

Abstract

Title – The Impact of Lyric Choices on Spiritual Edification

Program of Study – Doctorate of Worship Studies

Presentation Type – **Choose one of the following:** Oral Presentation & Three Minute Thesis

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Abstract example: Modern Christian worship music has gained influence within the evangelical community. The words of these songs, sung corporately, have the potential to influence the spiritual lives of church congregants, making it important for worship leaders and songwriters to identify the most beneficial lyrics. Despite numerous opinions about theological and personally relevant lyrics, little research has been conducted on the spiritual effects of lyric content within congregational worship music. Diminutive scholarly inquiry has been limited to historical, theological or qualitative methodologies. Utilizing the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and the Spiritual Transcendence Index (STI), this quantitative quasi-experimental study employed a pre-test, post-test design to determine whether worship lyrics, in general, led to stronger perceptions of spiritual edification and if lyrics that are emotional and theologically integrated led to stronger perceptions of spiritual edification than lyrics that are either emotionally or theologically driven. The study attempted to identify lyric choices that promote strong personal perceptions of spiritual edification in the lives of worshipping evangelical believers between the ages of 18-21 years of age who attend a large university in the Mid-Atlantic United States. The results showed a statistically significant difference in spiritual edification according to worship lyrics in general. In addition, there was a statistically significant difference in spiritual edification using integrated

driven lyrics, when compared with emotional lyrics. However, there was no significant difference between an integrated and theological lyric approach. The results suggest that the worship songs believers sing aid in enlightenment and that there is merit in integrating both relational and theological components, within worship lyrics, as a means for increasing spiritual edification.

Christian worldview integration: As a Christ follower and worship leader, my convictions have played a large role in informing the design of my research and the implications I believe it has on both the doxology and praxeology of worship. The Westminster Shorter Catechism asserts, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” As believers, worship is a command as well as a delight. God graciously allows our living sacrifice of pleasing worship to Him to also transform our minds and our lives (Romans 12:1-2). Through my studies, I have discerned minor doctrinal divisions pertaining to the way believers worship God through singing, specifically on the topic of lyric content. There are many credible theologians and historians, with well supported, yet varied opinions about this topic. I first began this study, for personal reasons, wanting to settle my thoughts as to the songs I should be singing during my personal worship. As a Christ follower, I needed to determine my convictions on the topic. However, I have come to see a greater implication in the importance of these findings, as the words evangelical believers sing to the Lord, not only serve as glorifying God, but also have the capacity for aiding in emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and transcendent elevation, supporting what the scriptures confirm: The worship of God produces spiritual edification in the life of the believer. In light of this, I believe the results of this study are useful in helping the church, at large, engage with meaningful songs that produce more spiritual maturity within the congregations of their churches.