churches tap into the hidden talent buried on their benches? I believe it is because they do not focus on making and training disciples. They spend so much time putting on a show that they do not have the time to know or invest in their people” (Putman 2010, p. 19). In other words, for most churches, programming trumps discipleship. From the onset, Putman states clearly that “it is the job of every believer to make disciples. The church is supposed to equip its people (every person) to be an army released on its community” (Putman 2010, p. 20).
As we saw in the Transformational Discipleship study discussed earlier, pastors were unhappy with their discipleship efforts, yet confident that spiritual transformation was taking place. This seems to indicate that in many churches discipleship is happening by accident. Putman points to Jesus as our model for discipleship: 1) Jesus was an intentional leader in every sense; 2) he did his disciple-making in a relational environment; 3) he followed a process that can be learned and repeated. In other words, an intentional leader + a relational environment + reproducible process = infinite number of disciples. (Putman 2010, pp. 35-36).

Metaphors are wonderful tools to bring clarity to words and concepts. In Real-Life Discipleship, Putman uses the metaphor of human growth and development to represent various stages of spiritual growth and development. At stage one, a person is spiritually dead and characterized by the word unbelief. In stage two, following salvation, a person is a spiritual infant characterized by the word ignorance. At stage three, a person is a spiritual child and is often self-centered. Stage four is spiritual young adulthood where people are characterized by becoming “God-focused” and “other-centered.” Stage five is the final stage known as spiritual parenting. We arrive at this stage once we begin to reproduce ourselves spiritually in others (Putman 2010, pp. 41-42).

Relationships are a critical part of discipleship. Jesus modeled this in his relationship with his disciples. “Yet many pastors believe they are making disciples by preaching sermons that teach their congregations what the Bible says. They see discipleship as simply a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, and the result will be a changed life” (Putman 2010, p. 47). Receiving Bible knowledge through listening to
a sermon or small group Bible study is not enough. “In a good growth environment there is shepherding, transparency, accountability, and guided practice” (Putman 2010, p. 52).

It is staggering to think that each believer can trace his spiritual lineage back to one of Jesus’ disciples. This speaks to the power of multiplication and reproduction within the discipleship process. Real Life Ministries developed a reproducible process for making disciples called the Share, Connect, Minister, Disciple process (SCMD). Jesus shared with his disciples the truth that he was the Messiah. He offered them the opportunity to connect with Him. As they grew spiritually, Jesus gave them opportunities to minister to people. Before leaving this earth, he sent them out to disciple others (Putman 2010, p. 62). Each of these steps in the reproducible process corresponds to one of the spiritual life stages discussed earlier: Share/Infant, Connect/Child, Minister/Young Adult, Disciple/Parent (Putman 2010, pp. 77-148).

Putman’s discipleship methods in Real-Life Discipleship and the results they have yielded are tough to argue. It is a clear and concise method that has resulted in many people not only being converted but discipled. However, Putman’s approach to discipleship still feels a bit too programmatic to me. It seems to rely heavily on the program of small groups and the discipling relationships that are assumed to develop within. The book does not give much information on how that relationship can or should take place. It seems to be understood that discipling relationships will organically germinate within the environment of the small group program. The subtitle of the book, “Building Churches that Make Disciples,” communicates that the responsibility for making disciples lies with the Church rather than individuals. Yes, in the book Putman states that discipleship is the responsibility of every believer, but there is somewhat of a
mixed message between the subtitle and the contents of the book. Perhaps the book emphasizes the more organized and structured components of discipleship rather than the more organic, spontaneous moments where discipleship often occurs. The truth is discipleship requires both the organized and organic moments in order for it to occur. In any case, Putman’s method for discipleship may be just what the doctor ordered especially for churches that may be more comfortable with a more programmatic approach to discipleship.

*Building a Discipling Culture by Mike Breen*

In the fall of 2011, I was in search of a new ministry position. Although at the time I had been a full-time worship pastor since December of 1995, for the past four or five years, God had been impressing on my heart the importance of discipleship and mission. Much of it had to do with my discontent with church services and programs that were not resulting in the making of disciples. I typed the words “missional community” into a Google search field. The very first entry that appeared was 3 Dimension Ministries (3DM) founded by Mike Breen. I clicked the link, read nearly every page of their website and ordered his book *Building a Discipling Culture*. Ever since that fateful Google search, this book has impacted my understanding and practice of discipleship. I did end up finding a new ministry position as a Worship and Discipleship Pastor at a small congregation in Michigan. Our church ended up going through a two-year Learning Community on discipleship and mission with 3DM which expounds upon the material presented in this book and three others written by Mike Breen and the 3DM team. It is only natural that a book that has impacted me so deeply be included in this literature review.
Like most discipleship books, Breen starts with the problem: the lack of discipleship occurring in our churches today. He also points out that the making disciples is the plan Jesus chose for the spread of the Gospel. In fact, both Building a Discipling Culture and Real-Life Discipleship contain a subheading of “There Is No Plan B” in their first chapters. Perhaps my favorite quote on discipleship comes from chapter one of Building A Discipling Culture: “If you make disciples, you always get the Church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples.” On the same page, Breen emphasizes that discipleship is the effect of discipleship and not the cause (Breen 2011, p. 11).

Once again, Breen portrays Jesus as the ultimate model for discipleship. He contends that Jesus was constantly calibrating invitation and challenge with those he was discipling. “Invitation is about being invited into a relationship where you have access to a person’s life and all the vibrancy, safety, love and encouragement that reside there… But by accepting that invitation, you also accept the challenge that comes with it: The challenge to live into your identity as a son or daughter of the King” (Breen 2011, p. 18). Discipleship flourishes in environments that are both highly invitational and highly challenging.

As is the case with most discipleship methods, multiplication is the goal. As the book title indicates, it is a culture of discipleship that we are pursuing. One of the primary characteristics of 3DM is the emphasis they place on a discipling language. The reason? Language creates culture. Also important to building a culture of discipleship is the concept of apprenticeship. “Jesus taught his disciples, asked them to imitate his life and then said, ‘You will do greater things than me.’ Information » Imitation » Innovation” (Breen 2011, p. 41).
Earlier in my literature review, I mentioned the value of metaphor in bringing clarity to words. In a similar vein, Breen fills his book with visuals he calls Lifeshapes to demonstrate various truths distilled from the life and teachings of Jesus. These shapes act as an icon or visual that help us to remember the teachings of Jesus and relevant scripture passages:

- The Learning Circle represents spiritual breakthrough. As we go through life, we inevitably experience an opportunity to learn. We can choose to enter the Learning Circle or stay on our merry way. In the first half of the Learning Circle, we ask “What is God saying to me?” As we come around the other half, we ask “What am I going to do about it?” (Breen 2011, pp. 51-66).

- The Triangle is what gives 3 Dimension Ministries (3DM) its name. Breen identifies three areas from the life of Jesus that we should emulate. “Jesus lived out his life in three relationships: Up—with his Father; In—with his chosen followers; Out—with the hurting world around him. This three-dimensional pattern for living a balanced life is evident throughout Scripture (Breen 2011, pp. 67-83).

- The Semi-Circle - We all live busy, stressed out lives which is not the way God intended for us to live. God built a natural rhythm into all of creation. The Semi-Circle is a picture of a pendulum swinging in a natural rhythm. This rhythm alternates between rest and work; between abiding and being fruitful (Breen 2011, pp. 85-97).

- The Square represents different aspects of leadership development in four stages. Stage one requires a highly directive leader and an apprentice who is willing to
watch and learn. In stage two, the apprentice helps the leader as part of the learning process. At stage three, the apprentice carries more responsibility with the leader’s assistance. By stage four, the apprentice is fully equipped to operate on his own. Each stage requires different skills of both leader and apprentice, and we see Jesus modeling all four stages with his disciples (Breen 2011, pp. 99-112).

- The Pentagon is a visual representation of the fourfold giftings mentioned in Ephesians 4: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher. Each of us has a base gift in one of these five areas for equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. A simple inventory questionnaire can help each person determine his base gifting (Breen 2011, pp. 113-129).

- The Hexagon is a model for prayer patterned after six components of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13: 1) the Father’s character (verse 9), the Father’s Kingdom (verse 10), the Father’s provision (verse 11), the Father’s forgiveness (verse 12), the Father’s guidance (verse 13a), and the Father’s protection (verse 13b) (Breen 2011, pp. 131-139).

- The Heptagon is patterned after the seven signs of life characteristic of all living organisms as applied to one’s spiritual life: 1) Movement, a disciple is on the move; 2) Respiration, the breath of God’s Spirit in our lives; 3) Sensitivity, a disciple is sensitive to the needs of others; 4) Growth, growing in our relationship with God; 5) Reproduction, a disciple reproduces himself in others; 6) Excretion, confession of sin through repentance; 7) Nutrition, the spiritual nourishment of God’s Word (Breen 2011, pp. 141-151).
• The Octagon represents eight potential dimensions of relationships that we can leverage for the Gospel: 1) Presence, understanding that wherever you go, Jesus is with you; 2) Passing relationships, people we may have a chance encounter with; 3) Permanent relationships, friends or family members; 4) Proclamation, individuals with whom we have the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel; 5) Preparation, sometimes we plant the seeds of the Gospel, other times we water, and sometimes we get to harvest; 6) Power, the power of God shown through answered prayer is a powerful tool in sharing the Gospel; 7) Perception, sensitivity to the Spirit’s leading; 8) Person of Peace, the previous seven dimensions help us find People of Peace whom the Holy Spirit is preparing to respond to the Gospel (Breen 2011, pp. 153-163).

*Building a Discipling Culture* concludes with some practical suggestions and vehicles for building a culture of discipleship within the church. However, the entire discipleship strategy is spread out over three additional books: *Multiplying Missional Leaders, Leading Missional Communities,* and *Leading Kingdom Movements.* Having read all the books and participated in a two-year 3DM Learning Community, and having been involved in two different churches that have adopted this discipleship strategy, I feel uniquely qualified to offer an evaluation of not only the book, but the entire discipleship approach. First, what Breen and 3DM are proposing in these books is not for the faint of heart. Unfortunately, if you do a search on the Internet on churches implementing the 3DM strategy, you will likely find more negative stories than positive. Thanks to the Church Growth and Seeker Movements, the American Church has been built at least to some degree by appealing to consumeristic tendencies. The Gospel and the Great
Commission to make disciples is about denying ourselves which runs on a collision course with a consumer mentality. Couple this contradiction with impatient pastors looking for results through making comprehensive and complex changes too quickly and you have a recipe for church upheaval and sometimes complete implosion. My current church has experienced a good deal of attrition of people who simply did not understand the church’s new focus. To them, it seemed that everything that attracted them to our church in the first place had been stripped away. Sadly, pastors often get frustrated with those who do not “get it” and they are left behind feeling abandoned and disconnected with those who quickly adopt the new direction and focus of the church.

After modeling my personal discipleship endeavors after this method and, more specifically, utilizing the Lifeshapes discipling tools for the past five years, I wholeheartedly believe it to be an effective but imperfect method. It is important to understand that it is a personal discipleship method that must be implemented at the personal level and be allowed to spread among a community through relationships. The dangers lie in mandating through making it a program from the top down. While Building a Discipling Culture does not address the subject of worship or congregational singing, it is my strong belief that a culture of discipleship will yield a renewal of worship and congregational singing in any church as the people engage in God’s mission and experience his mighty acts for themselves.

Saturate by Jeff Vanderstelt

At first glance, the title of the book does not seem to portray the subject of discipleship. However, in the introduction, the author asks the question,
“Can you imagine every city, every neighborhood, every street, and every house saturated with Jesus’ presence through his people? What if, in every school, every classroom, and every extracurricular activity, students daily experience the person and work of Jesus? Can you dream with me of a day when no business office, retail center, or industrial hub can get away from the good news of Jesus proclaimed in words and expressed in gracious deeds? A day when every café, pub, restaurant, or bakery smells of the aroma of Christ (Vanderstelt 2015, iBooks p. 23)?

It certainly is a beautiful picture! If followers of Jesus go into all the world making disciples, saturation would certainly be a fitting description. Unfortunately, that is not the reality of our world which makes books like Saturate necessary. Also in the introduction, the author makes it clear that the call to discipleship is for every believer. “This book is for you—the normal, unimpressive, everyday person, young or old, male or female—because Jesus means to carry out his mission of filling the world with his presence through you. You are meant to do this” (Vanderstelt 2015, iBooks p. 25).

Chapter one states the problem—many (most?) of the people in our churches have never been discipled. Vanderstelt shares the story of a conversation with his father while fishing. His church had hired a new discipleship pastor and for the first time in fifty years, he was being discipled and learning how to disciple others. “How is it possible that someone could be in the church for over fifty years and not know how to make disciples?” I wondered. ‘What’s wrong with the church?... It’s not a separate program of the church! It’s the mission of the whole church! Every disciple of Jesus is called to it! Clearly something is broken!’” (Vanderstelt 2015, p. 36). Interestingly, as the author recounted how his father’s had changed, it resulted in parties with neighbors and exciting spiritual conversations rather than involvement in a new church program. The conversation with his father was a defining moment for Vanderstelt.
Earlier, when evaluating the Transformational Discipleship study, I mentioned the lack of clarity in the North American Church regarding discipleship and that much of our efforts had been focused on church programs. Vanderstelt acknowledges this disconnect and makes a very strong connection between people and discipleship rather than programs. In fact, chapter two focuses on the role that parties and hospitality can have in reaching out to others.

“What if our homes were intended by God to be some of the primary spaces in which the ministry of the church should take place? People could be welcomed in, cared for, and experience belonging to a people who enjoy one another and life together. This would transform people’s perceptions of the church. Their understanding of who the church is and what she does would be very different from others’. As a result, people would come to understand Jesus in an entirely new way” (Vanderstelt 2015, iBooks p. 52).

I appreciate so much Jeff Vanderstelt’s approach to discipleship as “all-of-life discipleship” (Vanderstelt 2015, iBooks p. 144). He maintains that “this kind of discipleship cannot happen simply by attending church gatherings or going to classes… All-of-life discipleship… requires submitting to and obeying God’s Word in three key environments: life on life, where our lives are visible and accessible to one another; life in community, where more than one person is developing another; and life on mission, where we experience making disciples and, while doing so, come to realize how much we need God’s power” (Vanderstelt 2015, iBooks pp. 160-161). Saturate clearly intertwines discipleship with evangelism. It treats discipleship as so much more than a focus on our character and practicing spiritual disciplines.

As excellent a resource as Saturate is to paint a picture of what discipleship can and should look like, it never touches the subject of worship or worship renewal and how all-of-life discipleship might impact our worship gatherings as we sing together. That is
not within the scope of the book, yet it comes so close. Just imagine what it might be like to gather for worship with a group of people who were engaged in all-of-life discipleship. If people are experiencing life on life, life in community, and life on mission, I truly believe it would also experience a great worship renewal. The people would be practically bursting at the seams with praise and adoration for all they have experienced God doing in their midst. They would not be spectators observing the show on the stage or critiquing the performance of the musicians. And, it is also unlikely that they would complain about the style or volume of the music being used in worship. Instead, I am inclined to believe that they would lift their voices in song and express their love and worship to God in great abandon.

Section Two: Worship Literature

*Faith Communities Today – American Congregations 2015 by David A. Roozen*

Faith Communities Today conducts a regular national survey of church congregations. This is the fifth survey conducted since 2000 with previous surveys taken in 2000, 2005, 2008, and 2010 with responses from over 32,000 randomly sampled congregations in the United States from all denominations and traditions. “This report focuses on an initial look at core trends across the survey series and a first look at new sets of questions introduced in the 2015 survey” (Roozen 2016, p. 1). It is a fascinating study that measures many of the key health indicators of local congregations. This study covers many topics; however, for the purposes of this literature review, only those pertaining to the subject of worship, worship renewal, and music will be mentioned.
Church growth and the factors that drive it is one of the first sections of this report in which worship is mentioned. In general, churches that adopted more contemporary styles of worship music experienced a boost in growth. According to this study, in the past five years, 53.2 percent of congregations that described themselves as being very innovative in worship grew by at least 2 percent and 43.7 percent that described their church as having little to some innovation in worship grew by at least two percent (Roozen 2016, p. 4). It is not surprising to find a significant connection between a positive experience during worship services and the spiritual vitality of a congregation. However, a surprising departure from previous surveys was that for the first time there was little connection found between having a positive worship experience and the growth of the congregation. All other previous surveys showed a strong connection. Another interesting departure from previous surveys was the finding that while positive experiences in worship remained at consistent levels, spiritual growth and vitality trended downward. Additionally, fewer churches report a willingness to change their worship style or add a worship service with a different style. More than three-quarters of those surveyed reported no changes in style or very slight changes and only 4 percent added a new service with a different style. In attempting to quantify the term “contemporary worship,” the surveyors chose “use of electric guitars always or often” as the benchmark for defining contemporary. As such, the number of churches that indicated that they use electric guitars in worship always or often has plateaued at 34.8 percent. The report speculates that perhaps this is because electric guitars are hardly seen as innovative in today’s context. A final mention in the report relating to music and worship is in the area of member-oriented programming. The percentage of churches that indicated that their
music program was a strong emphasis in or specialty of their church fell from 58.1 percent in 2010 to 52.9 percent in 2015. Sometimes this kind of decline is indicative of budgetary constraints on the church brought on by external financial trends in society (Roozen 2016, pp. 9-12).

**Pew Research Center**

Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan fact tank, conducts research on trends, attitudes and issues that shape public policy in the United States and around the world and informs the public on its findings. They conduct hundreds of surveys on topics ranging from politics, social trends, religion, technology, science, and global issues. In an August 2016 study entitled “Choosing a New Church or House of Worship,” 74 percent of respondents indicated that worship style was a significant factor in choosing a new church behind only the quality of preaching and feeling welcomed by church leaders (Pew Research Center 2016).

A 2015 study entitled “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” showed a sharp overall decline of the Christian share of the U.S. population (from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% 2014) and an increase in those designated as “unaffiliated” (16.1% to 22.8%) and those of other faiths (4.7% to 5.9%). Evangelicals saw less of a decline (-0.9%) than both Catholic (-3.1%) and Mainline Protestant (-3.4%) (Pew Research Center 2012).

**LifeWay Research**

In a March 16, 2017, episode of the “Keep Asking” podcast with Lizette Beard, Scott McConnell, and Casey Oliver with LifeWay Research, the topic was “Research on Worship: Putting the Pieces Together.” Interestingly, with all the church-specific research
that LifeWay conducts, they rarely conduct any specific research on worship. During the podcast, Lizette Beard had this to say about research on worship from LifeWay:

“A question we are asked a lot is, have you done any research on worship in this really specific way’? Or about this very specific type of church? More often than not, our answer has actually been no. Sometimes the population is just too specific… Sometimes it’s a question that would be interesting… None of the people would be interested in it. It’s not that it’s not important to someone, it just probably wouldn’t be important to very many more people than that… If we don’t do a full-blown research study out there, what value can people get from research that comes from multiple studies if it’s not on the very granular thing they’re looking for?” (Beard, McConnell and Oliver 2017)

While LifeWay Research does not have any worship specific research of its own, the podcast included aspects from other studies—of its own and from other organizations such as the ones mentioned above—that touch on worship. While the data from other surveys such as Faith Communities Today and Pew Research Center have already been explored in previous paragraphs, LifeWay Research recently produced a survey of new church plants that touches on worship. Among new church starts, 34 percent were considered contemporary, 18 percent blended, 11 percent seeker, seven percent post-modern immersion, and five percent urban contemporary. Traditional services among church plants only make up four percent and only one in 50 churches were classified as liturgical. In a related statistic, 40 percent of those attending a new church plant were not active in another church at the time and 18 percent who were previously completely unchurched (Beard, McConnell and Oliver 2017).

Also, according to LifeWay Research, if churches are doing worship well, they will see more people begin to attend. “The model that includes church’s mean responses to the worship assessment questions accounts for 33 percent of
the five-year growth of that church…What we’re saying is not that we can predict that more people will come to your worship services, if [you do worship well]. We can say that it’s more likely that they’re going to come, if [you do worship well]” (Beard, McConnell and Oliver 2017).

Observations from worship trends and statistics

We appear to be entering a stage in the American Church where simply changing the style of music used in the worship service to more contemporary forms does not necessarily equate to church growth. Churches have closed the gap between themselves and the surrounding culture at least in the instrumentation that is used during the musical portion. It is no longer shocking to most people to hear an electric guitar in a worship service!

Perhaps the most telling statistic is the significant rise of those who identify as unaffiliated. In the church world, we call them the unchurched or de-churched. For many people who no longer attend church, worship or musical style is immaterial. In fact, it appears that worship style matters more to those inside the church than outside. In any case, changing a church’s worship style to be more contemporary seems less likely to cause a significant growth in attendance than in the past. There is also little doubt that the de-churched population is growing and unless churches engage people in something significant—like the mission of God—this trend is likely to continue.

Worship Old & New by Robert E. Webber

Although the first edition of this book was written in 1983, Robert Webber’s call for worship renewal through incorporating past worship forms still represents one of the
major approaches to worship renewal today known as convergence worship. By 1994, and the release of the second edition of this book and the subject of my review, Webber contends that there is great uncertainty in worship due to a breakdown of distinct worship styles between denominations. While some argue for the old ways of worshiping, and others lobby for only the latest styles and trends, Webber calls for a blending of both old and new forms (Webber 1994, pp. 12-13). Convergence worship is an attempt at worship renewal by connecting ancient practices with modern forms and can be effective in liturgical or free worshiping churches.

Webber spends the first part of the book exploring the biblical foundations for worship beginning in the Old Testament and running through early Christian worship practices. He makes note of the “event nature” of worship with God calling for his people to prepare themselves for a meeting with Him at the foot of Mount Sinai. While little is said about the details of early Christian worship in the New Testament, “both the Old and New Testaments contributed to the worship patterns of the early church (Webber 1994, p. 61).” The second part of the book covers a biblical theology of worship with the Gospel taking the central place in worship. Webber points to Old Testament worship practices that foreshadow and symbolize the relationship between God and the worshiper which culminate in the New Testament with the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper (Webber 1994, pp. 78-79). Of particular importance to Webber is the use of signs and symbols in worship. He devotes an entire chapter to the subject. “They are not ends in themselves; rather, they are the tangible meeting points between human beings and God in which spiritual worship takes place. This is true of the order of worship, which is a sign-act just like baptism and the Eucharist. (Webber 1994, p. 90)”
The third section of the book is devoted to a history of Christian worship practices including the earliest worship order from the writings of Clement of Alexandria (d. 220) and Origen (d. 251). This order of worship included selected scripture readings from the Law, the Prophets, Epistles, Acts, and the Gospels with Psalms sung by cantors in between readings. Webber traces the development of both Eastern and Western Liturgies which serve as the basis for the Liturgy still practiced in many churches today. He also traces the effect of the Reformation and the beginning of the Free Church worship movement before speaking to worship renewal efforts in the twentieth century and the charismatic movement. Section four of the book speaks to the practice of worship—the environment, the content, structure and style. Webber gets quite detailed in this section, even giving floor plans and layouts of various worship spaces throughout church history.

Central to worship is the Word of God. The people listen to and respond to readings from the scriptures. Another central theme is the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper and the act of remembrance and giving of thanks. Here, Webber gives suggestions for contemporary, free worshiping churches to incorporate some of these ancient, more liturgical elements. The worship service ends with sending the people out to love and serve the Lord (Webber 1994, pp. 163-194).

For myself, not being from a liturgical church, I find the signs and symbols of liturgical worship described in this book fascinating. I can appreciate the tie Webber seeks to make between the ancient and more modern worship expressions. The centrality of the Gospel as expressed throughout the liturgy is wonderfully rich. However, I have met many people who grew up in liturgical churches that completely missed the Gospel because it was never explained to them. It seems that in many liturgical churches, the
meaning of the symbolism is assumed to be understood. Unfortunately, the meaning is lost to many people who plod through the liturgy without appreciating the truths inherent in the signs and symbolism. To many, it represents just another mass or church service to endure because it is what they have always done. Webber’s path to worship renewal in the future lies through the past. He believes that building a bridge to our Christian forefathers through ancient worship practices will somehow revitalize both cold and stale liturgical worship and unfocused and seemingly random free church worship. I am certainly not opposed to incorporating meaningful ancient traditions into modern worship expressions. However, if our efforts for worship renewal are focused entirely on the worship event itself, I believe that they will have limited and short-term effectiveness because we are leaving out the other half of the equation—what happens outside the worship event on the other six days of the week.

Emerging Worship by Dan Kimball

Dan Kimball, pastor of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California, noticed a troubling trend. An entire emerging generation—18 to 35 years of age—was largely absent from North American churches. He expressed a restlessness evident among emerging leaders over the status quo and the need for courageous changes to connect with those in a post-Christian American culture. Kimball is one of the pioneers in the field of emerging worship. An emerging worship gathering tends to be a more holistic approach to the formatting of a worship service than a dichotomous service with a few precursory songs followed by a message. “There is a definite move away from worship services simply composed of preaching and a few songs. We are now moving toward a much more multisensory approach comprised of many dimensions and expressions of
worship” (Kimball 2004, p. 5). Such expressions include art, visuals, the practice of ancient disciplines, and a conscious effort to foster participation rather than mere spectating.

For many churches interested in reaching emerging generations, the kind of changes Kimball speaks of in his book would wreak havoc. That is why he proposes that churches begin alternative worship gatherings—like a church within a church. He gives existing churches five compelling reasons to start an alternative worship gathering: 1) You desire to see emerging generations worship God, 2) You are starting a new worship gathering to be missional, 3) You understand that new models are needed to address both cultural changes and generational change, 4) You want to be a good steward of finances and buildings for the Kingdom, 5) You see how emerging worship allows intergenerational relationship to develop and keep a church from dying out (Kimball 2004, pp. 39-47).

Kimball devotes much of the book to helping churches consider and take steps toward starting an emerging worship gathering as an alternative worship service offering to existing programming. He also spends a good deal of time explaining what makes an emerging worship service different. Emerging worship moves away from spectator type of gathering and seeks to engage participants in multisensory ways. There is also a more organic design to the worship gathering versus a linear flow of the service elements. The environment is also very important and a sacred space is created for the worship gathering that communicates that something deeply spiritual is planned. Crosses, candles and artwork are common sights in emerging worship gatherings. Mystery and wonder are important values reflected in the environment of an emerging worship gathering. Musical
styles are often quite eclectic with modern pop rhythms combined with ancient creeds and prayers as lyrics. Historical practices, liturgy, the liturgical Church calendar and Jewish practices are also integrated into emerging worship practices. Communion is a central part of almost every worship gathering with plenty of time for unhurried, unrushed reflection, confession and thanksgiving (Kimball 2004, pp. 73-95).

Like *Worship Old & New*, within reason, I find the introduction of ancient practices into worship services refreshing. Of particular interest to me are Jewish practices such as the Passover Sedre that have such foreshadowing of the coming Messiah. I am in favor of innovative and multisensory worship practices whether they be ancient forms or completely new expressions. Like most books on worship or worship renewal, Kimball’s book focuses primarily on the worship event itself. However, in chapter one, the author does acknowledge that worship is a lifestyle.

“In a worship gathering, we create a place where we can express love, devotion, adoration, and praise to God. This should shape our planning and design. But worship is not something we do only once a week on Sunday morning or evening. Worship is a lifestyle of being in love with God and in awe of Him all week long (Romans 12:1-2). It is offering our love, our adoration, and our praise to him through all of our lives” (Kimball 2004, p. 4).

Outside of this and a few other small sections of the book, the focus of the book is what can be done *inside* the worship event to bring about a worship renewal—especially among emerging generations—and little if anything about what can be done *outside* the worship event to ensure worship renewal.

*Worship Matters by Bob Kauflin*

While Kauflin’s book is nearly ten years old, it still finds its place on required reading in many classes in worship studies. *Worship Matters* may not have been written
Specifically to bring about worship renewal. It is written to those who lead congregations in worship and seeks to revitalize the practice of worship by encouraging and exhorting worship leaders. Kauflin seeks to improve the impact of the worship event through investing in those who plan and lead worship in the local church.

The book is divided into four main sections, each with a different focus: the leader, the task, healthy tensions, and right relationships. In the first section, Kauflin addresses the leader through asking a series of questions. What is really important? “Worship matters. It matters to God because he is the one ultimately worthy of all worship. It matters to us because worshiping God is the reason for which we were created. And it matters to every worship leader, because we have no greater privilege than leading others to encounter the greatness of God” (Kauflin 2008, p. 19). In this first section of the book, Kauflin asks some tough questions about the heart of the worship leader—what we believe, what we practice, and what we model with our lives. The second section of the book looks at the task of being a worship leader. Across 12 chapters, Kauflin unpacks the responsibilities of a worship leader—not just the mundane tasks of planning, rehearsing, and leading worship, but also the most important task of making much of God so that the people are motivated to live differently. In the third section of the book, the focus is on aspects of worship that we must be able to hold in tension. Finding a balance between things like the transcendence and immanence of God, worship that is planned yet also sensitive to the spontaneity of the Spirit’s leading, being a skilled yet authentic musician and others. The last section of the book speaks to the key relationships in a worship leader’s life—the congregation, the worship team, and the pastor.
Kauflin offers a very valuable perspective to worship leaders. Although it does not directly address the topic of worship renewal, that is clearly the aim. He desires to raise the level and practice of worship by encouraging and exhorting the leaders of worship. While my evaluation of other resources on the subject of worship may be somewhat critical because it focuses narrowly on the worship event, likewise, this book focuses only on the equipping or discipleship of worship leader. It is not that such a focus on worship leaders is a bad thing; it is just incomplete when it comes to seeing worship renewal. It is my belief that we can have the most talented and godly worship leaders planning the most theologically sound worship services, but if we fail to disciple our people to engage in God’s mission, our worship renewal efforts will fall short.

*The Great Commission to Worship by Vernon M. Whaley and David Wheeler*

I was first exposed to this excellent book during one of my classes. As I read, I found myself in such agreement with the authors. Although it may not be one of the most prominent or popular books on worship, it touches on so many of the same themes as my research so I knew was essential to include it in my literature review. That said, I do not believe Wheeler and Whaley wrote this book with worship renewal in mind—at least not as a primary focus. The underlying message of the book is that there is a strong relationship between worship and evangelism. In the introduction, the authors pose several questions that drove them to write this book: “First, ‘What is it that inherently drives us to evangelize?’ Second, ‘What is it about evangelism that drives us to worship?’ Third, how does one define worship and evangelism?’ Finally, when all of these issues meet discipleship, ‘What does it mean to be a Great Commission worshipper?” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, p. 5).
So much of what Wheeler and Whaley have written parallel my own thoughts and beliefs regarding worship and discipleship. In fact, I could make a strong case from my perspective that perhaps a more fitting subtitle for the book would be *Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Discipleship*. Wheeler and Whaley quote from Jonathan Fallwell’s 2008 book *Innovate Church*: “Proper discipleship is never complete until the person being discipled multiplies their witness consistently into those who do not know Christ” (Fallwell 2008, p. 120). In other words, discipleship is not truly discipleship unless the disciple leads another person to Christ. The authors also do an excellent job tying worship with mission. “The heartbeat of worship is the daily response of obedience to the commands of Christ that result in our joining Him on mission” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, p. 17). Yes! The engine of our worship is being on mission with God!

I agree with much of what the authors have written in this book. However, because of my background and experiences in church, I tend to prefer the term *discipleship* as including evangelism and not separate from it. For instance, the authors write, “A Great Commission Worshpper is equally committed to worship and evangelism. There is never a time when a division is made between the two. This concept of worship-evangelism is the biblical model for discipleship” (Whaley and Wheeler 2011, p. 30). In my experience, Christians view the point of salvation as the end. It is as if once we get the person across the line of faith, it is like crossing the finish line and our work is done. Herein lies the disconnect. Many Christians believe that discipleship cannot begin until salvation has occurred. I do not hold to that position. I believe discipleship *includes* evangelism. Look at the model of Jesus. Jesus invited his disciples to follow Him and learn from Him. When we share the gospel with someone, we are inviting them to follow
Jesus. I believe that this is a process that can begin before a person puts his faith and trust in Jesus and does not conclude until the person’s death or Jesus returns. The danger of having a dichotomous view of evangelism before salvation and discipleship afterward is that too often the discipleship piece never happens. We are content to make converts, but all Jesus is interested in is disciples. That is why I would rewrite the previous quote this way: A Great Commission Worshipper is equally committed to worship and discipleship. There is never a time when a division is made between the two. This concept of worship-discipleship is the biblical model for discipleship.

Wheeler and Whaley’s book is the only book that I have read that comes as close to tying worship with discipleship. Yet, the book contains no research—no attempt to prove that there is a connection between being on mission with God and a renewal of worship. It primarily presents the Biblical basis for the connection and appeals for Christians to be obedient to the commands of Christ. However, as I believe my research shows, discipling people to join God in his mission can truly lead to worship renewal.
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Introduction

When I began formulating my thesis subject, I was afraid that gathering the research I needed was going to prove very difficult. After all, people’s perception of worship can be very subjective. Originally, I had thought that my research would be entirely qualitative in nature with interviews with pastors and worship leaders being my primary method. However, as I began to get clarification as I narrowed my thesis topic, I knew I would need the input of the people in the pews and not just pastors and worship leaders. Because of the delicate nature of the subject of worship, anonymity was crucial. I looked at several research projects from LifeWay Research and other organizations and decided that I could glean a tremendous amount of information from an online, anonymous questionnaire or survey. Such a questionnaire could also be easily distributed electronically contributing to a larger sample size. A standardized, multiple choice system with scaled answers assigned to a number would yield quantitative data (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0) while short answer questions would yield qualitative data. As such, my research is categorized as mixed method research.

Since my thesis seeks to show the connection between worship and discipleship—specifically, congregational singing—it was necessary to define worship—for the purposes of the questionnaire only—as congregational singing. Therefore, each question that used the word worship also contained a reminder that for the purposes of the questionnaire worship referred to congregational singing or the musical portion of a corporate worship service.
Design

This research project seeks to establish whether or not there is a link between discipleship and worship—especially, participation in congregational singing. As such, the research questions needed to probe one’s background in discipleship as well as one’s experience during worship. First, I made a list of as many elements as possible that might motivate someone to worship during a typical corporate worship setting. The list contained 18 elements with the option to choose “other” as number 19 where a respondent could add his own to the list. Respondents were permitted to select any number of the elements on the list that he felt motivated them to engage in worship. Second, I identified four concepts regarding worship—ability to engage in worship, potential of distractions such as worship style and musical quality, whether the individual is influenced more by what happens inside a worship event (songs, prayers, scripture readings, etc.) or what happens outside of the worship event (God’s activity in their life, personal worship times, etc.), and one’s affinity toward music. I crafted two questions regarding each concept from different perspectives to ensure consistency in responses. These eight questions were worded as statements with a multiple choice, scaled response (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0). Lastly, I included an open-ended question that would help me to gain a little context regarding what a respondent perceives as a powerful worship experience.

Similarly, for the discipleship portion of the questionnaire, I made a list of elements that might contribute to one’s spiritual growth and development. The list contained 17 elements with the option to choose “other” as number 18 where a respondent could add their own to the list. Respondents were permitted to select any
number of the elements on the list that were a part of their personal spiritual
development. Second, I identified four concepts regarding discipleship—whether or not
the respondent has been discipled (one-on-one or one-on-few), sharing the gospel with
others, missional living and discipling others, and sense of calling or role in God’s
Kingdom. I crafted two questions regarding each concept from different perspectives to
ensure consistency in responses. These eight questions were worded as statements with a
multiple choice, scaled response (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree =
0). Lastly, I included an open-ended question that would help me to gain a little context
regarding what things had contributed most to the respondent’s spiritual development.

Now that the questionnaire was complete, I needed as many people as possible to
participate. Noticeably absent from the questionnaire were any questions that could be
influenced one way or another by a specific worship style. The questions were written so
that they could be answered by anyone who attends church regularly regardless of the
worship style. I have served in seven churches in six different states across nearly 21
years of ministry, so naturally I asked my friends at these churches if they would fill out
the questionnaire and then share it with others. In total, I received 167 completed
questionnaires. Since the questionnaire was anonymous and I did not collect any
demographic information on the respondents (age, gender, race, etc.), I know little about
these 167 people other than they attend worship services regularly and, of course, the
answers they submitted via the questionnaire about their discipleship background and
worship experiences. The most important qualification was that they regularly attended
worship. Beyond that, my research would draw conclusions based on whether or not a
respondent had been discipled (one-on-one or one-on-few) to join God in his mission.
Questions and Hypotheses

Questions

The primary question this research project is seeking to answer is what is the relationship between discipleship and worship. More specifically, is there a connection between discipleship and participation in congregational singing? To answer this main research question, I had to answer six sub-questions—three regarding worship and three regarding discipleship:

1) Do you find it difficult to engage in corporate worship due to distractions/busyness of life? Or do you regularly experience so much of God’s activity in your life that you look forward to worshipping and praising Him?

2) Do things like worship style, quality of the vocalists/musicians, music volume, etc., distract you from worship? Or because you regularly experience God using you to accomplish his mission during the week, there is rarely anything that can keep you from engaging in worshiping Him?

3) Which impacts your engagement in worship most—what happens during the worship event (songs, prayers, scripture readings, etc.) or what happens outside or leading up to the worship event (God’s activity in my life, personal times of worship, etc.)?

4) Have you ever had someone disciple/mentor you (one-on-one or one-on-few)?

5) Have you been discipled/mentored in missional living (living like a missionary where you live, work, and play, living out the gospel and look for opportunities to share it as God provides)?
6) Do you have a strong sense of calling as to your role in advancing God’s Kingdom? Is God currently using you in the life of at least one unsaved person to help them take steps toward faith in Jesus?

**Hypotheses**

1) **Those who have been discipled to join God in his mission are less dependent on what occurs inside of a worship event to engage in worship.** When a person has been discipled (one-on-one or one-on-few) to live a missional lifestyle, they will more likely experience God using them to see people take steps toward faith in Jesus. Witnessing these mighty acts of God will cause them to come to a corporate worship setting filled with praise to God for all that they have experienced him doing in and through their lives as they join him in his mission. They are more likely to quickly engage in worship without distraction regardless of the worship style or the quality or volume of the music.

2) **Those who have not been discipled are more dependent on what occurs inside of a worship event to engage in worship.** People who are not engaged in God’s mission during the week miss out on experiencing God using them to accomplish his mission. They are also more likely to be focused on other temporal things like their career and/or leisure activities rather than on God’s mission. As a result, they are more dependent on what happens inside of the worship event such as worship music that is their preferred style, quality and volume, and promptings from worship leaders.

3) **Discipling people to join God in his mission will lead to worship renewal.**

Those who experience the excitement of joining God in his mission will also
experience a newfound passion to praise and worship God. As a church is permeated with a culture of discipleship and mission, it will also experience a noticeable change as the people gather for corporate worship.

Online Questionnaire

To conduct my research, I chose a free, online survey tool called Typeform (www.typeform.com). While there are a number of similar online survey tools available, I chose Typeform because of its attractive and intuitive user interface. Also, the data was easy to export to spreadsheets for analyzation and the creation of various graphs and charts. Typeform allows you to embed a video on the welcome screen which enabled me to introduce myself and the topic of my research to those who filled out the questionnaire. The first ten questions were about the respondent’s typical experience during the musical portion of a corporate worship experience and the second ten questions were about the respondent’s personal discipleship experience. The complete questionnaire is as follows:

1) I often find it difficult at first to engage in worship because of the distractions and/or busyness of life. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

2) Things like worship style, quality of the vocalists/musicians, music volume, etc., often distract me from engaging in worship. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

3) What happens during worship (songs, prayers, scripture readings, etc.) has a greater impact on my engagement than what has happened in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship (God’s activity in my life, personal worship times, etc.). (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

4) I enjoy music so I find it easy to engage in worship. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

5) Most weeks, I have experienced so much of God’s activity in my life that I’m looking forward to worshiping and praising Him for all he’s doing! (God’s activity in my life, personal worship times, etc.). (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)
6) Because I regularly experience God using me to accomplish his mission during the week, there is rarely anything that can keep me from engaging in worshiping Him. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

7) What happens in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship (God’s activity in my life, personal worship times, etc.) has a greater impact on my engagement in worship than what happens during worship (songs, scripture readings, prayers, etc.). (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

8) Music/singing is not really my thing so I find myself unsure of how to engage or participate during worship. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

9) Which of the following elements regularly motivate you to engage in worship? (select all that apply)
   a. Thinking about God—his love for me, his greatness, power, majesty, etc.
   b. Thinking about the obedience and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for my sin
   c. Sensing the Holy Spirit prompting and inviting me into worship
   d. Scripture passages either recalled from my own study or read during the worship service
   e. Experiencing God answer my prayers
   f. The beauty and complexity of God’s creation
   g. The look and feel of the atmosphere/environment of the room
   h. The invitation, encouragement, and/or instruction of the worship leader(s)
   i. The sound of the music that is skillfully played or sung
   j. Hearing the voices of the congregation lifting up their praises in song
   k. Watching other people—either on stage or in the congregation—engaged in worship
   l. The lyrics of the songs we are singing
   m. My personal times of worship during the week carry right into the corporate worship experience
   n. Seeing people put their faith and trust in Christ for the first time
   o. Hearing other believers share testimonies of God’s activity, faithfulness, provision, etc.
   p. Experiencing God use me during the week to draw unsaved people to Himself as I live as a missionary where I live, work, and play
   q. Experiencing God use me during the week to disciple other believers to become more like Jesus in their character and competency—doing the kinds of things he did
   r. Seeing God do supernatural things (i.e. physical healing, etc.)
   s. Other

10) Describe a particularly powerful time of worship you have experienced. What made it so powerful? Why was it so unique and memorable? Was the primary impact on your experience something that happened during the event (the
lyrics/music, a scripture that was read, thinking about God’s love, etc.) or outside the event (personal times of worship, experiencing God do something in or through you during the time leading up to the event, etc.)? (short answer)

11) I have never had a spiritual mentor (one-on-one or one-on-few). (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

12) I am a pretty typical American Christian. I attend church regularly and do my best to obey God’s Word, but I don’t feel confident enough to share the gospel or talk about my faith regularly with others. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

13) The discipling/mentoring I have received has been primarily in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.) but it has not equipped me for missional living or to disciple others. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

14) I have a strong sense of calling, and I have a pretty good idea of what God wants me to accomplish for his Kingdom. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

15) I have had others pour into my life through intentional spiritual mentoring (one-on-one or one-on-few). (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

16) God is currently using me in the life of at least one unsaved person to help them take steps toward faith in Jesus. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

17) The discipling/mentoring I have received has helped me develop in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.) as well as in how to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

18) I attend church regularly and serve in ministry where I can, but I don’t yet have a clear sense of how God could use me to further his Kingdom. (Strongly Agree = 10; Neutral = 5; Strongly Disagree = 0)

19) Which of the following elements have been a part of your spiritual development? (select all that apply)
   a. Reared in a Christian family
   b. Active in a youth group
   c. Regular church attendance
   d. Participation in a small group or Sunday school class
   e. Christian school (at least some elementary or high school)
   f. Christian college/university (at least some undergraduate)
   g. Participation in a campus ministry at a secular college/university (InterVarsity, Cru, etc.)
h. Local church college ministry
i. Volunteering/serving on a ministry team within a church or para-church ministry
j. Lay leadership (unpaid) of a ministry team within a church or para-church ministry
k. Receiving intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.)
l. Receiving intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in discipleship and mission (how to join God in his mission in the world and how to disciple others)
m. Cross-cultural experience through a foreign or domestic mission trip
n. Christian seminary/graduate school
o. Part or full time formal ministry leadership (church or para-church)
p. Providing intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.)
q. Providing intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in discipleship and mission (how to join God in his mission in the world and how to disciple others)
r. Other

20) What 2 or 3 things have contributed most to your spiritual development? (short answer)
CHAPTER FOUR: Research Findings

Introduction

There are many excellent resources on worship and worship renewal available to worship leaders today. More and more schools and seminaries are offering degree programs in worship studies at the undergraduate, master’s and even doctoral level to prepare men and women to serve the Church in the area of worship. Yet, most of these training resources focus their efforts on the worship event itself and/or the leaders of the worship event. My research seeks to show that discipling people to join God in his mission is at least of equal value to experiencing a renewal of congregational worship singing. To do so, my research questionnaire asked questions about both worship and discipleship. In sharing the findings from my research, in Section One, I will start with the questions about worship, then Section Two concerning discipleship. In Section Three, we will look at correlations between the two. For instance, we will look at how the answers in the worship section of those who indicated they had been discipled (one-on-one or one-on-few) compare to those who indicated they had not been discipled and vice-versa.

Most of the questions are quantitative in nature and the results are shown with either a pie chart (questions 1-8 and 11-18), or a bar graph (question 9 & 19). Questions 10 and 20 are open-ended (qualitative) questions and require a bit more explanation. In each case, I have analyzed the responses and combined similar themes.
Section One: Questions about Worship

**Figure 1 - Question 1**

I often find it difficult at first to engage in worship because of the distractions and/or busyness of life.

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 1](image1)

**Figure 2 - Question 2**

Things like worship style, quality of the vocalists/musicians, music volume, etc., often distract me from engaging in worship.

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 2](image2)
What happens during worship (songs, prayers, scripture readings, etc.) has a greater impact on my engagement than what has happened in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship (God's activity in my life, personal worship times, etc.).

![Figure 3 - Question 3](image)

I enjoy music so I find it easy to engage in worship.

![Figure 4 - Question 4](image)
Most weeks, I have experienced so much of God's activity in my life that I'm looking forward to worshiping and praising Him for all He's doing!

Because I regularly experience God using me to accomplish His mission during the week, there is rarely anything that can keep me from engaging in worshiping Him.
What happens in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship (God's activity in my life, personal worship times, etc.) has a greater impact on my engagement in worship than what happens during worship (songs, scripture readings, prayers, etc.).

Figure 7 - Question 7

Music/singing is not really my thing so I find myself unsure of how to engage or participate during worship.

Figure 8 - Question 8
Which of the following elements regularly motivate you to engage in worship?

- Thinking about God—His love for me, His greatness, power, majesty, etc.
- Thinking about the obedience and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for my sin
- Sensing the Holy Spirit prompting and inviting me into worship
- Scripture passages either recalled from my own study or read during the worship service
- Experiencing God answer my prayers
- The beauty and complexity of God’s creation
- The look and feel of the atmosphere/environment of the room
- The invitation, encouragement, and/or instruction of the worship leader(s)
- The sound of the music that is skillfully played or sung
- Hearing the voices of the congregation lifting up their praises in song
- Watching other people—either on stage or in the congregation—engaged in worship
- The lyrics of the songs we are singing
- My personal times of worship during the week carry right into the corporate worship experience
- Seeing people put their faith and trust in Christ for the first time
- Hearing other believers share testimonies of God’s activity, faithfulness, provision, etc.
- Experiencing God use me during the week to draw unsaved people to Himself as I live as a missionary where I live, work, and play
- Experiencing God use me during the week to disciple other believers to become more like Jesus in their character and competency—doing the kinds of things He did
- Seeing God do supernatural things (i.e. physical healing, etc.)
- Other

Figure 9 - Question 9
Up until this point, each question has been quantitative in nature. The responses have been standardized and easily represented with a neat pie chart or bar graph. However, question ten is qualitative. Respondents were asked to describe a particularly powerful time of worship they had experienced. What made it so powerful? Why was it so unique and memorable? Was the primary impact on their experience something that happened during the event or outside the event? After analyzing and synthesizing the answers, I was able to pull out some common themes. There were 76 responses to the question (some either chose not to answer the question or typed something in the text box was not applicable). Table 1 shows a breakdown of the responses. There were 39 respondents who described their most powerful worship experience as being triggered by something purely inside the worship event. Only five respondents indicated that their most powerful worship experience was solely triggered by outside events, and 32 indicated that it was a mixture of events both inside and outside a worship event that led to a powerful worship experience.

Table 1 - Question 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Describe a particularly powerful time of worship.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside Event</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Specific song/hymn, video, scripture reading, special season or service, worship theme matched message, un rushed time of worship, quality music, engagement of the people, revival service, spoken testimonies, sensing the presence of the Holy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Life circumstances combining with songs during worship, sensing God’s leading during personal worship/prayer confirmed by songs during worship, answered prayers bringing extra meaning to worship, personal preparation/expectation coming in to worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Event</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Context of week’s events, a trip to Jerusalem, experiencing deeper times of worship outside of church, times of personal worship, community/family feel of congregation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations on data from Section One regarding worship questions

Most of the data in section one speaks for itself. However, there are a few findings I would like to highlight. First, by way of a reminder, there are eight questions regarding worship that cover four concepts, each with two questions asked from a different perspective. Asking the same question from more than one angle allows the researcher to verify consistency of responses. Breaking down each of the four concepts and comparing the answers to both questions can help the researcher determine whether or not the respondent understood the question or was confused by it.

1) Questions 1 and 5 dealt with the individual’s ability to engage in worship. For question 1, 59% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (40% and 19%, respectively) with the statement “I often find it difficult at first to engage in worship because of the distractions and/or busyness of life.” That is consistent with question 5, where 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (43% and 46%, respectively) with the statement “Most weeks, I have experienced so much of God’s activity in my life that I’m looking forward to worshiping and praising Him for all he’s doing!”

2) Questions 2 and 6 dealt with potential distractions during worship. For question 2, 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (35% and 17%, respectively) with the statement “Things like worship style, quality of the vocalists/musicians, music volume, etc., often distract me from engaging in worship.” There is a slight discrepancy with question 6, where 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (43% and 17%, respectively) with the statement “Because I regularly experience God using me to accomplish his
mission during the week, there is rarely anything that can keep me from engaging in worshiping Him.” More than half of respondents agreed with both statements. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that perhaps question 2 contains prominent examples of hypothetical distractions, but respondents do not regularly encounter these distractions when or where they worship.

3) Questions 3 and 7 ask whether the individual is influenced more by what happens inside a worship event (songs, prayers, scripture readings, etc.) or what happens outside of the worship event (God’s activity in their life, personal worship times, etc.). For both questions 3 and 7, around half of the respondents agreed with both statements (50% and 51% agreed or strongly agreed with questions 3 and 7, respectively); 44% and 37% agreed or disagreed with questions 3 and 7, respectively); and 6% and 12% were neutral on questions 3 and 7, respectively. When factoring in responses to question 10, it is easy to see why. Many respondents indicated that circumstances outside the worship event and that which happened inside the worship event combined to provide a very powerful worship experience.

4) Questions 4 and 8 ask about the respondent’s affinity to music. Answers to both questions were remarkably consistent (88% agreed or strongly agreed with question 4 and 91% disagreed or strongly disagreed with question 8). Interestingly, very few respondents indicated that they did not enjoy music or singing. A likely explanation to this scenario is that this questionnaire was
heavily distributed to and by people involved in worship ministry resulting in the sample weighing heavily toward people who have an affinity to music.

An interesting observation about question 9 is that the top three elements respondents indicated motivated them to worship relate to the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. (83% thinking about God, his love, etc.; 64% thinking about the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus; and 63% sensing the Holy Spirit’s prompting and invitation to worship). Tied with sensing the Holy Spirit was the lyrics of songs (also 63%)—another indication of the role that music plays in worship. Another interesting observation is that the least mentioned element was the look and feel of the atmosphere/environment of the room.
Section Two: Questions about Discipleship

**Figure 10 - Question 11**

I have never had a spiritual mentor (one-on-one or one-on-few).

- **Strongly Disagree (0-1)**: 10%
- **Disagree (2-4)**: 16%
- **Neutral (5)**: 4%
- **Agree (6-8)**: 24%
- **Strongly Agree (9-10)**: 46%

**Figure 11 - Question 12**

I am a pretty typical American Christian. I attend church regularly and do my best to obey God's Word, but I don't feel confident enough to share the gospel or talk about my faith regularly with others.

- **Strongly Disagree (0-1)**: 3%
- **Disagree (2-4)**: 17%
- **Neutral (5)**: 4%
- **Agree (6-8)**: 40%
- **Strongly Agree (9-10)**: 36%
The discipling/mentoring I have received has been primarily in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.), but it has not equipped me for missional living or to disciple others.

![Figure 12 - Question 13](chart12.png)

I have a strong sense of calling, and I have a pretty good idea of what God wants me to accomplish for His Kingdom.

![Figure 13 - Question 14](chart13.png)
I have had others pour into my life through intentional spiritual mentoring (one-on-one or one-on-few).

Figure 14 - Question 15

God is currently using me in the life of at least one unsaved person to help them take steps toward faith in Jesus.

Figure 15 - Question 16
The discipling/mentoring I have received has helped me develop in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.) as well as in how to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others.

Figure 16 - Question 17

I attend church regularly and serve in ministry where I can, but I don't yet have a clear sense of how God could use me further His Kingdom.

Figure 17 - Question 18
Which of the following elements have been a part of your spiritual development?

- Reared in a Christian family
- Active in a youth group
- Regular church attendance
- Participation in a small group or Sunday school class
- Christian school (at least some elementary or high school)
- Christian college/university (at least some undergraduate)
- Participation in a campus ministry at a secular college/university (InterVarsity, Cru, etc.)
- Local church college ministry
- Volunteering/serving on a ministry team within a church or para-church ministry
- Lay leadership (unpaid) of a ministry team within a church or para-church ministry
- Receiving intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.)
- Receiving intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in discipleship and mission (how to join God in His mission in the world and how to disciple others)
- Cross-cultural experience through a foreign or domestic mission trip
- Christian seminary/graduate school
- Part or full time formal ministry leadership (church or para-church)
- Providing intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.)
- Providing intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling (one-on-one or one-on-few) in discipleship and mission (how to join God in His mission in the world and how to disciple others)
- Other

*Figure 18 - Question 19*
Like question ten, question twenty is an open-ended question. Respondents were asked what two or three things have contributed most to their spiritual development.

After analyzing and synthesizing the answers, I was able to pull out some common themes. I grouped the responses together into 44 different categories. Table 2 shows a breakdown of these categories and the number of responses for each in numerical order.

Table 2 - Question 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>What 2 or 3 things have contributed most to your spiritual development?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Christian family/parents/grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Small group/Sunday school class/Bible studies/prayer groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Personal study/Bible reading/personal worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Regular church attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Receiving mentoring/discipling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Influence of Christian friends/Christian fellowship/example of other believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bible preaching/influence of senior pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Facing adversity/life lessons/hardships/faith building experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Short term mission trips/involvement in missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Volunteering/serving in ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Involvement in a worship ministry/influence of worship pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Involvement in a youth group/summer camp/influence of youth pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Personal prayer life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Attending a Christian college/university/graduate school/seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teaching/leading a Bible study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Living a missional lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Scripture memorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mentoring/discipling others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Involvement in a campus ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Learning to listen to and respond to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Attending a Christian school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Listening to recordings of messages/podcasts/YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The prayers of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Attending Christian conferences/seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading Christian books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experiencing the death of a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Having children/teaching my children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Involvement in a local church college ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Having an accountability partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experiencing life change/forgiveness/healed wounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations on data from Section One regarding worship questions

Here again, most of the data in section two speaks for itself. However, there are a few findings I would like to highlight. Again, by way of a reminder, there are eight questions regarding discipleship that cover four concepts each with two questions asked from a different perspective. Breaking down each of the four concepts and comparing the answers to both questions can help the researcher determine whether or not the respondent understood the question or was confused by it.

1) Questions 11 and 15 dealt with whether or not the respondent has been discipled (one-on-one or one-on-few). For question 11, 70% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (24% and 46%, respectively) with the statement “I have never had a spiritual mentor (one-on-one or one-on-few).” That is consistent with question 15, where 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (32% and 34%, respectively) with the statement “I have had others pour into my life through intentional spiritual mentoring (one-on-one or one-on-few).”

2) Questions 12 and 16 dealt with sharing the gospel with others. For question 12, 76% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (40% and 36%,
respectively) with the statement “I am a pretty typical American Christian. I attend church regularly and do my best to obey God's Word, but I don't feel confident enough to share the gospel or talk about my faith regularly with others.” For question 6, 55% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (33% and 22%, respectively) with the statement “God is currently using me in the life of at least one unsaved person to help them take steps toward faith in Jesus.” The research seems to show that people may feel confident enough to share the gospel, but fewer are actually engaged in sharing the gospel with others.

3) Questions 13 and 17 ask about missional living and discipling others. For question 13, 58% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (32% and 26%, respectively) with the statement “The discipling/mentoring I have received has been primarily in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.), but it has not equipped me for missional living or to disciple others.” This is consistent with question 17, where 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (47% and 27%, respectively) with the statement “The discipling/mentoring I have received has helped me develop in the area of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, integrity, character, etc.) as well as in how to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others.” The research indicates that the majority of respondents in the sample have been discipled to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others. This is also consistent with responses to questions 19 and 20. In question 19, 56% of respondents indicated they had received intentional spiritual
mentoring/discipling in spiritual disciplines and 37% indicated they had received intentional spiritual mentoring/discipling in living a missional lifestyle. Also, for question 20, “Receiving mentoring/discipling” was tied for the fourth most mentioned elements that contributed most to the spiritual development of respondents.

4) Questions 14 and 18 ask about the respondent’s sense of calling or role in God’s Kingdom. Answers to both questions were consistent (71% agreed or strongly agreed with question 14 (“I have a strong sense of calling, and I have a pretty good idea of what God wants me to accomplish for his Kingdom.”) and 65% disagreed or strongly disagreed with question 18 (“I attend church regularly and serve in ministry where I can, but I dont yet have a clear sense of how God could use me to further his Kingdom.”).

An interesting observation about question 19 is that the top three most mentioned elements that were a part of the spiritual development of the respondents were regular church attendance (95%), participation in a small group or Sunday school class (87%), and volunteering/serving on a ministry team within a church or para-church ministry. These same three things are what many churches would like to see their people engaged in: regular church attendance, part of a small group, and serving in a ministry. In fact, in many American churches, this is their discipleship process.
Section Three: Correlation of the worship and discipleship data

While looking at the response data to the worship questions and discipleship questions individually is informative, it is when we begin to make correlations between the two that things really get interesting. In order to establish that there is a relationship between discipleship and worship, there should be some noticeably different responses to the worship questions from those who indicated they have been discipled versus those who indicated they have not. Therefore, in this section, we will look at seven correlations between worship and discipleship. We will also examine one correlation between the responses to two discipleship questions and one correlation between the responses to two worship questions. These correlations are not exhaustive. With ten worship questions and ten discipleship questions, there are thousands of potential combinations. The correlations chosen are representative of the consistent nature of the research findings.

To show theses correlations, the responses to each question have been placed on a scatter plot graph. For instance, if a respondent selected a “7” in answer to question 11, and a “2” in answer to question 3, a point is placed on the graph at 7 on the “x” axis and 2 on the “y” axis. A trend line plotted across the average of the responses shows the correlation between the responses to the two questions. The steeper the trend line, the stronger the correlation.
Correlation #1: Questions 11 and 3

For the first correlation, in Figure 19, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicate that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have never had a spiritual mentor,” were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “What happens during worship has a greater impact on my engagement than what has happened in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship.” In other words, my research suggests that those who have not been discipled may be slightly more dependent upon something inside a worship event to engage them in worship.
Correlation #2: Questions 15 and 3

In Figure 20, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have had others pour into my life,” were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “What happens during worship has a greater impact on my engagement than what has happened in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship.” My research suggests that those who have been discipled may be somewhat less dependent on something inside a worship event to engage them in worship.

Figure 20 – Correlation #2: Questions 15 and 3
**Correlation #3: Questions 14 and 7**

In Figure 21, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have a strong sense of calling, and I have a pretty good idea of what God wants me to accomplish for his Kingdom,” were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “What happens in my life *outside* or in the time leading up to worship has a greater impact on my engagement in worship than what happens *during* worship.” In other words, my research suggests that those who are confident about their calling and role in God’s Kingdom are less likely to be dependent on something that occurs *during* the worship event to engage them in worship. This could be because they are experiencing God’s activity in their life and in their own times of personal worship throughout the week.

*Figure 21 - Correlation #3: Questions 14 and 7*
Correlation #4: Questions 17 and 7

In Figure 22, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The discipling/mentoring I have received has helped me develop in the area of spiritual disciplines as well as in how to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others,” were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “What happens in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship has a greater impact on my engagement in worship than what happens during worship.” My research suggests that those who have been discipled to live a missional lifestyle and to disciple others—joining God in his mission—may be less likely to depend on something that occurs during the worship event to engage them in worship. Joining God on mission may be fueling their worship.
**Correlation #5: Questions 13 and 3**

In Figure 23, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The discipling/mentoring I have received has been primarily in the area of spiritual disciplines but it has not equipped me for missional living or to disciple others,” were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “What happens during worship has a greater impact on my engagement than what has happened in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship.” My research suggests that those who have specifically been discipled to live a missional lifestyle are less dependent on something that occurs to engage them in worship (see Correlation #4), while those who have only been discipled in spiritual disciplines may be much more reliant on the worship event (shown below).

*Figure 23 - Correlation #5: Questions 13 and 3*
Correlation #6: Questions 17 and 1

In Figure 24, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The discipling/mentoring I have received has helped me develop in the area of spiritual disciplines as well as in how to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others,” were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “I often find it difficult at first to engage in worship because of the distractions and/or busyness of life.” My research suggests that those who have specifically been discipled to live a missional lifestyle may be less prone to distractions and may find it easier to engage in worship.

Figure 24 - Correlation #6: Questions 17 and 1
Correlation #6: Questions 11 and 1

In Figure 25, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have never had a spiritual mentor,” were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “I often find it difficult at first to engage in worship because of the distractions and/or busyness of life.” My research suggests that those who have not had a spiritual mentor may have a more difficult time engaging in worship than those who have had intentional spiritual mentoring or discipling.

Figure 25 - Correlation #6: Questions 11 and 1
Correlation #7: Questions 16 and 6

In Figure 26, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “God is currently using me in the life of at least one unsaved person to help them take steps toward faith in Jesus,” were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “Because I regularly experience God using me to accomplish his mission during the week, there is rarely anything that can keep me from engaging in worshiping Him.” My research suggests that those who are engaged in evangelism may be less likely to be distracted from engaging in worship.

Figure 26 - Correlation #7: Questions 16 and 6
Correlation #8: Questions 17 and 16

For Correlation #8, I thought it might be interesting to look at the correlation between the responses to two discipleship questions. In Figure 27, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The discipling/mentoring I have received has helped me develop in the area of spiritual disciplines as well as in how to live a missional lifestyle and how to disciple others,” were very likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “God is currently using me in the life of at least one unsaved person to help them take steps toward faith in Jesus.” My research suggests that those who have been discipled to live a missional lifestyle may be much more likely to be used by God to help at least one unsaved person take steps toward faith in Jesus.

Figure 27 - Correlation #8: Questions 17 and 16
Correlation #9: Questions 1 and 3

For the final correlation, we will look at the correlation between the responses to two worship questions. In Figure 28, the light blue trend line shows the average of the responses and indicates that those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I often find it difficult at first to engage in worship because of the distractions and/or busyness of life,” were very likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “What happens during worship has a greater impact on my engagement than what has happened in my life outside or in the time leading up to worship.” My research suggests that those who find it difficult to engage in worship because of distractions or busyness may be more likely to be dependent on something during the worship event to engage them in worship.

Figure 28 - Correlation #9: Questions 1 and 3
CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

Summary of Study

In March of 2009, my wife and I planted a church in Newnan, Georgia, together with another couple. The church was focused around the concepts of discipleship and mission rather than the more attractional model with which we were most familiar. As we took our fledgling congregation through a study on missional, incarnational living, I noticed that it affected our worship. It affected my worship. Our God somehow became bigger and more real to us the more we stepped in to join him in his mission. The excitement we felt over God using us to see people take steps toward faith in Jesus and helping other believers learn how to join God’s mission spilled over into our times of worship and singing. Because of that experience, I believe that discipling people into a missional lifestyle has tremendous implications on how people engage in worship through singing.

With this study, I wanted to see if my hypotheses were correct. Are those who have been discipled to join God in his mission less dependent on what occurs inside of a worship event to engage in worship? Are those who have not been discipled more dependent on what occurs inside of a worship event to engage in worship? Is it possible that discipling people to engage in God’s mission can lead to worship renewal? My research seeks to answer these questions by showing the cause and effect relationship between worship and discipleship. Specifically, it compares the experiences in worship of those who have been discipled to live a missional lifestyle with those who have not.
Summary of Purpose

From conferences, seminars and degree programs to books, blogs and magazines, there are many excellent resources on the market today for worship pastors and worship leaders. In one way or another, each of these resources endeavors to enhance the value and practice of worship within the local church. Some resources are intended to equip those who lead worship so they can plan services and lead worship ministries more effectively. Other resources speak to the need of worship renewal by incorporating ancient practices, multisensory components, or a greater understanding of the theology of worship. In any case, most of the resources available concerning worship and worship renewal focus on improving the worship event as a means of ushering in a renewal of worship in the Church.

Any attempt at worship renewal through improving the worship event and those who lead them is not only valid, but necessary. However, just as worship encompasses so much more than music, the renewal of worship must encompass more than the worship event. With all the books, conferences, degree programs and internet-based tools available, worship leaders today have more resources at their fingertips than at any time in history. Yet with all of these resources, training, and tools, participation in worship through singing continues to decline in our evangelical churches. At the same time, many pastors of churches that appear to be successful because they are drawing large crowds to their services on Sundays are beginning to ask themselves tough questions. Is what we are doing really making a difference in people’s lives? Are we making disciples? I believe that lack of clarity on discipleship in the Church is directly tied to the decline in worship participation through singing.
The purpose of this study is to show that worship renewal through discipleship is not only possible, it is probable. In fact, discipleship is at least as big a part of the solution leading to worship renewal as efforts focused on the worship event itself. This study seeks to quantify and explain through research that which our church plant experienced nearly ten years ago. As we led our congregation to join God in his mission, it deeply affected our times of worship through singing. As we lived like missionaries engaged in God’s mission throughout the week, our times of worship and singing became more meaningful because God had become bigger and more real to us than ever before. This study seeks to show the cause and effect relationship between discipleship and worship.

Summary of Procedure

After originally considering a more qualitative approach to research through interviews with worship pastors and worship leaders regarding worship experiences and their church’s discipleship strategies, I decided that an anonymous survey or questionnaire would be a far better means of gathering data. Additionally, rather than targeting only worship pastors or worship leaders, the research sample was broadened to include anyone who attends worship regularly. Since my research seeks to show the relationship between worship and discipleship, the questionnaire asked questions in both areas.

Respondents were asked the same ten questions about their typical experiences during worship and the same ten questions regarding their discipleship background. Of each set of ten questions, eight were quantitative in nature with respondents asked to agree or disagree with a statement with a scaled response from 0—strongly disagree—to
10—strongly agree. An additional multiple choice question in each subject provided additional quantitative data, and one short answer question in each subject provided some limited qualitative data regarding the subject matter. The questionnaire was posted using the online survey tool Typeform (www.typeform.com) and distributed electronically via email and social media. In total, 167 respondents submitted completed questionnaires. Raw data from the questionnaires was exported from Typeform into a spreadsheet and organized into charts and graphs showing the breakdown of responses. Data from the two areas of worship and discipleship was treated first independently then correlated to determine the relationship between discipleship and worship. If my hypotheses were correct, there would be noticeably different responses regarding worship experiences between those who indicated they had been discipled and those who indicated they had not.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

Of those surveyed, 26 percent agreed or strongly agreed (16% and 10%, respectively) with the statement “I have never had a spiritual mentor (one-on-one or one-on-few) (see Figure 10). In correlating the data and comparing responses between those who indicated they have been discipled and those who have not, my research appears to show that there is a strong relationship between worship and discipleship. People who have not had a spiritual mentor appear to be more dependent on what happens inside of a worship event to engage in worship (see Figure 19). At the same time, those who have had a spiritual mentor appear to be less dependent on what happens inside of a worship event (see Figure 20).
My research also differentiates between two types of discipleship. Many people use the term *discipleship* to refer to learning the spiritual disciplines like studying the Bible, developing a prayer life, or addressing character or integrity issues. That is certainly a very important part of discipleship, but it is not a complete picture. Discipleship is about both character and competency—becoming like Jesus both his character and in the things he did, his mission. My research seems to indicate that those who had only been discipled in spiritual disciplines but not in how to join God in his mission appeared to be more dependent on what happens *inside* of a worship event to engage in worship than those who have been discipled to join God in his mission. They also appear to be less likely to be distracted during worship *(see Figure 24)*.

My research appears to be unique as I was unable to find any literature that attempts to quantify the relationship between discipleship and worship. As has already been discussed, there are many excellent resources on both discipleship and worship, but none that draw a connection between the two. The Transformational Discipleship research study by LifeWay Research is perhaps the most exhaustive study on discipleship to date. Yet, nowhere in the study does it discuss implications for worship. Similarly, the *American Congregations 2015* study by Faith Communities Today and other studies by both Pew Research Center and LifeWay Research regarding worship practices in today’s churches are beneficial in identifying trends, yet they offer no solutions for worship renewal.

There are many books on discipleship and mission that call the church back to her mission. *Real Life Discipleship* by Jim Putman, *Building a Discipling Culture* by Mike Breen, and *Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt which are included in my literature review are
some of the most recent and prominent books available. As excellent as these and other books on discipleship and mission are, very little, if anything, is said about the implications for worship. Similarly, there are many excellent books on worship that call for worship renewal. *Worship Old & New* by Robert Webber, *Emerging Worship* by Dan Kimball, *Worship Matters* by Bob Kauflin and *The Great Commission to Worship* by Vernon Whaley and David Wheeler are excellent books on worship and worship renewal. Of these resources, *The Great Commission to Worship* makes the strongest connection between being engaged in God’s mission and the implications for worship. My study seeks to quantify these implications through research.

**Limitations**

The research projects cited in the literature review have career experts in research conducting their research over many months with samples of tens of thousands of people. These experts know how to craft research questions so that they are clear, concise and yield the desired results. They also know how to design the entire study including methods to gauge consistency of responses and other means to measure validity. My experience in this field is limited to an Individual Appraisal class, a counseling course on psychological testing such as the Myers-Briggs, DISC, etc., that I took twenty-three years ago. As such, I was careful in my wording to avoid concrete statements in favor of terms such as “appears to show” or “may be more likely to…”

Although I do not know the names of those who completed the questionnaire, I suspect that many of those who make up the sample are involved in worship ministry. I distributed the survey electronically to people whom I have known in seven churches across six different states. Respondents were encouraged to distribute the link to the
questionnaire as well. Eleven respondents specifically mentioned involvement in a worship ministry or their relationship with a worship pastor as one of the top two or three contributors to their spiritual growth and development. Additionally, 88 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (42% and 46%, respectively) with the statement “I enjoy music so I find it easy to engage in worship.” Suffice it to say, my sample may have a higher affinity toward music than the average church member and may be more likely to be involved in worship ministry. The size of my sample is also a limiting factor. As cited earlier, many research projects involve sample sizes numbering in the tens of thousands. In addition, I allowed the raw data to speak for itself. I did not perform any statistical analysis of the data to scientifically declare the results as significant or not. At the same time, the results of my research with only 167 people seem far from inconclusive.

Recommendations for Future Study

There are two subjects about the Church that seem to garner the most attention especially in blogs and on the conference circuits: worship and discipleship. Nearly every week, I see another article or blog post about the decline of congregational participation in singing and the potential causes. At the same time, everyone seems to be talking about discipleship. Unfortunately, everyone seems to have a different idea of what it looks like and how it is accomplished, but at least churches and leaders are seeing the need to return to the Great Commission to make disciples.

In tackling this project, I must confess that I feel a little like David and Goliath. There are two huge giants facing the church today—worship renewal and a renewed focus on making disciples. I believe the two issues are interrelated. In some ways, the
Church has tried to increase the value and practice of discipleship through focusing on having better worship services. However, I believe the research available today and as cited in my literature review show that approach to be ineffective. We need a powerhouse of Christian research such as LifeWay Research to tackle the subject. They could put their expert resources into designing a scientifically validated but similar questionnaire on discipleship and worship. With the resources at their disposal, they could survey tens or even hundreds of thousands. With a larger sample size and statistical analysis, I believe the results may be even more clear-cut.

Conclusion

For too long, we have operated under the assumption that if we just had better worship services, we would have better Christians. If we infuse our worship services with better theology, more scripture readings, sprinkle some liturgy, use more creativity, and pray more, people will leave our services and live more like Christ throughout the week. This strategy of discipleship through worship renewal has not worked. It is time to flip it around and pursue worship renewal through discipleship. If we continue to focus only on the one hour worship event and fail to address the remaining 167 hours of the week outside the worship event, our efforts toward worship renewal will continue to fall short. Churches that are serious about engaging their people during worship through singing must get serious about engaging their people in God’s mission.

The worship of God’s people has always been fueled by God’s mighty acts, his wondrous deeds. The first song lyrics recorded in the Bible in Exodus 15 recount God’s mighty acts in delivering Israel out of Egypt. Psalm 145 written by King David repeatedly speaks to the role that recounting God’s mighty acts plays in worship.
reason our worship services lack passion and participation is that Christians are not
experiencing God’s mighty acts for themselves. It is time for churches to engage people
in God’s mission. When we do so, God becomes larger and more real to us. Then our
people will say:

1I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.
2Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. 3Great
is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.
4One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare
your mighty acts. 5On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your
wondrous works, I will meditate. 6They shall speak of the might of your
awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. 7They shall pour forth
the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your
righteousness. 8The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and
abounding in steadfast love. 9The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is
over all that he has made. 10All your works shall give thanks to you, O
Lord, and all your saints shall bless you! 11They shall speak of the glory of
your kingdom and tell of your power, 12to make known to the children of
man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
13Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures
throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind
in all his works. 14The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all
who are bowed down. 15The eyes of all look to you and you give them their
food in due season. 16You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every
living thing. 17The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his
works. 18The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in
truth. 19He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry
and saves them. 20The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked
he will destroy. 21My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all
flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.”

Psalm 145 (ESV)
References


"Music Education: Developing Musical Skills is Key to Congregational Singing." (Pastoral Music) 28 (February 2004): 47, 49.


