

UNITED HISPANIC CONGREGATIONS IN WORSHIP OF CHRIST

By

Ronald Alexis Carias Lopez

Liberty University

A MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC AND WORSHIP

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## Acknowledgments

I accepted Christ as my savior on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004; exactly one day before turning 15 years old. About 6 months after my conversion, God gave me a prophecy through an evangelist, whose last name was Silvestre. He said, “God has told me to tell you that you will become a musician and you will serve Him as a bridge for many youths who will come to Him.” About a year later, I was at a youth retreat and a thirteen-year-old boy came to me and prophesied over me saying, “I see a large number of young believers and I see you ministering to them.” Years later with my parent’s support, Jose and Maria Carias, I was able to come to United States and study music professionally. As soon as I graduated with a bachelor’s degree in classical music and music education, God put a burning desire in my heart to study music and worship at Liberty University where I have had the opportunity to be mentored by great men and women of God such as Dr. Vernon Whaley, Dr. Rodney Whaley Dr. Gary Mathena, Dr. David Hahn, Dr. Thomas Seel, Dr. Linsey Graham, Dr. Kimberly Martin, Dr. Daniel Suttles, Dr. Keith Currie, Dr. Donald Ellsworth, Don Marsh, and Pastor Moises Gomez, my onsite supervisor for my ministry project. Through all this process and educational journey, I have been accompanied by the most beautiful and God-fearing woman, Lesley Sanchez Carias; whom I am very grateful to be married to. Her unconditional support and ability to embrace our call to worship has allowed me to remain on task as we prepare for ministry. To all those men and women of God mentioned above, I give thanks from the bottom of my heart. Their disposition to serve our Lord and do as He says allowed me to hear God’s directions and teachings to remain firm on my faith and calling. Lastly, but not least, I would like to praise and give thanks to our God. We serve a faithful God, who fulfills His promises and whose mercies endure forever. He is the one who is

to come as King, the only one worthy to break the seals and open the scrolls, our Savior, our Lord. To Him be all the glory, honor, and praise; in Jesus name I pray, amen.

### **ABSTRACT**

This project is a direct response to the evident need for music ministers and worship that is relevant and inspiring in our local congregations. By visiting and serving local churches over the last 13 years, I have noticed that many churches do not have a complete worship team. They sing the same old songs from past generations, and most of them do not use visual media to improve one's worship experience. Whether this need has been caused by lack of leadership, planning, vision, faith, disposition, lack of musical ability, openness to remain relevant to society, and lack of Biblical knowledge and worship principles; this project-based thesis will provide ministers resources that will be of great help for any ministry or minister looking to improve or develop their worship. This study, experience and detailed explanation to carry out a seasonal worship project will model the process and theological approach to a worship ministry. It will also help worship ministries by providing them theological basis and biblical principles that highlight the Church's responsibility to worship God with sincere hearts and musical excellence. Ministers who read my study will also learn about forms of worship found in the old and new testament, guidance to develop and put together a worship team, and advice to properly lead a seasonal project. For practical reasons, this project-based thesis will focus on Easter, but the methodology, process and execution of such can be applied to any other worship and music ministry project. Circumstances may vary from church to church, and so readers must take what is applicable to their situation and apply it accordingly to improve their services in the body of Christ.

## Chapter 1: Exemplary Worship

Music and worship directed to God have been part of God’s revelation to humanity since the beginning of creation. In fact, the most visual revelation of heaven given to mankind depicts a scene of intimate and inspiring worship in which God is worshipped with a truth-based lyrical poem, physical demonstrations, incense, and musical instruments (harps). Such revelation was given to apostle John after a lifelong relationship with God. The apostle John’s vision of heaven depicts living beings singing a lyrical poem that reads: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”<sup>1</sup> John also testifies the following:

“The twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne. And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.’”<sup>2</sup>

John continues the narrative of his vision and said that right after the Lamb took the scroll from the right hand of God

The twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.’<sup>3</sup>

God’s revelation to the apostle John is the perfect example of what worship is. In genuine worship, there is first a confession of faith and understanding of who God is, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, who was, and is, and is to come.” The confession of faith is preceded by physical

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<sup>1</sup> Rev 4: 8 NIV

<sup>2</sup> Rev 4: 11 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Rev 5: 8-10 NIV

demonstrations and worthy offerings as they lay their crowns before the throne, prostrate before Him, play harps, and sing. It is very important to understand that the individuals involved in John's vision are indeed in one mind and spirit, and their physical demonstrations of worship are a result of a unifying understanding of God. In the elder's mind, there is no doubt about who deserves the honor and glory. They have a clear understanding that everything they have and do is meant to be laid at the feet of Jesus, for they know that everything they are is meant to glorify the Lamb who was slain.

There is another wonderful example of excellent genuine worship in the Bible which we can learn from, and it is found in 2 Chronicles. King Solomon, David's son and successor, had finished building the temple, and he decided to bring everything that belonged to God to the temple, including the Ark of the Covenant. The author wrote:

When all the work Solomon had done for the temple of the Lord was finished, he brought in the things his father David had dedicated: the silver and gold and all the furnishings; and he placed them in the treasuries of God's temple. Then Solomon summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the Lord's covenant from Zion, the City of David. The Levitical priest and King Salomon and the entire assembly of Israel were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their son [were] dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God. (2 Chronicles 5:1-14 NIV)

What a wonderful, powerful, life changing, and innovative worship experience Israel had. Solomon organized a full orchestra to worship God with thanksgiving, for God had fulfilled His promise to allow them to build the temple which would be His house, the house for the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant represented the

presence of God to the Israelites. It accompanied them from battle to battle as they were pursuing their calling to conquer their promised land. Now that God had allowed them to establish their Kingdom, Solomon and Israel had a significant reason to celebrate and worship Yahweh. According to 1 Chronicles 23:5, there were “four thousand Levites to praise the Lord with the musical instruments [David] had provided for that purpose.”<sup>4</sup> Although most of the musical concepts and resources to build the temple were collected and planned by David, God chose David’s son, Solomon, to build the temple. Solomon demonstrated great wisdom and ability to use resources properly, and his obedience to God was crucial for God’s purpose to be worshipped by His people and continue to be glorified among them.

Unfortunately, despite of witnessing the glory of God so evidently, Israel was not able to keep a genuine relationship with God as their worship of Yahweh became polluted with idols. The people of Israel became lukewarm in their walk with God and it soon reflected in their worship/obedience to God and His redemption plan. God’s instruction to Israel was for them to destroy pagan’s altars, but Israel did not listen. Judges 2: 11 and 12, says that “Israel served the images of Baal. They went after other gods, worshiping the gods of the people around them.”<sup>5</sup> Their worship became so profane that God confronted them saying the following through the last prophet Israel heard, the prophet Malachi:

A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the Lord Almighty. It is your priests who show contempt, [despise]<sup>6</sup>, for my name. But you ask, how have we shown contempt for your name? By offering defiled, [polluted]<sup>7</sup>, food on my altar. But you ask,

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Ch 23: 5 NIV

<sup>5</sup> Judges 2:11-12 NLT

<sup>6</sup> Malachi 6: 1 NKJV

<sup>7</sup> Malachi 1:7 NKJV



How have we defiled you? By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? Says the Lord Almighty... I am not pleased with you, and I will accept no offering from your hands. My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord Almighty. But you profane it by saying, "The Lord's table is defiled, and its food is contemptible and you say, 'What a burden!'" (Malachi 1:6-12 NIV)

The wonderful worship event described by John in the book of Revelation and the beautiful relationship between Israel and God witnessed in Solomon's orchestrated worship to Yahweh when dedicating the Temple was far from what Israel was offering God during Malachi's time. Israel's worship to the Lord was perceived by them as a burden and was certainly unacceptable to God. They became so used to worship in a lukewarm manner that when God rejected their worship, they got surprised their worship was not accepted. Today we need to ask ourselves the following question: How acceptable to God is our worship? What do we see or experience worship to be like in our local congregations? Is our worship heaven-like worship as the one John saw in his vision? Is our worship like the orchestrated worship Solomon offered God in thanksgiving for His faithfulness? Is the presence of the Lord so tangible in our worship that we are experiencing the Holy Spirit work in us as we thankfully-surrender our lives to Christ? The presence of the Lord was so tangible in Solomon's worship offering, that God took over the rest of the service and ministered to His people. How wonderful! How life changing worship can be!

### **The Worship Crisis in Local Congregations**

Lamentably, that life changing worship experience offered by Solomon and Israel is rarely occurring in our local congregations. We are experiencing a worship crisis in many of our local churches. Far from having a fruitful, relevant, and inspiring worship team; the majority of

local churches are struggling to find enough musicians to put a band together and their congregations are constantly declining in numbers. Our inability to develop our worship ministry is causing the local church more harm than what we would like to admit. Thankfully, there are some small, some large, and some mega churches growing and worshiping in spirit and in truth; with lives being transformed. Churches who are worshiping in spirit and truth are offering acceptable worship to God, and His presence is tangible among them. They labor and pursue God's call without considering it a burden. They are gaining significant terrain as some of them attempt to influence and reach the masses. Even famous artists and politicians are confessing Christ as Lord and Savior as a direct result of their outreach and community services and contributions to society. Sadly, some local churches keep losing ground and credibility in our local communities. Where did our David-like plan and vision go? Churches that are over ten and sometimes twenty years old have failed to develop a Biblically founded worship team. Where did our Solomon-like organizational skills go? We have older churches with a significant amount of people willing to learn and serve the Lord in ministry, but there is no organization to educate and unite the body to make a significant impact in our communities. Churches with enough resources to send their young generations to study music and worship to learn how to develop homegrown qualified and spirit-filled worship teams, miss the opportunity to reap a harvest as they refused to invest in God's people. It is evident that in many of our churches, we are offering God blind animals for sacrifice. Are we and church leaders consuming the bread that belongs to the house of the Lord and misusing resources? Are we dishonoring the name of the Lord like Israel did?

## Statement of Purpose

This project-based thesis is a direct response to our pressing disfunction and is intended to help local churches and ministries regain their desire and faith to serve the Lord with excellence and sincere hearts. I will provide biblical principles, resources, strategies, and outreach plans that will facilitate the development of relevant and inspiring worship ministries and projects in our local congregations. The value in carrying out a worship project like this, in which I use my own finances and resources, is to be able to convince and demonstrate local congregations and ministers of their ability to do the same or even better with more resources and facilities. In this study, I will develop and explain in detail the process to carry out a ministry project. For practical reasons, this project-based thesis will focus on Easter, but the methodology, process, and execution of such can be applied to any other worship-ministry project. The project components to be developed are the following:

- What is the theological basis to celebrate Easter?
- What is worship?
- How can we properly prepare and plan for an Easter worship night?
- What resources are needed and how do we maximize resources?
- How can we make our worship experience inspiring and relevant to our community?
- What equipment is needed, and how do we budget for it?
- How can recording and filming a seasonal Christian worship night help us spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

## Chapter 2: Basis and Resources to Celebrate Easter

Dr. Vernon M. Whaley, in his book entitled, “*Called to Worship*” states the following truth, “Every time God reveals Himself to man, an expression of worship follows. Worship is the normal and natural response to God’s presence.”<sup>8</sup> The greatest revelation of God to humanity was given through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Not only did God fulfill His promises in Christ, which certifies His divinity, but God also took the form of a man and lived among us in perfect obedience to His Word. In Jesus, we witnessed the perfect example of a worship-based relationship with our Creator. God’s revelation through Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection should in every form produce in us authentic worship. Are we worshipping in response?

If Jesus Christ would have never been born or resurrected from the dead, Yahweh’s story of creation and redemption plan for humanity would have been found untruthful and become nothing but a fiction tale of a god. But it was not the case, God in fact sent His son, the promised Savior, to die for humanity and rose Him from the dead. Jesus is alive and He sits at the right hand of the Father.<sup>9</sup> Jesus is now worshipped by millions around the world. His life, crucifixion and resurrection became the most powerful and life changing event that humanity will ever experience. Dr. John L. Drury, on his dissertation entitled, “The Resurrected God: Karl Barth’s Trinitarian Theology of Easter,” said the following regarding Easter:

The central focus of the living God's self- disclosure is *the resurrection of the crucified Jesus Christ*. In the Easter event, God is once for all revealed as the living God and the God of the living. In this event, God reveals himself as the Father who raised Jesus Christ from the dead; as the Son who was raised, who arises, and who will be present even to the end of the age; and as the Holy Spirit by whom the Father raised Jesus Christ, in whose

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<sup>8</sup> Vernon M. Whaley. *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 49

<sup>9</sup> Mk. 16:19 NIV

power Jesus Christ arises, and in whose promise Jesus Christ is present. The God who acts in the Easter event is the living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

Isn't it magnificent? Although God continues to reveal Himself to us individually, His greatest revelation and demonstration of divinity was through Christ, our Lord and Savior. Consequently, I must ask, how much greater should our obedience be than that of those who worshipped God before Christ? We have been privileged to live during a time when God's greatest promise has already been fulfilled. God's greatest revelation to humanity has already been given. He has ransomed us and we have been empowered by His Spirit to do His will and so live in a worship-based relationship with our Creator. Therefore, it is our responsibility as the body of Christ to celebrate the faithfulness of our God and the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ in obedience, with sincere hearts, and excellent service to God and His people. As worship ministers, we must worship Him in spirit and truth and with excellent music for He is worthy of all honor, glory, and excellence. He is not to be given defiled worship for He will reject it just as He rejected Israel's through the prophet Malachi. God's Word in the book of Hebrews 10: 26-30 says:

Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. For we know the one who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The Lord will judge his own people."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John L. Drury. *The Resurrected God: Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology of Easter* (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary) accessed March 6, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/912739019?pq-origsite=summon>.

<sup>11</sup> Heb. 10: 26-30 NLT

Knowing God's expectations, the apostle Paul, in his epistle written to the Ephesian church, calls us to be imitators of Christ. He said, "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."<sup>12</sup> He also wrote to the Philippian church and said,

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.<sup>13</sup>

If the Son of God took a humble position to worship in obedience and sacrificed for God's commission, we are called to do the same. So how can we worship so authentically?

John M. Frame in his book entitled "*Worship in Spirit and Truth*," when teaching about the definitions of worship in the Holy Scriptures, categorizes worship in two groups of Hebrew and Greek words. According to Mr. Frame, "The first group refers to "labor" or "service". The second group of terms means literally "bowing" or "bending" the knee, hence paying homage, honoring the worth of someone else."<sup>14</sup> It is evident that worshipping God will require us to labor. Good intentions do not transform into works if we do not act. The apostle Paul, the most prolific missionary of the Christian faith, in an attempt to disciple the church in Corinth and teach them to worship by serving, wrote the following:

Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from

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<sup>12</sup> Eph. 5:1-3 NLT

<sup>13</sup> Php. 2:6-8 NLT

<sup>14</sup> John M. Frame. *Worship in Spirit and Truth: A refreshing study of the principles and practice of biblical worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Published by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1996), 1

rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches.<sup>15</sup> So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.<sup>16</sup>

It is evidently that God is expecting us to worship Him by serving Him and His church.

Sunday worship, Easter and any other Christian holiday are a great opportunity for us to go above and beyond in our celebration of God's revelation to humanity. We may also use our worship events to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ by evangelizing our communities. A ministry project, like the one I am carrying out, allows us to share about the good news of salvation and the faithfulness of our living God with others. It allows us to serve those who need us as we discover brothers and sisters in need. While reaching out to different churches for this ministry project, I have found new brothers and sisters in Christ who needed someone to guide them to become better worshippers, ministers, and leaders. I have also reconnected with brothers and sisters who I have not served or seen in many years. This project has given me and those who are with me a strong sense of community. It reminded us that Christianity is not about ourselves or self-development but about serving and developing others. Certainly, God has promised to bless those who work for Him for when Jesus taught His disciples about serving, he told them:

And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou hast been good and faithful over a few things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Co. 11:24-28 NLT

<sup>16</sup> 1 Co. 15: 58 NLT

<sup>17</sup> Mt. 25:20-21 KJV

On the other hand, the second definition of worship pertains to bowing down in reverence and recognition of “someone superior to ourselves.”<sup>18</sup> It pertains to spiritual acts such as coming before God with a repentant and thankful heart; this kind of worship is not about physical works. The greatest musician and worship minister, in the Old Testament, king David, wrote:

Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.<sup>19</sup>

The more we know about our Father and His ways, the better we will worship Him and serve His people. To worship God in Spirit and Truth means to work for God and His kingdom with a contrite heart and spirit. We must fully depend on His love, grace, and power which will guide us through every trial and circumstance. We must labor arduously to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12, “And so brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice, the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.”<sup>20</sup> Lastly, a genuine contrite heart before God, will produce good works of faith. James 2:14 and 17 says, “What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ... faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.”<sup>21</sup> So, brothers and sisters, we must work for our Lord with faithfulness in the area of music, worship, and evangelism. Local congregations should not be

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<sup>18</sup> John M. Frame, *“Worship in Spirit and Truth,”* 2

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 51:15-17 NLT

<sup>20</sup> Ro. 12:1 NIV

<sup>21</sup> Jas. 2:14, 17 NLT



suffering in this area of service. Congregational worship is the time when people physically, spiritually, and emotionally praise and glorify God for His goodness. But how can they praise with such liberty if they can't help but be distracted by our unorganized, lacking, and dysfunctional worship ministries? It is definitely not the congregation's fault but ours as leaders. We have failed to invest in our ministries, and we have failed to give God our best; perhaps we are offering Him a blind animal. Most local churches are suffering in this area and no one seems to care or even notice. This should alarm us for the Word of God says, "The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like total darkness. They have no idea what they are stumbling over."<sup>22</sup>

There are several books, in addition to God's Word, that have helped me understand the meaning and importance of excellent worship to God, and I would like to enlist them below for your reference as you attempt to carry out a ministry project that will honor and glorify God, bless you and all those under your influence, and evangelize your community. Each source will be followed by a brief summary so that you can refer to each as needed. These books, dissertations, and trade journals were written by professional worship leaders, the majority of them are professors and worship ministers who have devoted their lives to God and the Great Commission. It is this passion for God and commitment to their calling that led them to devote years, and for some decades, to develop a Biblical understanding of what it means to worship God in Spirit, truth, and musical excellence. Below please find a list of relevant sources to develop a worship ministry project in our congregations, communities, and personal ministries.

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<sup>22</sup>

Pr. 4:18-19 NLT

## Relevant Sources

*“Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen”* by Dr. Vernon M. Whaley. In his book, Dr. Whaley uses the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation to teach the following Biblical truth, “Every time God reveals Himself to man, an expression of worship follows. Worship is the normal and natural response to God’s presence.”<sup>23</sup> He examines principles of worship learned from the lives of spiritual leaders who responded to God’s revelation in worship. Among these men you will find Abraham, Moses, Joshua, prophet Samuel, king David, king Solomon, prophet Elijah, king Jehoshaphat, Jahaziel the musician, Nehemiah, Ezra the priest, the sons of Korah, Asaph, Job, and the perfect worshipper Jesus Christ, among others. They all responded to God in worship for they obeyed God’s call and commission. Although the only perfect example of a worshipper among all of them is Jesus, for He is God,<sup>24</sup> who in perfect obedience to his Father gave Himself in ransom for many,<sup>25</sup> other men mentioned genuinely worshipped God by giving their best even in weaknesses and God received their worship. They had a repentant heart and were fully committed to God’s commission as they wholeheartedly depended on God’s power, love, grace, and mercy. This book will inspire you as you learn how each of them worshipped. Above all, it will move you as you learn and understand with more clarity how Jesus our Lord and Savior worshipped God by obeying God’s command to the point of giving his life for others. And when we find ourselves weak, this book will remind us of those exemplary men who remained seeking and trusting God even through the valleys. In Dr. Whaley’s words, “Each of these worshippers was eager to obey

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Whaley, *“Called to Worship,”* 49

<sup>24</sup> Jn. 1:1-4 NIV

<sup>25</sup> Lk. 22:42, Mk. 10:45 NIV

the Lord, because each knew it was critical to worship. It's no less critical today. If we desire to glorify God in deed, then we have to be ready to do what God wants us to do."<sup>26</sup> In addition, Dr. Whaley also teaches about how God revealed Himself to men in each period in time or book of the Bible; it is truly amazing. I highly recommend this book. It will give you a clear understanding of what worship is and how you should respond to God's revelation personally and corporately. It will prepare you for ministry as you carry out a ministry project in response to God's call to worship Him.

*"Worship Old & New"* by Dr. Robert E. Webber. This book is divided in four parts. The first part is The Biblical Foundation of Worship in which Dr. Webber teaches about different forms of worship found in the Old & New testament and early Christian church. According to Dr. Webber this worship-based relationship was initiated at Mount Sinai where and when God took the initiative to meet with Israel. On this occasion, "The Lord agreed to be the God of Israel, and Israel agreed to worship and obey the Lord."<sup>27</sup> Among the forms of worship that Dr. Webber identifies you will find: the reading of the Word of God, obedience to the book of covenant, the sacrifices of the tabernacle, and Davidic worship in which "Levites led the people day and night in praising the Lord through song, musical instruments, and dance."<sup>28</sup> In Dr. Webber's words, "The epicenter for worship with Israel was the central saving event of the Exodus, and with the church it is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ."<sup>29</sup> In the second part of the book, Dr. Webber teaches us and Biblically defines what is worship and how it should be

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<sup>26</sup> Dr. Whaley, "Called to Worship," 217

<sup>27</sup> Robert E. Webber. *Worship Old & New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 22

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 35

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 31

enacted. Dr. Webber defines worship as follow, “Our worship is like heavenly worship in that it centers around Jesus and his work. In worship we “sum up” or “recapitulate” the work of Christ. That one unrepeatable event in history is made real again and again through the power of proclamation (by the Holy Spirit) that confronts us with the reality of new life in Jesus Christ.”<sup>30</sup> In the third part of the book, Dr. Webber teaches about the history of the church from ancient to twenty century worship renewals. In the last part of his book, Dr. Webber teaches about what should be the church form of worship which he draws from his “Biblical, historical, and theological studies.”<sup>31</sup> He suggests specific settings of worship, matter of content, structure, and style of worship; a blend of traditional and contemporary worship.<sup>32</sup> This book is very profound and it would help ministers have a better understanding of Biblical worship.

“*Worship in Spirit and Truth*” by John M. Frame. In this book, Dr. Frame teaches a large variety of biblical worship principles. Although his specialty is not worship, he is a very prolific theologian and this book demonstrates his profound Biblical knowledge. According to Dr. Frame, “There are two groups of Hebrew and Greek terms that are translated worship. The first group refers to labor or service. The second group refers to bowing or bending.”<sup>33</sup> Similar to Dr. Webber, Dr. Frame goes over forms of worship in the Old and New Testament, the order of worship, and the setting of worship. Dr. Frame’s writing has a rational touch, he includes questioning and reasoning as he teaches concepts. One chapter that I would recommend to you is chapter 7. On this chapter, Dr. Frame teaches about emotions in worship. According to Dr.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 68

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 135

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*,” 1

Frame, “Literature on worship, especially in reformed circles, is full of condemnations of emotionalism, especially in the charismatic movement and some other forms of evangelicalism. But there is little in this literature on the positive value of emotions in worship or the emotional content of the Word of God.”<sup>34</sup> In this chapter Dr. Frame explains how God’s Word appeals to our emotions and intellect simultaneously. We cannot separate one from the other. It is imperative that we, as worship leaders, educate ourselves on this matter for it is unnatural and dangerous to rely solely on one or the other. Lastly, Dr. Frame teaches about worshipping God by responding to His Word in prayer which includes repentance, praise, requests, thanksgiving, and confession of faith.

*“The Great Commission to Worship: Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism”*

by David Wheeler and Vernon M. Whaley. In this book, Dr. Wheeler & Dr. Whaley interwove our call to worship and the Great Commission. According to them,

A Great Commission worshipper is a person who is so much in love with Jesus, so committed to worship of Jesus, and so devoted to being obedient to every command of Jesus that he simply cannot restrain himself from telling others about his incredible relationship with the Son of God. A Great Commission worshiper is equally committed to worship and evangelism.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, Dr. Whaley and Dr. Wheeler teach that the Great Commission worship is formational; it will help us develop character and integrity. It is also transformational; as we seek God and preach his Word, the Holy Spirit will transform our lives into worshipers full of vision, hope, and peace. Great Commission worship is also relational; it will lead us to establish genuine relationships with God first, which is our vertical relationship, and then with people, which is our horizontal relationship. In addition, Great Commission worship is missional; it will lead us to

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 77

<sup>35</sup> David Wheeler & Vernon M. Whaley. *The Great Commission to Worship: Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism* ( Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 30

evangelize the unsaved and plant churches. Lastly, Dr. Whaley and Dr. Wheeler teach that a person who is a Great Commission worshiper will have the desire to reproduce himself in others by teaching others to do the same.

*“Pure Praise: A Heart-Focused Bible Study on Worship”* by Dwayne Moore. This book is written in a Bible study devotional style and is divided by weeks. It is easy to read and it covers important concepts such as the reason why we worship, the motivation behind our worship, the methods we use to worship, qualities of leadership, how to utilize resources properly and more. One devotional that resonated with me significantly is “The Mission,” week 8. When teaching about the mission, Mr. Moore encourages musicians to play as good as possible. We must not bring an offering to the Lord that is sickly or deformed. This book could be used to train and educate our worship band. It covers Biblical principles of worship and musical aspects as well. It could be used as a worship band devotional book.

*“Worship Through the Ages”* by Dr. Elmer L. Towns & Vernon M. Whaley. The subtopic for this book is *“How Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship.”* This book has valuable educational content about Christian worship and the music styles that we have utilized over the centuries in our worship services. According to Dr. Towns and Dr. Whaley, most meaningful musical changes in Christian worship have been produced by revivals and awakenings. This book, in addition to teaching us about Christian worship through the ages, it imprints in our hearts the desire to seek God and serve in ministry until we experience a revival. As they wrote,

We want to tell the story of worship so that our sovereign Lord is magnified and exalted. We want to bless readers with the stories, Biblical truths, and worship principles. Perhaps you too will weep as you learn how deeply many of our brothers and sisters in Christ sacrificed in order to advance worship.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Elmer L. Towns & Vernon M. Whaley. *Worship Through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 7

*“Enter His Courts with Praise: Old Testament Worship for The New Testament”* by Andrew E. Hill. In this book, Dr. Hill uses Old Testament worship principles to encourage the practice of these principles in our contemporary Christian worship. Some of these principles are spiritual and others are artistic expressions. Dr. Hill believes we should worship our Lord in an artistic and fresh manner. He said the following, “Aesthetic appreciation was part of the endowment given to humanity created in the image of God for the purpose of artistic expression, along with a creative spirit or imagination (Gen. 1:26).”<sup>37</sup> Art has always displayed the culture of each society. Our worship style will indisputably reflect our cultural traits. Each generation has praised God in their own way, which included elements found in Biblical worship, early Christian history, and innovative elements. This book will spark in us the desire to be innovative and relevant to our culture yet still be biblically founded.

*“God’s Singers: a guide for the Worship Leading Choir”* by Dave Williamson. In this book, Mr. Williamson teaches about four main principles for developing a worship leading choir. These principles are: foundation, relation, education, and celebration. In the first half of his book, Dr. Williamson provides Biblical reasons why is it necessary to practice those four principles and in the second half of his book, he teaches in great detail how to apply them. According to Mr. Williamson, a choir can be categorized as a worship leading choir when they have developed a strong relationship with God and they don’t sing to perform but to worship God with excellence. They are also conscious of their responsibility in the church as worship leaders so they enact worship in a way that leads people to praise and glorify God. Lastly, as brother and sisters, they keep a strong sense of family among them by praying, learning, and worshipping

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<sup>37</sup> Andrew E. Hill. *Enter His Courts with Praise: Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 213

together.<sup>38</sup> “*God’s Singers*” is a great book to read. It will help you become a better worship leader and minister. In it you will find methods for leading and developing a healthy worship choir. You will also learn Biblical principles pertaining to leading worship spiritually and musically.

“*Tips for Tight Teams*” by Sandy Hoffman. In this book, Sandy Hoffman teaches about the essential musical and spiritual practices that will empower and equip worship leaders to develop a Tight Team. This book is ideal for teaching young musicians or new members in our worship ministries. It starts with very basic information about music and ministry responsibilities. Then Mr. Hoffman proceeds to teach Biblical principles regarding our spiritual and musical mission. Mr. Hoffman also emphasizes the need to develop a clear vision in regards to our ministry mission, for it will give us a strong sense of direction. According to Mr. Hoffman “a ministry must be spiritually empowered, relationally engaged, and musically excellent.”<sup>39</sup> Mr. Hoffman also teaches about creating a spiritual and musical experience together. This will occur when we have learned to apply Biblical principles of worship and musical fundamentals properly. He recommends that “we fill the void between worship songs, using interesting, Spirit-inspired verbiage and/or instrumental movement.”<sup>40</sup> This is an excellent book to read when developing a new worship ministry.

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<sup>38</sup> Dave Williamson. *God’s Singers: a Guidebook for the Worship Leading Choir in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Nashville, TN: Published by Worship Leading Choirs International, 2010), 56

<sup>39</sup> Sandy Hoffman. *Tips for Tight Teams: High – Performance Help for Today’s Worship Musician*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2012), 14

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 69



## Conclusion

It is imperative that we, as worship leaders, ministers, and pastors, educate ourselves in the discipline of music and worship. A significant number of Christian congregations have neglected this valuable and unreplaceable ministry. As a direct result, there are several local congregations whose worship is in tremendous need, spiritually and musically. As I mentioned before, some congregations don't have enough worship band members to put a full band together. So, they need to identify or find a good keyboardist or guitar player to lead worship with excellence until they can develop an adequate worship team. The Apostle Paul, when teaching the church of Ephesus about gifts Christ gave the church, he said, "[our] responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."<sup>41</sup> It is evident that some of us have failed to labor for God as He expects us to do so. Therefore, beloved brothers and sisters, I suggest that we seek God and take seriously our responsibility. We cannot continue to offer God half-hearted apathetic worship. We, who have received much talent from God may be tempted to seek the acclaim of people and fail to please God. Our ministries are a direct evidence of our commitment and dedication to God's commission. Jesus taught his disciples the following truth:

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.<sup>42</sup>

May the Holy Spirit guide us to do what must be done to honor and glorify God as we serve His people properly and worship Him genuinely.

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<sup>41</sup> Eph. 4: 12 NLT

<sup>42</sup> Lk. 12: 47 – 48 KJV

### Chapter 3: Methods

My ministry project focused on a seasonal production; an Easter worship service. My intention was to carry out a worship service in which people would experience God in song, communion, and proclamation. When planning for it, I took the following principles as my guidelines: First, our worship songs must be aligned with God's Word and express confessions of hope, thanksgiving, and faith in Jesus Christ; choosing songs randomly will not allow you to meet the need of the people and purpose of the event. In some cases, it won't even allow you to meet God's purpose to reveal Himself to His people in a way that is truthful, understandable, and coherent. Second, those who gather to worship, including ministers, must practice Communion which signifies that God is with us, in us, and moves among us. Although it was not possible to celebrate The Lord's Supper because our event took place online due to the crisis caused by covid-19, we did practice communion, spiritually speaking, as ministers from different churches selflessly united in one spirit and mind to enact an Easter Worship service. Third, God's Word must be proclaimed authentically. It is extremely important that the minister proclaiming God's Word is a person who has Biblical knowledge and is mature in his/her faith.

One of the most important things to do, when planning for an event like this, is to select and mentor your team wisely. Before reaching out to anyone, I first considered the following Biblical principles of leadership:

A Church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and must be able to teach... He must not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>

1 Tim. 3:2-5 NLT

We must remember that any person serving in any given area of ministry must be an exemplary reflection of Jesus. As leaders, on the other hand, we must fulfill God's principles of leadership. If we ignore God's advice, His Spirit will not support us for we will be acting in disobedience to His Word. Second, it is imperative that you mentor your team. It does not matter if there is an older and more experienced person than you in your team, or someone with a more recognizable position in ministry; you must mentor and share with them Biblical principles that apply to the event and impart them your vision. Be very attentive during this time, you must identify anyone who is not embracing the vision and spirit of the event. Your team must be in one mind and spirit, there is no such thing as "everyone except one is fully onboard." In that situation, talk to the brother or sister in need to see if you can assist, pray to God and ask for discernment, ask a mentor and if after all attempts the brother or sister is not embracing the vision and spirit of the team, you must replace him/her. Do not make the mistake of perceiving this situation as "God will deal with him/her, I should ignore or demonstrate love like Jesus did to Judas Iscariot; Jesus did not call him out." In fact, He did, Judas Iscariot did not get to serve God's church like the rest of the disciples; Judas was cut out completely. Judas did not receive God's Spirit and so He was never empowered to serve God properly. When doing something for God's Kingdom, you must comply with God's Kingdom principles. Perhaps, our failure to do so has led us to the worship crisis and lack of growth we are experiencing today.

To mentor my team, in addition to holding four rehearsals where we worshipped in communion, I scheduled three educational meetings. During these meetings, I shared with them Biblical principles of worship and how we were to apply them prior and during our service. I also taught about the Great Commission to worship/serve. We have been called to worship and lead people to have an encounter with God; it is our main responsibility as Christians. Among

the Biblical principles that I shared with my team are principles I have learned from my professor, Dr. Keith Currie, who kindly shared them with me, and others I have learned during my Biblical education at Liberty University. They are the following:

1. Sincerity of the heart; earnestness; intense conviction: “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth,”<sup>44</sup> “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain.”<sup>45</sup> “We do not desire to create an atmosphere of artistic performance, but the atmosphere of a personal encounter with God.”<sup>46</sup>
2. Obedience and commitment to serve God: lives are changed as believers worship God by serving and living in obedience. “We reflect the glory of our Lord.”<sup>47</sup>
3. Giving to Him; uninfluenced by emotions of prejudices. “Our giving to Him must be with understanding of His sovereignty.”<sup>48</sup> “I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice, the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.”<sup>49</sup> Guide people to understand and they will worship.
4. Love for others; whoever loves God must also love his brother. Our love for others is a demonstration for the reality of God within us. The less personal interest we have the better we are going to love each individual working with us.<sup>50</sup>
5. It’s impossible to worship with bitterness or with unresolved conflicts in our hearts. “So, if you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God.”<sup>51</sup> Don’t ignore the conflict. Deal with the issue while you can deal with it. Go to the person and make peace with them.

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44 John 4:24 NIV

45 Matt. 15:8-9 NIV

46 Dr. Keith Currie, “*Conversation*”

47 2 Corinthians 3:18. NIV

48 Ibid.

49 Rom. 12:1 NLT

50 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NIV

51 Matt. 5:23-24 NIV

6. Confession of sin is necessary to properly worship God. When Isaiah saw the Holiness of God, he fell on his face confessing his sinfulness: “Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips”<sup>52</sup> Every Sunday, our pattern of corporate worship includes confession of sin, that our broken fellowship with God may be restored. We may need to seek forgiveness of a brother or sister before we can worship.
7. Our worship is a response to God’s revelation to us. Everything about God makes us worship if we respond properly. Whether our response is awe, fear, joy, thankfulness, or reverence, it’s all a response to whom we have experienced; our Living God, the Almighty.
8. Acceptable worship will involve actions that reflect reverence and awe. “The Bible says, “Worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”<sup>53</sup> In the Old Testament, the most common Hebrew word translated worship is “cheetah,” meaning to bow down, crouch, fall down flat, in homage to God. The most common Greek word translated worship in the New Testament is “proskuneo” from “kuneo” which means to kiss to make obeisance (a gesture and attitude of respect or reverence such as bowing or kneeling.)”<sup>54</sup>“Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel; before the Lord our maker.”<sup>55</sup>
9. Unity in our diversity is essential to worship God. A variety of musical expressions is a Biblical concept and very apparent in the Jewish songbook, the Psalms: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to the Lord.”<sup>56</sup>
10. Acceptable worship will be joyful and celebrative in many occasions. This joyful or celebrative feeling cannot be superficial. The Psalmist often reminds us of this, he wrote, “Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song.”<sup>57</sup> “Clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Isaiah 6: 1-5 NIV  
<sup>53</sup> Hebrews 12:28 NIV

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Keith Currie, “Conversation”

<sup>55</sup> Psalm 95:6 NIV

<sup>56</sup> Colossians 3:16 NIV

<sup>57</sup> Psalm 95:1-2 NIV

<sup>58</sup> Psalm 47:1 NIV

11. Worship is expressing our gratitude and thankfulness to God: “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endures forever.”<sup>59</sup>

The method or procedure I used when selecting the songs was to ask myself the following questions:

1. Is this song Biblically based?
2. Does this song communicate and convey the purpose and spirit of our gathering?
3. Does the style and genre reflect and convey the spirit and emotion we want people to tune into when worshipping God?
4. Is it an outer court or inner court song? Songs that contain horizontal lyrics that address one another are outer court songs, and songs that contain vertical lyrics that address God are inner court songs.
5. When would it be most appropriate to sing this song? Inner court songs are usually placed at the end of a worship set.

By the time we get to these songs the people have already united their minds and spirit to come closer spiritually, emotionally, and cognitively to God and worship Him by glorifying and exalting Him as their Almighty God. In some cases, songs may have sections of outer and sections of inner court singing. Many contemporary Christian songs are written with a mix of inner and outer court language. In this case, the questions you should ask include: What is the overall message of the song? And when would it be best to communicate this message to the people? In the following, please find our worship set in the order we sang it at our Easter worship service, and a detailed explanation of my reasoning for choosing and aligning each song accordingly:

The first song in our worship set was “*Resurrecting*” by Elevation Worship. This song commemorates the sacrifice of Christ, it leads people to confess faith in Jesus and to worship Him as our Savior with reverence and humility. The lyrics go as follow:

**VI.** “The head that once was crowned with thorns  
Is crowned with glory now  
The Savior knelt to wash our feet  
Now at His feet we bow”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Psalm 100:4 NIV

<sup>60</sup> Christopher Brown & Steven Furtick, “Resurrecting” from Here as in Heaven Album by Elevation Worship. Published by Essential Music Publishing, 2016.

**V2.** “The One who wore our sin and shame  
Now robed in majesty  
The radiance of perfect love  
Now shines for all to see”<sup>61</sup>

These verses testify of our Savior and His redeeming sacrifice. They are written in an outer court form which are intended to unify the congregation in spirit and truth; in one faith. They also state the reason of our gathering; to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ and His victory over sin. Lastly, these verses proclaim the faith on which we stand; in Christ we are forgiven. The chorus, on the other hand, has a line in which the church sings directly to God, declaring victory in Jesus’s name.

**Ch.** “Your name, your name is victory (inner; glorifying the name of Jesus)  
All praise, will rise to Christ our king”<sup>62</sup> (outer; restating our faith in Christ)

The third verse is written in an outer form. It continues to proclaim the divine work of Jesus, who died for us to live, and the work of His Spirit, who empowers us and gives us peace; it goes as follow:

**V3.** “The fear that held us now gives way  
To Him who is our peace  
His final breath upon the cross  
Is now alive in me”<sup>63</sup>

Towards the end of the song, on the bridge, we sing a powerful confession of faith. It is written in an inner court form and declares the following:

**Bridge:** “By Your spirit I will rise  
From the ashes of defeat  
The resurrected King, is resurrecting me  
In Your name I come alive

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

To declare Your victory  
The resurrected King, is resurrecting me”<sup>64</sup>

Right after we finished singing “*Resurrecting*,” we transitioned to the chorus of “*Glorious Day*” by Casting Crowns. “*Glorious Day*” is a beautiful song the contains the entire Gospel in only a few lines. Once again, we communicated the Gospel of Christ to those who gathered/listened and we sang Biblical truth about the Son of God and His plan of redemption. It certainly strengthened our unity in faith and spirit as we sang together the following chorus:

**Ch.** “Living, He loved me  
Dying, He saved me  
Buried, He carried my sins far away  
Rising, He justified freely forever  
One day He's coming  
Oh glorious day, oh glorious day”<sup>65</sup>

It was imperative for us to constantly remind congregants the reason of our gathering. This helped us keep the message clear and understandable. As Christians, we gather to remember the mighty works of our Creator, who fulfilled His promises in Jesus Christ our Savior. As a bride, we faithfully wait for His second coming for we know that our God is faithful and once again He will fulfill His promise. We joyfully anticipate His return.

Our third song was “*See a Victory*” by Elevation Worship. This song is based on Isaiah 54:17 that says, “But in the coming day no weapon turned against you will succeed. You will silence every voice raised up to accuse you. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord; their vindication will come from me. I, the Lord, have spoken.”<sup>66</sup> Our faith leads us, united in one spirit and mind, to confess our belief in God and His promises. As we sing out in faith,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Michael Bleecker & Mark Hall, “*Glorious Day*” from *Until the Whole World Hears* Album by Casting Crowns. Published by Warner Chappell Music, Inc, Essential Music Publishing, Capitol Christian Music Group, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Isaiah 54:17 NLT



confessing victory over anything that may threaten us, we are proclaiming our trust in God. We are leaning into Him, calling Him our refuge, our protector, our Savior, the commander of the Lord's Army who fights the battles for God's people. This confession of faith causes congregants to realize how blessed are those who believed. The song goes as follow:

**V1.** "The weapon may be formed, but it won't prosper  
When the darkness falls, it won't prevail  
'Cause the God I serve knows only how to triumph  
My God will never fail  
Oh, my God will never fail

**V2.** There's power in the mighty name of Jesus  
Every war He wages He will win  
I'm not backing down from any giant  
'Cause I know how this story ends  
Yes, I know how this story ends

**Ch.** I'm gonna see a victory  
I'm gonna see a victory  
For the battle belongs to You, Lord

**Bridge.** You take what the enemy meant for evil  
And You turn it for good  
You turn it for good"<sup>67</sup>

By now, the congregants know or have been reminded that "God fulfills His promises for He is faithful"<sup>68</sup>, "Jesus is our Savior and in Him we are forgiven"<sup>69</sup>, "we anticipate the second coming of Christ in glory"<sup>70</sup>, and that "God fights our battles for we belong to Him; we have been reconciled to God through the precious sacrifice of Jesus Christ."<sup>71</sup> By now, the

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<sup>67</sup> Jason Ingram & Steven Furtick, "See a Victory" from See a Victory album by Elevation Worship. Published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 2019.

<sup>68</sup> Joshua 21:45 NIV

<sup>69</sup> Eph. 1:7 NIV

<sup>70</sup> Titus 2:13 NIV

<sup>71</sup> Isaiah 54:17, 2 Cor. 5:18 NIV

congregants have renewed their minds as they sang Biblical principles. With this in mind, we proceeded by singing a song that leads people to confess their identity in Christ. Our fourth song was, “*Who You Say I Am*” by Hillsong Worship. The song goes as follow:

**V1.** “Who am I that the highest King  
Would welcome me?  
I was lost but He brought me in  
Oh His love for me  
Oh His love for me

**V2.** Free at last, He has ransomed me  
His grace runs deep  
While I was a slave to sin  
Jesus died for me  
Yes He died for me

**Ch.** Who the Son sets free  
Oh is free indeed  
I'm a child of God  
Yes I am  
In my Father's house  
There's a place for me  
I'm a child of God  
Yes I am

**Bridge.** I am chosen  
Not forsaken  
I am who You say I am  
You are for me  
Not against me  
I am who You say I am  
Oh, I am who You say I am  
Yes, I am who You say I am”<sup>72</sup>

By now the congregation is faith filled, they have been reminded of God’s greatness, His mighty acts, and of who they have become in Jesus Christ. Fears and doubts have faded away for God’s Word has cut through them like a sword. Their minds have been renewed; they are convinced by the truth we have testified. God’s faithfulness has overwhelmed their hearts, they

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<sup>72</sup> Ben Fielding & Reuben Morgan, “Who You Say I am” from *Who You Say I Am* album by Hillsong Worship. Published by Capitol Christian Music Group, 2018.

are humbled before Him and ready to give Him their intimate praise. This given moment is crucial for us as ministers for we can either interrupt this precious time of intimacy or be wise to discern the moment and lead them carefully to their ultimate praise. At this point you can either go to a song written in an inner court language with plenty space in between for people to meditate, pray, give thanks, commit, and bow down in a calm manner or you can also lead them to a song of celebration also written in a form of inner court language. In our case, we led them to a song called “*This is Amazing Grace*” by Phil Wickman. This song celebrates God’s grace, love, power, forgiveness and our freedom in Christ. It goes as follow:

**V1.** “Who breaks the power of sin and darkness  
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger  
The King of Glory, the King above all kings

**V2.** Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder  
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder  
The King of Glory, the King above all kings

**Ch.** This is amazing grace  
This is unfailing love  
That You would take my place  
That You would bear my cross  
You lay down Your life  
That I would be set free  
Oh, Jesus, I sing for  
All that You've done for me (Inner Court)

**V3.** Who brings our chaos back into order  
Who makes the orphan a son and daughter  
The King of Glory, the King of Glory

**V4.** Who rules the nations with truth and justice  
Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance  
The King of Glory, the King above all kings

**Bridge.** Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
Worthy, worthy, worthy”<sup>73</sup>

“*This Is Amazing Grace*” was the last song in our worship set, but we also ministered with a post-sermon song. The post-sermon song should be a song that calls people to commit to God’s call or one that dismisses them in blessing. In our case, we had first selected “*O Come to the Altar*” by Elevation worship, but because of the crisis we are facing due to covid-19, we were forced to hold our service online. So, the altar call was made by our pastor after his sermon, and we changed the song to a song that would “dismiss” people in faith and reassured that in Christ we have victory over anything and that God is our commander who will never lose a battle. The song we sang was, “*Way Maker*” by Sinach. This song is written in an inner court language. By now, it is expected that people have fully received God’s Word and revelation and they are at the highpoint of their worship, in communion, spiritually aware of what God is communicating and worshiping Him with reverence; they have surrendered their hearts to their Creator. The song goes as follow:

**V1.** “You are here, moving in our midst  
I worship you; I worship you  
You are here, working in this place  
I worship you; I worship you

**V2.** You are here, touching every heart  
I worship you; I worship you  
You are here, healing every heart  
I worship you; I worship you  
You are here, turning lives around  
I worship you; I worship you  
You are here, mending every heart  
I worship you; I worship you

**V3.** You are here, touching every life  
I worship you; I worship you

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<sup>73</sup> Jeremy Riddle, John Farro & Phil Wickham, “This Is Amazing Grace” from This Is Amazing Grace Album. Published by Warner Chappel Music, Inc, Bethel Music Publishing, Music Services, Inc, 2013.

You are here, meeting every need  
I worship you; I worship you

**Ch.** Way maker, miracle worker  
Promise keeper, light in the darkness  
My God, that is who you are

**Bridge.** You wipe away all tears  
You mend the broken heart  
You're the answer to it all  
Jesus”<sup>74</sup>

### **Proclamation of the Word**

I used the same Biblical principle found in 1 Tim. 3:2-5 to select a brother or sister to proclaim God’s Word in our service. Remember, a person who preaches is a person who teaches and a teacher is always considered a leader in any given setting. Many ministries make the mistake to invite a brother or sister who has a powerful testimony, “went to prison and now he or she is free, got divorced and now his/her marriage has been restored, got healed from a threatening disease, or he/she is a rising ‘star’ in a particular ministry. Although their testimony is an evident work of God that would move people to glorify Him, it may not align with the purpose of the event. For an event like mine, an Easter worship service, I needed someone who was knowledgeable in Scriptures, experienced in ministry, and had fruits of the Spirit; a good testimony. So, God led me to pastor Moises Gomez. Pastor Moises was raised in Christianity and has been pastoring for over 8 year. He prepared a sermon that contained Biblical principles of worship and proclaimed God’s plan of redemption through Jesus Christ our Savior. His sermon was aligned to what we as musicians communicated through our songs. The congregation, those who watched our service, were blessed by Pastor Moises’s teaching, which culminated with a call to repent and a confession of faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. It was a glorious day, as many

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<sup>74</sup> Osinachi Okoro, “Way Maker” single by Sinach. Published by Tunecore Inc, 2016.

people from different countries connected to our service. There were people from Colombia, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Texas, Chicago, and New Jersey watching our service live and together we worshipped our Lord in song, communion, and proclamation.

I consider my approach, to carry out a seasonal project, to be different than many others in several areas. First, most local churches have the tendency to be very self-centered and self-consumed, they usually do not help each other in any way; specially for an event like Easter, which is ironic. Many of them operate like businesses who compete against each other; they compete for members. By God's grace, I was able to unite several members from different churches to carry out my ministry project. There were about 7 churches invited but only 5 churches supported my vision. The number of members from each church varied from one person to several. Some of them supported the project by attending my educational meetings, inviting people they know, playing in the worship band, programming the event, recording our music, editing our videos, mixing our songs, and sharing our event with churches outside of the United States. About two hundred families have streamed our service on YouTube, and several more on other platforms such as Facebook. It is evident that God was pleased and glorified in our unity as we acted as one body.

Second, we did not choose our songs randomly; we intentionally planned and selected each song for a specific purpose and aligned them accordingly. I have visited, served, and worked in many local congregations over the last 13 years and although the idea of being intentional when selecting songs is expressed in words, it is not followed. It is very common to find services in which songs are not communicating a clear or coherent message that will reveal God or Biblical principles to people. Many local worship ministries, in an attempt to remain relevant, play songs found in the top 10 Christian music charts. This leads them to ignore and

neglect the main reason of our gathering; to lead people, including ourselves, to experience a revelation of God in truth and spirit which will cause us to worship Him in return. Although it is important to remain culturally relevant to our society, the corner stone in our victory over sin and the salvation that the world desperately needs and looks for is only found in Jesus Christ. Therefore, our main mission is to reveal God and His plan of redemption to all those who gather in our services; choosing songs to please the ear will not make us spiritually relevant. Ultimately, we will not meet people's spiritual needs, the spiritual needs they desperately look for. People come to our services to see or have an encounter with God, but instead they find self-centered, self-consumed, spiritually ignorant and/or deceived self-promoting individuals who have taken God's place in worship.

Third, every minister or servant who participated in our ministry project was mentored through educational meetings that focused on Biblical principles that related to our calling to serve and our ministry project. Many local churches make the mistake to only mentor new believers; specially those who have expressed willingness to be baptized. They neglect those who constantly serve the church every Sunday. Among the neglected we find: musicians, Sunday school teachers, deacons, co-pastors, sound engineers, media and parking personnel, door holders, and more. We can't forget that God has placed us, pastors and leaders, who are spiritually capable and educated individuals to mentor and lead the entire congregation; including those who actively serve. Some pastors and leaders tend to deduced that because someone serves, he or she is fully capable of handling or adapt to every situation. Therefore, when planning for a ministry project, they deduce that mentoring is not needed. For my ministry project, I decided to mentor every brother or sister who served; even those who are older and have more years serving than me. I understood that the vision God given to me needed to be

communicated to the rest of the body involved. I also discerned that Biblical principles needed to be shared so that we do not depart from God’s truth and Spirit when planning and carrying out our event. God turned our educational meetings into worshiping experiences, where each servant was strengthened in faith and Spirit, including myself. Our conviction to serve God and His people developed to be so strong that even Covid-19 couldn’t stop us from gathering responsibly; following our government’s social distancing regulations, to record the music, do a post recording editing session, mix the sound, edit and sync the video, program it and stream it live on three different platforms. Everyone was working from home for many hours. Although communication was key, it was the Spirit of God and conviction in faith that allowed us to fulfill our duty despite the crisis and its emotional, psychological, and physical effects. I praise and give all glory to our God for everything that was done and achieved.

In conclusion, we must be intentional and Spirit led when planning and executing a ministry project. Our source for guidance must always be God’s principles, His Word. We must not depart from God’s advice. Jesus said, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”<sup>75</sup> In addition, we leaders must take the time to plan properly and strategically. This will take time, a lazy or unintentional leader will not be willing to do what it takes, but those who are Spirit-led will serve the Lord with excellence. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and said, “This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a

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<sup>75</sup> John 15: 4-5 NLT



spirit of fear and timidity, but power, love, and self-discipline.”<sup>76</sup> May the Spirit of God lead you and your congregation as you commit to serving the Lord with excellence. May my methods, described above, for executing a ministry project, help others duplicate a ministry project with your congregation. The Lord has promised to be with us as long as we remain in Him.

#### **Chapter 4: Reflections**

Planning and preparing to carry out a seasonal worship service in which people would gather to worship in Spirit and Truth was not an easy project to carry out. I refused to do something easy or meaningless for God. I wanted to do something that was going to teach me and those involved a lesson of worship. So, the first step I took was to find a need in the body of Christ. So, God directed me to the Hispanic ministries. I have played in many Hispanic congregations and have learned that although they differ in some areas, there is one thing very common among them; there is a serious lack of musicians and Biblical understanding of worship. So, I wrote down my vision and plan, “to unite different Hispanic congregations and ministers to celebrate Easter together and serve the body of Christ with excellence in Spirit and Truth. By doing so, I wanted to provide ministers resources to improve their services in their churches.

My plan was to hold 3 educational meetings in which ministers were going to learn about Biblical principles of worship and our responsibility to commit to God’s Great Commission. My first initiative was to visit and call pastors of congregations I have served in the past. I invited them to participate in this beautiful event, and I promised them that the scheduled date was not going to conflict with theirs. I made sure to explain to them that I was going to be imparting Biblical teachings about worship and that I could volunteer to play in their churches on a given weekend to help their worship ministers understand each concept better. I let them know of the

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<sup>76</sup> 2 Tim. 1:6-7 NLT

need I had witnessed in our local congregations, to which most agreed, but unfortunately not every congregation joined me. Thankfully more than a dozen brothers and sisters ended up joining my Biblical teachings and God moved in our favor. In our last meeting, we had singing, proclamation, and even informal communion. We stayed after class talking and sharing about God's miracles in our lives. My students expressed gratefulness for my teachings. During these three Biblical lessons God taught me the following: "Many churches have abandoned their call to serve the community. They almost operate like business companies; looking to keep and accumulate customers. They don't share but instead compete against each other. Despite of this, there are people in these churches that desire to know God, they desire to learn from Him and be led to Him in worship. The brothers and sisters that assisted my classes were the least I thought were going to attend. The people I expected to be on the first row, did not even call me to say 'sorry I won't be able to support your vision or project.' Although I did not get offended it did teach me a lesson, "I am never in control, God is, and He has already prepared the hearts of those who will join me in ministry at all times. It's never by sight but by faith. It's never who looks fit but who is anointed." I glorify God for this for He is perfect!

The second part of my plan was to hold at least three rehearsals with the worship band. I was able to gather musicians from different churches who were willing to serve God unconditionally. Most of them also came to my Biblical teachings, the ones who couldn't make it had to option to watch it at home the following weekend using a YouTube link. The plan was to unite the team in one mind and spirit so that we could lead worship in Spirit and Truth. But nothing comes without difficulties when you are working for God's kingdom. There is opposition caused not by blood of flesh but by cosmic spirits.<sup>77</sup> So, in our very first meeting, I

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<sup>77</sup> Eph. 6:12 NIV

noticed my drummer a little indifferent. It wasn't anything personal but something wasn't right. Our first rehearsal finished and everyone went home but my spirit wasn't at peace. A week later, right before our second rehearsal, the drummer called me saying he wasn't going to make it. I prayed, and asked God for direction. I also email my professor Dr. Currie for advice. Dr. Currie confirmed what I was feeling was right to do, find another drummer; so, I did. This second drummer, who sounded really interested in the project and very spirit-led, decided not to show up to our rehearsal. Now we really had an issue, it was our third and last rehearsal and we did not have a drummer. At that moment, I must admit, I got a little worried. But God is our provider and He glorified. A friend who had an event on the same day as ours was suddenly available to play with us because his event was cancelled due to covid-19. We ended up having four rehearsals in total, so that our new drummer could feel confident about the songs and worship with us confidently. This part of my project taught me that when you are doing something for God, He will support you and provide everything you need.

A week prior to our event, our State governor banned large gatherings and churches had to close their doors. So, I was forced to make changes, drastic changes. In cooperation with my on-site supervisor, we decided to hold the event online; on Facebook and YouTube. Our event was going to take place on March 21<sup>st</sup>, but due to covid-19 we moved it to resurrection Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I must admit, first I was sad that we were not going to be able to gather physically to worship our Lord, but then I remember that we could praise God together still in the spirit. In addition, our event was now taking place on resurrection day! What a blessing! So, I hired an audio engineer and videographer and we recorded and filmed the worship set on Saturday April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It was mixed and edited in five days and then it was sent to the programmer who was in charge of displaying our service on our platforms. We were expecting

about 100 people to gather physically, but God has greater plans than ours. Because it was online people from Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, and USA were able to watch it and worship with us on resurrection Sunday! How beautiful is our God? He has promised us good, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”<sup>78</sup> According to pastor Moises Gomez, my on-sight supervisor more than 1,000 brothers and sisters watched our resurrection Sunday service. My lesson after this unexpected circumstance was that God had already dispositioned the hearts of those who were to be present in our worship service. I also learned that indisputably “God’s thoughts are greater and higher than ours.”<sup>79</sup>

The results of our worship service were so great. I clearly remember seeing pastor Moises Gomez preaching live with so much grace and joy. He knew that God was moving, I could see it. The service lasted for 1 hour and 45 minutes and people were still engaged asking for prayers, writing comments of worship. There were several comments regarding the service, I will write them below:

PinkMac from YouTube said, “Wow what a blessing !!! That worship was anointed ! God bless you always”

Lesley Sanchez Carias, vocalist of our worship band, who is also my beautiful wife, said, “It was a blessing to be a part of this process of lifting up the name of Jesus through worship. It was humbling to see everyone dedicate their time and talent to make this presentation possible. May God continue to bless those who participated, I am sure it made an impression on all who this recording reached.”

Juan Lopez said, “May God continue to bless our brother Ronald Carias for leading us with these songs that blessed us tremendously” (Spanish post, translated to English)

Ricardo Lopez said, “Beautiful service. May God continue to bless the lives of brother and sister who ministered our lives today. Glory be to God for the songs we sang and the sermon we’ve received.”

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<sup>78</sup> Rom. 8:28 NIV

<sup>79</sup> Is. 55:8-9 NIV

My Bible study team expressed their interest for me to do the same in each of their churches. They were really grateful for my lessons and they supported me even under extreme circumstances.

Pastor Moises Gomez, my onsite supervisor said:

“This letter would serve to observe and report on the student Ronald Caria’s (ID#: 29350370- Program: M.A. Music and Worship) spiritual and music leadership of the worship ministry team and their preparations. These are my observations which Ronald Caria demonstrated with flying colors as a spiritual and music leader: Faith, Motivation and Dedication were shown since our first conversation until the project completion. Stewardship and Credibility were the core of his success through the many trainings, meetings and visitations to our church and other church participants. Authority and Forgiveness with the right attitude and willing submission toward God and the given advices from me and/or team members.

Finally, I have noticed his Warfare ability to fight the good fight of faith and to overcome every adversity faced during our Nation and Global crisis due the Coronavid19 pandemic. Ronald was able to maintain his coolness which reveals the quality of his response to God-given opportunities and his commitment to faithful service until the task was completed: (3 training and teaching meeting, 3 worship rehearsals, an Easter Worship Service, plus audio and video recording and coordination). Throughout these tasks I have seen an example of great spiritual leadership.

As music leader he focuses always in the meaning and biblical principles of worship; and the encouraging of his team members and worship service participants to practice transformational spiritual worship and music. Concerning the presentation for the various congregations invited, due to the quarantine mandate (which is still active); it had to be online through social media channels: YouTube and Facebook. We are very glad to mention that the estimate reached was more than 1000 thousand people from sites as New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Nevada, Texas, Peru, and Puerto Rico.

We praise the Lord and feel very grateful for the great impact of the event on our worship team and the congregation. There were many comments about the selected songs and worship led by Ronald Carias and his worship team members. I personally watched the video many times, just to enjoy it and worship along with the five recorded worship songs. It was a great Easter Sunday Service blessed with a time of worship that elevated our spirit toward praising our Savior!”

Dr. Keith Currie, my professor and project evaluator said:

“I was so blessed to listen to all six of your songs for Easter worship. You have surrounded yourself with excellent musicians who communicate passionately the great messages these songs contain. You did a good job of setting the stage for worship in Spanish, and you were the male soloist/guitarist on *Glorious Day*. You have great arrangements and a great team. I am praying that the Lord blessed all who tuned in and listened to these songs. The

messages conveyed so beautifully by you and your team in these days of turmoil, fear, loss of employment, and health, will help carry your people to the One who alone can meet their deepest needs. I am grateful for all that God is doing through you.”

If I was to conduct another worship project like this, I would plan it for at least 6 months. I would make sure I visit each church at least twice before the event. I would teach my team from day one and asked them to help me teach others in each church we visit. I would also hold live teaching sessions on Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook. Lastly, I would invite more guitar players so that I can minister more freely.

In conclusion, this ministry project was an unmeasurable blessing and lesson for me. By reaching out to local churches I was able to see even with more clarity the level of need in our congregations. There is a hunger, and people are thirsty for God’s Word. I could sense people desperately looking for truth. I also realized that there is a lot of individuality, but the church that will stand strong in the near future is a church that is willing to work together with other congregations for the glory and honor of God alone. This experience has also moved me to open a YouTube Channel called “Alexis Carias El Musico.”<sup>80</sup> On my Channel, I impart music and worship principles and practices to the Spanish speaking Christian community. May God receive the glory, the honor, and the power for He alone deserves it, amen.

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<sup>80</sup> YouTube, “Alexis Carias El Musico Channel,” [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_qoG6sdGMgrovg8QuagjKA/featured?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_qoG6sdGMgrovg8QuagjKA/featured?view_as=subscriber)

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