INCORPORATING A PEDAGOGY OF WORSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY GROUP
MINISTRY OF GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

Many local church fellowships have embraced small groups (life groups, community groups) as a means of connecting people with one another from within the larger church body. These small groups are a means of building community. Furthermore, many churches testify to the importance of pursuing worship as much more than music in the corporate worship gathering that takes place once a week. However, very little has been done to connect these two components together in the small group ministry environment. As will be presented, people have written concerning each one of these important elements of church body life. Yet, connecting these two foci of ministry has received very little attention. In particular, this study is focused on the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana. This researcher believed he would find a genuine disconnect between actions demonstrating a life of worship and the inclusion of an intentional worship component within the Community Group ministry. The hypothesis predicting an absence of an intentional worship component within the Community Group ministry was confirmed by the research.

Keywords: small groups, community groups, worship, worship pedagogy, discipleship
To Lori
for your unwavering love
steadfast encouragement
and wise counsel

To the Holy Trinity
for seizing my heart
to worship You
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Lord Jesus, thank You for the forgiveness of sins and the mercy, grace, and strength to confront every scenario of life and death.

O that day, when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face. Full arrayed in blood-washed linen, how I’ll sing Thy sovereign grace. Come, my Lord, no longer tarry, bring Thy promises to pass, For I know Thy power will keep me till I’m home with Thee at last.

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing (Robert Robinson)

Soli Deo Gloria!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

Since 2014, Ligonier Ministries has partnered with Lifeway Research in multiple settings to take the spiritual “temperature” of the United States of America through an online survey. The most recent manifestation of this survey occurred in April 2018, when over three thousand individuals responded to the survey. The results for the survey were made available on October 16, 2018. One of the key findings addresses the individualization of worship. According to the 2018 State of Theology Report, fifty-eight percent of respondents agree that “Worshiping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church.” This finding shows that “a majority of Americans downplay the importance of the church’s gathering together to worship God. This shows a characteristic American emphasis on individuality, an individuality that runs counter to the Bible’s teaching.”1 God’s Word offers a contrast.

In Genesis Chapter 2, God introduces the importance of community: “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone’” (Gen. 2:18).2 Stated in another manner, “No man is an island, entire of itself . . . any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”3 Since God’s original design for humanity included community, our current individualistic culture should consider as an act of worship the important element of coming together to encourage one

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2 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

another toward Christlikeness. In *Messy Church*, pastor and worship leader Ross Parsley encourages people to move beyond an individualistic perspective regarding church and personal involvement. “I don’t believe that being alone is the design God has in mind. He wants us consuming Him and sharing Him together. He wants us vulnerable with one another, sharing the intimate details of our hearts. God designed us to live in a community of selfless serving, sharing, and correction.”

As a result of God’s decision that man should not be alone, He created a woman to dwell alongside man. As first seen in the book of Genesis, God created humanity to have relationship and live in relationship. Even more, God designed the Church to live, serve, and love as community. As much as a sense of community and fellowship was important for Adam and Eve, community and fellowship are still important for the Church today. In particular, the American religious landscape has made great use of small groups in ministry. Consider this assessment from Robert Wuthnow: “Small groups are no stranger to American religion. They have deep roots in the Methodist class meetings and Baptist prayer meetings of the nineteenth century. They resemble the Sunday school classes and youth groups that have characterized many other religious traditions as well.”

Yes, God saves each person as an individual. However, He does not save each person to continue living as an individual in isolation. Instead, God saves each person to be part of a local body of believers. Even more, within the structure of a local church scenario, Community Groups (small groups, life groups, etc.) serve as an important element of spiritual formation and


progressive sanctification on the individual level. Equally important, a perspective concerning
worship must be part of this scenario.

If one is not careful, the concept of worship may be reduced to a perspective of “me and
God” with no involvement with others, nor consideration given to others. This self-centered
perspective flies in direct contrast to what God states through the Apostle Paul. “Do nothing
from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this
mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:3-5). In light of this passage of
Scripture, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ need to embrace the importance of self-denial
through potentially awkward interactions and growth that comes from personal relationships
with other people.

Joining these two concepts—God’s emphasis on community and God’s emphasis on
worshiping Him as He has prescribed—helps us understand the importance of a training
pedagogy regarding worshiping together in a smaller group scenario. With this thought in mind,
in a larger sense, acts of worship lived out in practical ways in the small group setting will have a
training and sanctifying effect on individual believers.

In an article championing the importance of small groups, William Boekestein, who
serves as a pastor within the United Reformed Church of North America denomination, offers
ten benefits of church small groups: Discipleship, Study, Curiosity, Accountability, Shepherd ing,
Evangelism, Hospitality, Commitment, Prayer, and Socializing. Understandably, all of these
components of small group ministry are important. However, glaringly absent from his
“benefits” list is any mention of worship! If these purposes regarding small group ministry are passed down to another generation of Christians, the Church unintentionally will reinforce the concept that worship is something that takes place on Sunday in the corporate worship gathering instead of a lifestyle engaged in worship from Sunday through Saturday. The Church must do better!

In the biblical Old Testament setting of the book of Psalms, multiple psalmists trumpet the value of religious practices being transferred from one generation to another. In Psalm 78, the psalmist (Asaph) testifies, “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (Ps. 78:4). In Psalm 145, David proclaims, “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts” (Ps. 145:4). As evidenced by these passages of Scripture, the various psalmists knew the importance of training the next generation in the worship of almighty God through the declaration of God’s actions and faithfulness demonstrated in their personal lives. For this to have taken place, time had to be spent recounting what God had done in the lives of the psalmists and others. To be able to do this, the psalmists had to make a conscious decision to testify regarding God’s faithfulness in specific settings where other people were present. One current avenue for doing this would be involvement in a local church fellowship’s small group ministry.

In addition, in the Bible’s second recorded letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul states, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). Even more, Paul stresses the importance of training people

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who will come after us, cultivating a godly heritage that will be passed down from one
generation to the next generation. “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in
Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to
faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:1-2). In essence, the Apostle Paul
is communicating about the reality that Christianity should be caught through personal
relationship as much as it is taught through teaching in a formal environment. Like every other
member of humanity, the Apostle Paul knew he had a select portion of time allotted to him each
day, so he wanted to maximize that time by having an eternal impact on the lives of others.

Sadly, it seems that the church is not doing a good job of having an impact like the
Apostle Paul had on Timothy.

Consider how recent statistics show that when it comes to morality and lifestyle issues,
there is little difference between the behavior (and one can assume condition of the heart)
of Christians and non-Christians. Divorce rates are about the same. The percentages of
men who regularly view pornography are roughly the same—and it’s a lot of men.
Christians are considered to be more than two times as likely to have racist attitudes as
non-Christians. Domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and most other problems are
just as prevalent among Christians as among non-Christians. Consider two statistics about
evangelicals. About one in four people living together outside marriage call themselves
evangelicals. Only about six percent of evangelicals regularly tithe. Only about half the
people who say they regularly attend church actually do.\footnote{Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, DiscipleShift: Five Steps that Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 20.}

According to this presentation from Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, the Church is in a world
of hurt. Something needs to change. The apparent disconnect between Christian belief and
Christian practice that has been prevalent in the lives of professing Christians needs to be
addressed. A connection of heart and action needs to be made between worship in a corporate
gathering and worship in the rest of life. Addressing worship and actively worshiping God in the
small group setting are part of the answer.
In the context of 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul knew that discipleship training is tied to relationship and chose to spend his time pouring into personal relationships that he believed would produce fruit for the kingdom of God. However, lest one view Paul as divine, not every relationship into which he poured himself produced a result that he would have desired (consider Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10; Paul says that Demas was in love with this present world and deserted Paul). However, in spite of profound discouragement in ministry where personal discipleship and training did not produce desired results, Paul continued to pour his life into the lives of others through discipleship as a means of worshiping God. Lest one think that worship and interaction with others were only important to Paul, consider these words from the Lord Jesus: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37, 39).

In *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, Old Testament scholar Daniel I. Block offers a clear association between humanity and worship. “To be human is to worship.” Vernon Whaley, who has served as a worship pastor and who is the present Dean of Liberty University’s School of Music corroborates this perspective. “Inside each one of us is an innate need to worship something.” In light of this, worshiping the right Person is important!

Since the act of worship is part of the makeup for each member of humanity, the main uncertainty involves *what* or *whom* as the recipient of worship. Modern theologian James K. A. Smith, a Canadian philosophy professor at Calvin College, addresses the reality of a life of

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worship by offering a connection between one’s learning and one’s specific habits. Smith writes, “Worship is the arena in which God recalibrates our hearts, reforms our desires, and rehabituates our loves. Worship isn’t just something we do; it is where God does something to us. Worship is the heart of discipleship because it is the gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts.”

As hinted at by Smith’s writing, spiritual development will be tied to discipleship that takes place in the same setting, which often takes place in smaller, personal, more relational settings. Consequently, the absence of true discipleship will have an impact on the Church. Consider the admonition from the Apostle Paul in the biblical book of Titus that older women are to train younger women (Titus 2:2-5) and that Titus should “urge the younger men to be self-controlled [and] show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works” (Titus 2:6-7). Living out these admonitions in the church will have an impact on succeeding generations of Christianity. In a similar fashion, having a positive spiritual impact on others requires personal spiritual growth.

Before fully addressing discipleship and spiritual training that can be passed from one generation to another, one should consider the character that already resides in one’s life. The character that people presently have is the character that will be passed along to another generation of Christians through discipleship. Very specifically, God’s Word is clear regarding character that should be present in leaders in the church. Although not every man will be called to be a leader in the local church fellowship setting, every man should seek to cultivate the character qualities given for those who will serve in those leadership roles. In addition, every

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11 Titus Chapter 1 and 1 Timothy Chapter 3 give clear presentations regarding those who serve in leadership positions in each local church fellowship.
woman should seek to cultivate character qualities Scripture presents as desirable for duplication.\textsuperscript{12}

As mentioned earlier, the presentation from Scripture is that each follower of Christ should seek to disciple a younger follower of Christ. Through this process, we will seek to encourage one another toward a life that is dedicated to worshiping the Lord. This action of discipleship is an act of worship that should take place both in one-on-one settings and in community-building settings outside of the local church fellowship’s corporate worship gathering. With an understanding of this background, we are ready to consider the problem and purpose addressed in this thesis.

\textbf{Statement of the Problem and Purpose}

A local church fellowship cannot meet the needs of every member of the congregation in a single corporate worship gathering (or multiple gatherings) on a Sunday. Yes, God’s Word can be taught and received as acts of worship. Yes, worship through the vehicle of music may take place. Furthermore, worship through service is possible. However, in such a setting, needs of people who are attending will be unmet. Something else is needed.

Small groups (Community Groups) fulfill part of these needs in the congregation. Robert Wuthnow, who has studied the effects of small groups on religious development, states, “Small groups encourage individual members to take greater responsibility for their faith, to support one another, and to extend ideas about faith into new realms of their lives.”\textsuperscript{13} Supporting the perspective that small groups are beneficial, Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington offer additional

\textsuperscript{12} The Apostle Paul addresses some of these character qualities for women in Titus Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{13} Wuthnow, 347.
ways small groups help people: shepherding, teaching, and offering authenticity and accountability. Even more, according to Wuthnow, small groups provide an opportunity for people to “take greater responsibility” and live out the reality of their faith. Offering further development of this concept, Wuthnow states, “Small groups are thus a means of extending the ministries of established congregations into the crevices of society.”

In the context of the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana, these Bible study meetings originally were incorporated as a means of personalizing a larger local church body through the offering of smaller groups for fellowship and the building of more intimate relationships. Later in the process of establishing the Community Group ministry, direction was given regarding the intellectual aspect of the groups. In particular, Community Groups started utilizing the prior Sunday’s sermon as a focal point for group discussion and personal application. Although this direction is helpful to make sure people understand what is being taught in the corporate worship gathering each week, there is a sense in which the Community Groups become an academic exercise of providing the “right” answer with little or no thought toward life-worship application. In addition to encouraging intellectual involvement, these groups also seek to generate relational development. With an understanding that so much more could be accomplished in the Community Group ministry, the leadership of Grace Bible Church sought to broaden the ministry expectations placed on Community Groups.

In Genesis Chapter 2, Adam and Eve came together and formed the first small group: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall

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14 Putman and Harrington, 186-194.
15 Wuthnow, 351.
become one flesh. And the man [Adam] and his wife [Eve] were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:24-25). Adam and Eve formed the first family and enjoyed the intimacy of the very first small group setting. Since the family is the first, and most basic, small group scenario, biblical spirituality professor Donald Whitney’s commentary regarding family worship offers a simple, insightful, and accessible connection to this study. Addressing family worship, Whitney presents basic elements of worship that could be used in a small group setting. “Basically, there are three elements to family worship: read the Bible, pray, and sing.”16 Although these are not difficult presentations of worship, effort should be made to make sure people understand that they are connected to worship. Furthermore, even though writing to those who would lead in the family worship setting, Whitney’s presentation offers three practical components of worship. As well, these elements of worship are accessible through the reality that they can be employed in many small group scenarios. Nevertheless, this may require change.

In most life scenarios, the easiest thing to do is to exist within the confines of the status quo—leave things as they have always been done. However, just because something is easy does not necessarily mean it is best. Professor Arthur Hunt III, whose studies focus on technology, culture, and community, echoes this perspective. “Just because we can do a thing, does not mean that we should do a thing.”17 Hunt argues that one should ask intelligent questions regarding what a change will do before enacting a change. Hunt’s perspective is a good reminder regarding one’s handling of the gospel. The gospel is unchanging, but methods may need to

16 Donald S. Whitney, Family Worship (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 44.

change over time. In addition, there are times when change should take place for the sake of
greater growth.

From a general perspective, people do not like change. Thom Rainer, the president of
Lifeway Christian Resources, and Ed Stetzer, a researcher and church planter, equate lack of
change with stagnation within the church. “Change is not the norm for many of our churches. We
are supposed to see transformation, but too often we see stagnation.”\textsuperscript{18} Since change can be
uncomfortable, often people attempt to avoid it altogether. However, Rainer and Stetzer offer
additional development addressing this misconception. “We can’t choose whether change will
come or not. But we can choose whether to embrace it or resist it. We can choose the kind of
change that advances the kingdom of God into our world, or we can retreat into a subculture that
attempts to insulate us from the world.”\textsuperscript{19} In such situations, change might be avoided, but so
will improvement. Indeed, every improvement is change, but not every change is improvement.

Even more, change that requires personal responsibility and action is harder to embrace.
Change in one’s spiritual life is no different. It is understandable that responsibility is required
for progress to be made. However, many people do not like being the person who is responsible.
Dorothy Sayers offers insight into humanity’s tendency toward avoidance of being the
responsible agent. In her setting, Sayers refers to this tendency as sloth (or apathy). “It
[sloth/apathy] is the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing,
interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing,

\textsuperscript{18} Thom S. Rainer and Ed Stetzer, \textit{Transformational Church} (Nashville: B&H Books, 2010), Kindle

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
lives for nothing, and remains alive only because there is nothing it would die for.”\textsuperscript{20} One may consider Sayers’ assessment to be harsh. However, she is not alone in this perspective regarding apathy and avoiding responsibility.

As pastors, Matt Chandler and Jared Wilson undoubtedly know the experience of interacting with people who want the benefits of a spiritual life, a great marriage, or a vibrant relationship with God without having to apply themselves in the realm of spiritual discipline. Although addressing spiritual growth in one’s personal life, Chandler and Wilson present humanity’s tendency to avoid taking personal responsibility: “No one falls into godliness, ever. It simply doesn’t happen.”\textsuperscript{21} If a person lacking personal responsibility is not going to become godly overnight, how does this take place? Chandler and Wilson hint at this reality: one must be active in pursuing godliness. The Apostle Paul echoes this thought by writing, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12) and “Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

Lifeway Christian Resources researchers and pastors Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger also share this perspective. Addressing the need to embrace change at various times in life, Stetzer and Geiger write, “Change never happens until the pain of staying the same exceeds the pain of change.”\textsuperscript{22} As these authors testify, any gain in life will require personal responsibility and sacrifice. In particular, to gain significant spiritual benefit from this thesis and study, the Community Groups of Grace Bible Church will need to embrace the application portion and


\textsuperscript{21} Matt Chandler and Jared Wilson, \textit{To Live Is Christ to Die Is Gain} (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 1319.

work at developing the spiritual disciplines that are taught to them in the worship pedagogy
developed to address the results of the study.

Although some might be willing to argue that small group ministry situations take place
in scenarios like adult Sunday school classes, Kevin D. Dougherty and Andrew L. Whitehead
stress a more precise focus on small groups outside of Sunday school. “While Sunday school
classes represent the most recognizable of congregational small groups, it is small Bible study,
prayer, and discussion groups that attract significant current attention.”23 This thesis is focused
upon a similar perspective of small groups as that held by Dougherty and Whitehead, small
groups outside of Sunday morning settings.

Having established the problem and purpose regarding this thesis, we may now consider
the limitations of the study.

Statement of Limitations

The purpose of this thesis is not to champion that worship in small groups should replace
worship in the local church’s corporate worship gathering. In addition, the purpose of this thesis
is not to diminish the importance of worship in the corporate worship gathering of each local
church fellowship through teaching, music, fellowship, and service. Thinking replacement or
subtraction will not help in this setting.

Instead, the purpose of this thesis is to encourage growth in the overall perspective
regarding the attitude and activity of worship in small group settings. In addition, identifying a
lack of worship direction in Community Groups will allow for the insertion and institution of a

23 Kevin D. Dougherty and Andrew L. Whitehead, “A Place to Belong: Small Group Involvement in
worship pedagogy in such situations. Recognizing the reality of the words presented by Dougherty and Whitehead, this thesis focuses on small groups that are not Sunday school classes in a local church fellowship. Sharpening this focus even more, the focal point of this research study project is the Community Group ministry, which is part of the larger ministry at Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana. With an understanding of the study’s limitations, the working hypothesis now may be considered.

**Working Hypothesis**

The inclusion of worship instruction and a worship pedagogy is a necessary component of small group ministry. The connection between an intellectual biblical understanding of worship and the actions associated with worship needs to be explained, taught, and explored in the small group ministry setting. In pursuing this working hypothesis, methodology also should be addressed.

**Statement of Methodology**

This thesis embraced the methodology of observation and assessment/analysis of human beings existing within a social, religious structure known as a Community Group (small group or life group). Furthermore, the methodology of research involved an assessment/analysis of print material that has been used in Community Group leadership training and the documents provided each week for Community Groups to utilize as points of discussion.

In addition, this thesis is offered in the following chapter breakdowns. The first chapter presents an introduction to the project and offers statement of the problem, statement of limitations, statement of methodology, definition of terms, and importance of the research project.
The second chapter of the research project provides a review of literature. Since very little is written that addresses small groups with the inclusion of a worship component, this review includes recent writing on the topics of small groups, worship, and disciple making and discipleship.

The third chapter addresses the research method that was utilized by this researcher to bring this thesis to fruition: Qualitative Research.

The fourth chapter offers the findings of the research that was conducted for this thesis.

Next, the fifth chapter serves as a summary and offers conclusions based on the research project. In this chapter, the author will summarize major points made. Furthermore, the author will re-articulate the findings of the research, provide an assessment of what has been uncovered throughout the project, and offer recommendations based on the research findings.

Finally, the appendix offers a worship pedagogy that could be utilized as a means of connecting an intentionally communicated worship component into small group scenarios. In particular, this component is laid out for the benefit of the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church. However, offering a resource to the universal body of Christ, the worship pedagogy could be utilized in almost any ministry setting.

Having established the methodology and outline for this thesis, we are ready to consider specific terms.
Definition of Terms

Christian

“So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:25-26).

A Christian is any person who has professed to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and lives out his or her life in such a manner as to provide evidence of the profession being reality (this is the process of progressive sanctification [becoming more like Christ], and many people would refer to these evidences as “fruit” of the Christian life). In essence, being a Christian is living a life of seeking to deny oneself while seeking to live in surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Byron Yawn connects denying oneself to being surrendered to the Lord by addressing the issue of inconvenience. “Christianity is the most inconvenient religion known to man. You have to be utterly inconvenienced to be a part of it at all. Death to self. Service to others. After all, Jesus is Lord. He may demand that you do things that result in tremendous discomfort and that are extraordinarily inconvenient.”

Community Groups

Whether they are called small groups, life groups, discipleship groups, or (as referenced in this thesis) Community Groups, multiple authors have written books and articles addressing the concept and importance of such a ministry. For the sake of this thesis, we are defining Community Groups as groups of people from a particular local church fellowship with an

attendance range between four and eighteen. Although not driven by any scientific data, the ideal number would be twelve: this number would follow the pattern of the twelve apostles set forth by the Lord Jesus Christ during His three-plus year ministry on earth. As well, such a number would allow for wisdom derived from various life perspectives and the building of personal and communal relationships.

**Spiritual Formation**

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:1-2).

Although “spiritual formation” has become a buzzword in recent years, the concept is not new. Jesus Christ was involved in the spiritual formation of His disciples. For this thesis, we are defining spiritual formation as the process of sanctification in the life of the follower of Jesus Christ. This definition seems to follow the direction set forth by Robert Wuthnow. “‘Spiritual formation’ is a key term. We define it broadly as a deepening or maturing of an individual’s faith.”25 Furthermore, Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger offer this connection between “spiritual formation” and “discipleship,” “Another term often used for discipleship or spiritual growth is ‘spiritual formation.’”26

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25 Wuthnow, 6.

26 Stetzer and Geiger, 56.
Discipleship

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Instead of being an action in which only the “super-spiritual” Christians are engaged, discipleship should be part of the “normal” Christian life. As such, a definition for discipleship is helpful. At its core, discipleship is encouraging others to become more Christ-like in character and action. Mark Dever offers us a simple definition: [discipleship is] “doing deliberate spiritual good to help [others] follow Christ.”

Worship

In his letter to the followers of Christ in Rome, the Apostle Paul gives a clear picture of worship. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). In today’s church society, many people may give an intellectual nod to the concept of worship as an “all of life” scenario. However, in the same setting, many of these same people will refer to worship as the music portion of the corporate worship gathering. For this thesis, worship must be defined and defended as giving the glory to God that is due Him with our thoughts, words, and actions. Utilizing the verbiage of the late Robert Weber, “Worship is a verb,” but it does not always need to be an action. For the sake of this thesis, worship action is presented as the three

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27 Mark Dever, Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 17.

identifiable and measurable components presented by Donald Whitney in *Family Worship*: “read the Bible, pray, and sing.”

Prayer

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

As a component of worship, prayer is the communication between followers of Christ and the Creator of the universe. Furthermore, this action of prayer is made possible by the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and the continuing work of Jesus serving as intercessor before the throne of God in heaven.

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14-16).

Scripture Reading

In the first recorded letter to his spiritual son Timothy, the Apostle Paul states, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:13). As another component of worship, Scripture reading is the process of reading portions of God’s Word, the Bible. In particular, for this thesis, Scripture reading is delineated as the audible reading of God’s Word in the presence of other people. Furthermore, God’s Word is defined as the Bible in its sixty-six book entirety, the result of verbal, plenary inspiration.

29 Whitney, *Family Worship*, 44.
Singing

“Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day” (Ps. 96:1-2).

As the Director of Lifeway Resources, Mike Harland understands the impact music and singing has on individuals. “What we sing goes into a place where what we talk about doesn’t go.” Furthermore, as a worship leader and pastor, Matt Boswell stresses the importance of singing in the life of Christians. “Christians are a singing people. Singing has marked our faith from Exodus 15 with the ‘Song of Moses,’ and continues through Revelation 5 as we sing the ‘Song of the Lamb.’ We are a people with a song to sing (Pss. 96; 105:1–5).”

Although singing by oneself is an important aspect of individual worship, singing with others is vitally important as a component of corporate worship. This vocal activity may take place in a large-group corporate worship gathering or a community-building endeavor within a small group setting. For this thesis, singing is defined as the activity of joining one’s voice with others in singing praise to God.

Now that we have completed this brief summary regarding specific concepts used in this thesis, we are ready to consider the essential nature of this particular research project.

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Importance of Subject Matter

The subject matter of this thesis is significant to the spiritual life of Grace Bible Church (specific) and the life of local church fellowships everywhere (general). Considering worship as an individual and as a member of a small group will have an impact on how one worships in the larger corporate worship gathering, as well. Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely insert their voices into this discussion by encouraging a sober-minded assessment regarding the role of worship.

Every Christian must understand the practice of biblical worship because God has repeatedly commanded us to do so (Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10), because true worship is a confirmation of our salvation in Christ (John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3), and because the absence of true worship and the presence of false worship arouse the terrifying judgment of a jealous God (1 Sam. 13:8-14; Rom. 1:18-32).32

Since God created us for worship, and commands us to worship Him, we must be willing to address this in regards to personal worship involvement in Community Groups.

Having established the importance of this thesis, the next chapter will consider the perspective of various literature regarding the particular subject matter.

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CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter serves as an overview of select literature that address various components related to this thesis: small groups, worship, and making disciples/discipleship.

As previously mentioned, the Lord Jesus Christ testified regarding the importance of discipleship, “Go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:18). Similarly, in recent times, the Church has taken a renewed interest in the development of disciples. Yes, discipleship may take place in a non-personal large-group setting. However, discipleship also should take place in more intimate surroundings. As a means of doing this, the Community Group ministry scenario offers a unique setting which personalizes a larger church fellowship and encourages discipleship relationships to take place.

William and Le Etta Benke are two voices encouraging the interconnection of numerous ministry scenarios for the purpose of building the local body of Christ. After identifying five purpose categories for local church fellowships (worship, evangelism, discipleship, mutual support and encouragement, and community outreach and service), the Benkes encourage a synthesis of the various purposes. “All this to say that basic purposes should not be viewed as independent stand-alones from one another, but rather as an interdependent and interrelated symphony of purposes that collectively provide the potential for synergistically extending the church ministry to new heights.”


34 Ibid., 74.
Additionally, Greg Ogden is another voice that is helpful in this consideration. Having served as an executive pastor of discipleship and the director of Fuller Theological Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry program, Ogden has a unique understanding concerning the challenges of discipleship. Throughout the course of his book *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*, Ogden develops four important elements for the expansion of spiritual formation into spiritual development: Growing Up in Christ, Understanding the Message of Christ, Becoming Like Christ, and Serving Christ.\(^{35}\) As the concepts of spiritual formation and spiritual development have been embraced more and more within the evangelical Christian community in recent years, the reality of what the phrases address is connected back to a biblical term: discipleship. Very specifically, the Lord Jesus Christ addressed discipleship in this manner: “And he [Jesus] said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it’” (Luke 9:23-24). These words from the Lord serve as a great transition into a review of select Scripture.

**Review of Select Scripture**

The Bible should be part of any literature review concerning the importance of a proper view of God, the importance and strength of Community Groups, and the importance of a life of worship. In Romans Chapter 1, the Apostle Paul presents mankind’s leaning regarding how one views God. “Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal

man and birds and animals and creeping things” (Rom. 1:21-23). Echoing this biblical perspective, Greg Ogden writes, “Every human being has [the tendency] to form our own conceptions of who God is.”

Additionally, in Acts Chapter 2, Luke presents a picture of people gathered for worship. “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). Then, in Acts Chapter 12, Luke documents a small group that had gathered for the specific purpose of praying for Peter’s release. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke offers a connection between the small group gathered for prayer and God’s miraculous action to release Peter from prison through angelic intervention. In another setting in Acts, Luke presents music as an important element of worship when Paul and Silas were in prison. “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25).

Moreover, Luke, who had to pay specific attention to detail as a doctor, offers an in depth presentation regarding how homes were utilized in Christian worship: gatherings for prayer (Acts 12:12), instruction (Acts 5:42), evangelism (Acts 16:32), celebrating communion (Acts 2:46), and fellowship (Acts 21:7). In addition, in Acts Chapter 20, Luke testifies regarding a late-night small-group worship gathering in a home. “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them . . . and he prolonged his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

We have seen the importance Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, places on meeting together. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul encourages a sober assessment

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36 Ogden, 58.
of a life surrendered in worship. “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:1 NASB). In this presentation from the apostle, we can see a connection between one’s lifestyle and a larger perspective regarding worship. As evidenced by this directive from Paul, worship should be involved in every aspect of one’s life: “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.” If we limit our concept of worship to something that takes place in a corporate worship gathering on Sunday, we are missing the point of Paul’s spiritual direction.

More specifically, Paul stresses the importance of embracing music as part of a life of worship. In Ephesians Chapter 5, Paul addresses the content of songs used in worship when he states, “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (emphasis added; Eph. 5:19 NKJV). As well, in another letter to the followers of Christ residing in Colossae, Paul echoes his words from Ephesians with a slight adjustment. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (emphasis added; Col. 3:16). In these two letters, Paul emphasizes music as an essential component in a life of worship. Furthermore, Paul’s specificity regarding speaking the songs to each other stresses the lyric content of music that is used, because the music is “teaching and admonishing one another.” Indeed, it matters what we sing.

As much as Scripture stresses the importance of discipleship in small groups and various acts of worship, the majority of recent writings do not link small groups with an intentional worship component. This next section presents an overview exposing this reality.
Community Groups (Small Groups)

Although many books, dissertations, and theses have been written concerning small groups, very little has been written concerning a worship component within the small group setting. The following is a sampling of books that have been written in recent years focusing on the reality of small group ministry within the local church context.

In 2011, CCS Publishing released Big Impact: Connecting People to God and One Another in Thriving Groups by Jim Egli and Dwight Marable. In this publication, the authors make no mention of a worship component within small groups, nor do they offer a connection between the concept of worship and what takes place within the small group. In the same year, Baker Books published Small Groups with Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities by Steve Gladen. In this work, Gladen sets aside a chapter addressing the importance of worship within the community life of each small group.

In 2012, Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson wrote Building a Life-Changing Small Group Ministry with no delineation of a worship component. In the same year, the same publisher (Zondervan) also placed another book by Bill Donahue in print: Leading Life-Changing Small Groups. Although concentrating on the prominence of building community and championing relationships while encouraging leaders to meet the needs of the people within their small-group environment, no worship component is mentioned.

In 2013, Starting Small: The Ultimate Small Group Blueprint was written by Ben Reed and printed by Rainer Publishing. Again, although speaking to the significance of small groups, there is no reference to a worship component. During the same year, Baker Books presented
another book by Steve Gladen: *Leading Small Groups with Purpose*. In this work, Gladen offers a chapter addressing the importance of worship within the structure of small groups.

In 2014, Amazon Publishing presented Brad Lewis’ book *Small Group University: Relevant Training for the Emerging Leader*. Lewis, who has served as a pastor and college ministry leader within Chi Alpha (Assemblies of God), offers no comments regarding a worship component in small groups in this book written for leaders of small groups. In the same year, Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger published *Transformational Groups: Creating a New Scorecard for Groups*. Like many other books, this resource presented no explicit reference concerning a worship component within small groups.

In 2015, Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop published a book through Crossway addressing the importance of building community within the local church fellowship. Although not specifically targeting small groups, the book makes such a strong case for the *community* aspect of a local church fellowship that its inclusion seems appropriate in the listing of books. *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive* speaks concerning the community nature of the local church fellowship as something that should be intentionally fostered. “We can invest in spiritually intentional relationships”,37 and “A church-wide habit of discipling builds depth of relationship into a church culture.”38

In 2018, Baker Books published two books that specifically consider small group ministry: *Activate: An Entirely New Approach to Small Groups* (authored by Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas) and *Planning Small Groups with Purpose: A Field-Tested Guide to Design and*


38 Ibid., 120.
Grow Your Ministry (authored by Steve Gladen). In Activate, there is no mention of a worship component of any kind in regards to small group ministry. In contrast, in Planning Small Groups with Purpose, Gladen offers a token acknowledgment regarding worship over a span of four pages. Toward the end of a 230-page book, the author seeks to provide an answer to this question: “How Will You Help Your Groups Cultivate an Attitude of Worshipful Submission?” 39

As seen through this multi-year overview of select books, a chasm seems to exist in print literature between small group ministry and intentional inclusion of a worship component. In this joint-focus context of worship and small groups, Steve Gladen appears to be in the vast minority in his willingness to offer insight into the connection that should exist between a person’s life of worship and its inclusion in small group ministry.

In addition to these highlighted books, the role of a small group ministry has been tackled by other authors. In “I Come Away Stronger”: How Small Groups Are Shaping American Religion, Robert Wuthnow In “I Come Away Stronger”: How Small Groups Are Shaping American Religion, Robert Wuthnow has collected assessments regarding the significance of small groups and their connection to one’s religious life. Wuthnow, who serves as Director of Princeton University’s Center for the Study of Religion, offers this edited tome that presents numerous manifestations of small group scenarios in various religious traditions: e.g., Catholic, house fellowship, Presbyterian, Assemblies of God, liberal protestant, Mennonite charismatic, campus ministry, and a large-church setting. Although Wuthnow’s edited work does not address worship specifically in small group settings, the range of religious traditions referenced is helpful. Even more, Wuthnow offers an awareness of what one could expect within small groups

in the American religious context. “What do people actually do in these groups? . . . Virtually all of their members (94 percent) say their groups pray together. More than nine in ten (92 percent) discuss religious topics. Nearly this many (86 percent) study or discuss the Bible in their groups. . . . 75 percent say their groups eat together, 75 percent also sing together on occasion, and more than half (62 percent) have parties.”

Roger L. Walton, who served for over ten years as the Director of the Wesley Study Centre at Durham University, presents a biblical perspective regarding the importance of small groups. “You cannot read any of the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus without noticing that he spent a lot of time with 12 people. In modern sociological terms this would be classified as a small group.”

Additionally, Walton offers this definition for a small group: “A small group is an intentional association of between 2 and 25 people over time for a shared purpose, where meaningful interaction is expected in fulfilling the group’s task.”

Joel Comiskey and Harley Atkinson have taught at the collegiate level and have written extensively regarding cell group use within the social and educational structure of today’s Church. Through their years of teaching experience, these authors are able to offer commentary regarding the historical presence of small groups. “House-based ministry became so common that throughout the book of Acts, every mention of a local church or of a church meeting,

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40 Wuthnow, 377.


42 Ibid., 71.
whether for worship or fellowship, is a reference to a church meeting in a home.”

On one hand, this assessment from Comiskey and Atkinson is helpful. However, one might be tempted to view the house-group scenario as something that took place during a particular era of Christian history. As a counter to this belief, in “Lessons from the Early House Church for Today’s Cell Groups,” Comiskey and Atkinson connect an historical assessment to present reality. “It is easy to conclude that the early house church serves as a helpful prototype of contemporary church-based cell groups.” Those who seek to minister to people in today’s evangelical Church would do well to consider the practices of the Early Church as presented in Scripture.

In The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul, Wayne Meeks, who has served as the chair for Yale University’s department of religious studies, analyzes the cultural makeup of the world during Paul’s time. In particular, Meeks addresses the use of small groups during the Pauline era of Christianity. “One peculiar thing about early Christianity was the way in which the intimate, close-knit life of the local groups was seen to be simultaneously part of a much larger, indeed ultimately worldwide, movement or entity.” Offering additional judgment regarding the importance of small groups in historical Christian ministry, Meeks states, “The meeting places of the Pauline groups, and probably of most other early Christian groups, were private houses.” Meeks also testifies to the prevalence of small groups during the Apostle Paul’s ministry. “The number of such household assemblies in each city will have varied from

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44 Ibid., 85.


46 Ibid., 75.
place to place and from time to time, but we may assume that there were ordinarily several in each place.”

Some may seek to argue that the way the Early Church operated as smaller groups in house settings is much like the current manifestation of the Church, which operates with multiple local church entities within a specific geographic area (for example, Bozeman, Montana—population 45,000—has more than twenty local church fellowships operating within the city limits). However, Wayne Meeks offers a credible contrast to such a presentation. “The household assembly in Philemon’s house was apparently not the whole of the Colossian church, nor that in Nympha’s household the only one in Laodicea (Col. 4:15).”

Additionally, some may argue that the small group ministry model is a recent phenomenon. However, one need only broaden one’s perspective regarding small groups to understand this is not the case. For example, the importance of the specific small group ministry in congregational life has grown as the role of other ministry “small groups” has diminished. For example, the National Congregations Study conducted by Duke University calls attention to this reality. In the stage III final report, which was published in 2015, the declining use of choirs as a ministry small group is addressed. “The decline of choirs is worth examining in its own right because singing in the choir is one of the most common ways, along with Bible studies, for people to become more deeply involved in a congregation, and it is the single most common way for lay people to participate actively in gathered worship. Choirs often become their own

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47 Meeks, 76.
48 Ibid.
communities within congregations.” However, not all small group ministries are in a state of decline. Consider these findings from the National Congregations Study: *American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century*: “In 2006-07, 62% of attendees were in congregations with book discussion groups [“small groups of people meeting around a common interest”], up from 42% in 1998.”

Connecting the reality of small group involvement to the corporate worship life of a local church fellowship, collegiate educators and sociologists Kevin D. Dougherty and Andrew L. Whitehead state, “No matter the size of the congregation, individuals involved in small, relational groups that meet for prayer, discussion, and Bible study are more likely to express a sense of belonging, attend religious services more often, and give financially at a higher rate than are persons not involved in such groups.” Atkinson and Comiskey echo this thought process regarding the importance of connecting large group and small group participation in the local church fellowship. “Much can be learned from the early house church regarding contemporary cell groups. . . . churches must have a healthy balance between small and large group meetings.” Additionally, psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend encourage small group participation within the context of the larger church fellowship setting. “Connection, far more than the information dispensed, keeps people coming to group. When people feel attached,

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51 Dougherty and Whitehead, 107.

52 Atkinson and Comiskey, 83.
they become much more invested in the process, and their hearts become more open to God, growth and each other.”53

Continuing this emphasis placed on the importance of involvement with others, Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger write, “No believer is transformed alone. Just as the mighty sequoia would topple without a community of supporting trees, believers who seek transformation apart from a Christian community are vulnerable to spiritually topple in the winds of adversity . . . . Transformation is a communal experience, not an individual exercise.”54 According to Stetzer and Geiger, transformation is a collaborative process. Roger Walton seems to agree with this perspective in Disciples Together: Discipleship Formation and Small Groups. “Just as we grow up unconsciously learning the accents of our parents and our school friends so a strong small group shapes us in a whole range of ways often without our noticing.”55

Bill Hull, who has served as a pastor for over twenty years and has written multiple books addressing discipleship, offers testimony regarding the significance of small groups when he states, “Healthy small groups combine every element necessary for growing healthy and reproducing disciples. They offer spiritual nurture and support, ministry skill development, accountability, training in outreach, long-term relationships, and worship.”56

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54 Stetzer and Geiger, 6.

55 Walton, 80.

As a final thought concerning small groups, one should consider the scriptural directive regarding life-on-life interaction within the Body of Christ. The Apostle Paul stresses the value of community in his letter to the church fellowship in Corinth. “For the body does not consist of one member but of many. . . . But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:14-25). As a pastor, counselor, and author, Paul Tripp offers wise counsel concerning this direction given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “The picture here is the body of Christ as a functioning organism of many mutually essential, interrelating, mutually contributing members. The interconnectedness and the interdependency of these members are so essential to the proper health, function, and growth of the body that Paul says it is impossible for one member to say to another, ‘I simply don’t need you.’”57

In addition to considering material in print that talks about small groups, this next section offers consideration in print regarding worship.

**Worship**

“Are you leading worship today?”

Invariably, every worship leader has been on the receiving end of such a question. The question implies a tacit belief that music defines worship. In contrast, Harold Best, the present Dean Emeritus of Wheaton College Conservatory of Music and former president of the National Association of Schools of Music offers wise caution for worship leaders concerning this false belief. “Whenever we assume that art mediates God’s presence or causes him to be tangible, we

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57 Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 89.
have begun the trek into idol territory. . . . We need to ask ourselves if we, as worship leaders, are giving the impression that we draw near to God through music or that God draws near because of it. Is music our golden calf?58

Although music is part of worship, music is not the entirety of worship. David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley endorse this truth. “Worship is not a ‘service’ to be attended. It is a surrendered approach to life that is to be lived out in all we do.”59 This wide-angle perspective regarding worship has been defended on multiple occasions to the local church fellowship in which this researcher serves. “Music: don’t make it more than it should be; don’t make it less than it is.”60 Even further, John Witvliet, the director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, helps us embrace the reality that worship is much broader than only music. “Worship is a multi-sensory subject matter.”61

Yes, worship is much more than music. Along these lines, when considering the topic of worship, the first and best place to begin is with the Word of God.

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58 Harold Best, Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 166.


60 Jeremy Sauskojus, “Do We Worship Worship?: Music as Idolatry” (lecture, Montana Bible College, Bozeman, MT, January 28, 2014).

Biblical Hebrew/Greek

In the Old Testament, one Hebrew word predominantly used when defining worship is שָׁחָה (shachah) and is utilized more than 170 times. One clear example is, “Oh come, let us worship [שָׁחָה]” (Ps. 95:6). Theologian and instructor Steve Lawson offers a specific presentation of worship in this manner: “Most specifically, ‘bow down’ [shachah] refers to an attitude of the heart, not necessarily a prostrated position. This word describes the total self-humiliation, submission, and adoration to be rendered by those who approach God.”62

In the New Testament, one Greek word predominantly used to help define worship is προσκυνέω and is used sixty times in the New Testament. In all sixty occasions of its New Testament usage, this Greek word is connected to worship. Highlighting these associations, the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis offers these thoughts concerning the word and its implications. “Our relation to God is expressed principally in worship, and above all in prayer. The call to conversion can therefore be put in the form, ‘Worship God!’ By doing so, we recognize him in all his power and glory as creator and judge, and we acknowledge his exclusive sovereign rights and claim on us ([Revelation] 14:7).”63 From a biblical perspective, worship involves clear surrender to God as the sovereign ruler over all.

The Old and New Testaments are abundantly clear that both an attitude and action of worship should be given to God. For some people, there seems to be a false dichotomy that is held between the concept of worship and the practical outworkings of various forms of worship.

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At best, there is confusion. For example, a book that targets those leading ministry small groups champions a broad perspective regarding worship. “Worship . . . is vulnerable to too narrow a focus. Worship is not just singing; it includes any gesture toward God of honor or respect.”  

This presentation regarding worship is true. However, the authors confuse the reality of true biblical worship since they proceed to utilize verbiage that distinguishes between worship and other activities. “Bible study . . . can sometimes be cerebral and analytical. Practicing group prayer and worship can address this imbalance with more intuitive and fluid rituals.” (emphasis added) In this setting that seeks to instruct small group leaders, the authors offer prayer as something distinctly different from (or an alternative to) worship. Sadly, this is a false dichotomy that is intentionally or unintentionally embraced by people who profess to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Instead of encouraging false distinctives regarding worship, pastors Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely offer this simple definition: “Worship is acknowledging the unique worth of an object and showing honor and respect to it.” Even further, Robbie Castleman, a professor of biblical studies and theology at John Brown University, encourages this much broader thought process concerning worship: “Worship is a response to the call of God. Worship happens at the initiative of God’s grace and is only made possible by his mediating presence on the worshiper’s behalf.”

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65 Ibid., 86.

66 Mack and Swavely, 121.

67 Robbie F. Castleman, Story-Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 351.
Duke University School of Religion, acknowledges the active reality of worship. “Real worship . . . prods, stabs awake, and sends a person, himself, out to work for the kingdom of God.”68 These words from Bowman regarding the action of worship also offer a tie to the connection between worship and discipleship, as championed by Bill Hull. “Worship becomes a key part of discipleship because, in worship, we break ourselves of the habit of interpreting all events in God’s story as centered in ourselves.”69 Hull’s words direct us back to the biblical Hebrew/Greek connection. Worship involves surrender to the Lord. He is the Creator. We are the creation. In light of this reminder, we are in a good position to consider practical acts of worship.

Practical Outworkings of Worship

Steve Gladen, Pastor of Small Group Community at Saddleback Community Church, is an author who has made an attempt to connect the significance of small group community with the importance of worship within the small group setting. In Leading Small Groups with Purpose: Everything You Need to lead a Healthy Group, Gladen breaks worship into two different categories: 1) Expressive Ways to Worship: Prayer, Thanksgiving, Music, and Sharing Struggles; and 2) Reflective Ways to Worship: Silent Prayer, Moments of Solitude and Meditation, Fasting, and Shar[ing] God Stories.70 In addition, Bruce Benedict, who serves as the Chaplain of Worship and Arts at Hope College, offers a continuing perspective on the responsive

69 Hull, 219.
nature of worship. “Here is the very heart of biblical worship: God speaks, and we respond.”\textsuperscript{71} This is the reality of biblical worship.

Even though one can understand the biblical emphasis placed on worship, very specifically, why should one worry about any aspect of “corporate” worship in a small group environment? Some might argue that personal worship and large-group corporate worship should be enough. Although addressing the importance of involvement in large group corporate worship, this principle that Donald Whitney presents should have a broader application into the realm of small-group corporate worship. “Nothing you do on a consistent basis is more like the activity of heaven than worshiping God with His people. In congregational worship we express our unity with all true Christians of all time everywhere.”\textsuperscript{72} This is a legitimate “communion of the saints.” Furthermore, since congregational worship is an expression of “unity with all true Christians of all time everywhere,” the inclusion of “congregational worship” in the small group ministry setting is a concept worthy of genuine consideration.

Worship leader and pastor Zac Hicks encourages this communal reality of worship. “If our one God truly is a Community of Persons, then true Christian worship is, at its core, inherently communal and corporate.”\textsuperscript{73} Additionally, John Witvliet champions the importance of the practice of worship as a group. “Worship is like these practices [hospitality, forgiveness, discernment, and grieving with hope in the face of death] in responding to fundamental human


\textsuperscript{72} Donald S. Whitney, \textit{Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ} (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 82.

needs, being practiced over time, and being an action of a community, not only of individuals.”\textsuperscript{74} Pursuit of community is an integral outworking of worship.

Another essential outworking of worship in the lives of followers of Christ is prayer. The Apostle Paul stresses the importance of worshiping via prayer throughout his writing in the New Testament. One example of this is found in Paul’s epistle to the followers of Christ at Ephesus: “Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me . . .” (Eph. 6:18-19). In addition, although personal prayer is important, praying in groups also serves a relevant function in the life of those seeking to follow Christ. Robert Wuthnow reminds us of this reality. “Part of the reason that group prayer is a significant contribution to spiritual formation is that people learn how to pray by listening to others.”\textsuperscript{75} In this manner, praying in groups serves another form of discipleship. As well, professor and theologian Hughes Oliphant Old offers a connection between worship and the importance of praying in a particular manner. “It is for the sake of Christ that the Father receives our prayers (Heb 9:24). It is appropriate, therefore, that our prayers plead both the intercession of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is implied by praying in the name of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{76} Used in small groups, prayer is an act of worship that can bring about greater community with others and a deeper sense of community with the community within the Holy Trinity.

\textsuperscript{74} Witvliet, “Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice: Music on Practical Theology and Pedagogy in Seminaries and Church-Related Colleges.”

\textsuperscript{75} Wuthnow, 354.

An additional outworking of worship is music and singing. Consider the biblical scenario that took place on the night before the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. Matthew records the small-group setting Christ had with His disciples, in which He initiated the Lord’s Supper and offered the example of singing a hymn with them (Matt. 26:30). Collegiate instructor Constance Cherry offers a worthwhile perspective concerning singing. “We sing because it is a vehicle for expressing our faith. The songs we sing testify to what we believe as Christians; they assert the doctrines of orthodox Christian belief and practice. Songs proclaim what we believe objectively, and in their singing we come to own that belief . . . mak[ing] it our faith. . . . The faith we sing is the faith that remains with us by virtue of song.”

In *Doxology and Theology*, worship leader and pastor Matt Boswell echoes the thought presented by Cherry. “Christians are a singing people. Singing has marked our faith from Exodus 15 with the ‘Song of Moses,’ and continues through Revelation 5 as we sing the ‘Song of the Lamb.’ We are a people with a song to sing (Pss. 96; 105:1–5).” Another pastor and worship leader stresses the command from God to sing. “I have always been fascinated with the fact that God commands us to sing. . . . ‘Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!’ [Ps. 47:6] Isn’t that interesting? God could have just as easily made us creatures that could only speak, or creatures for whom He only desired communicative speaking. Yet, He calls us to sing.” Yes, God calls His children to the personal and corporate act of worshiping Him

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through song. In addition to the physical action tied to singing, the heart attitude is part of worship. Songwriters and worship leaders Keith and Kristyn Getty press on this concept by offering an exhortation concerning one’s motivation to sing. “It is driven by a heartfelt desire to convey gospel truth to those of us who already know it and need to be refreshed and renewed by it—and to communicate it to those who don’t yet know, but who might be drawn to Christ through seeing and hearing people who clearly mean it because of the way that they sing about it.”

All of these thoughts regarding music as part of worship are true and worthy of consideration. Music is a significant aspect of worshiping God. However, Harold Best offers a voice of caution concerning one’s perspective regarding the role of music and the possibility that music could become an idol. “I know from personal experience how easy it is to draw people into my confidence with music, using it as a means for creating a bridge between them and me, between God and me and between them and God. When we are told by fellow worshipers that our music is actually making God more real, our repentance must be followed by corrective teaching.” Since worship involves much more than worship, the next logical consideration for this thesis should be worship instruction.

Worship Instruction

“Protestantism came into being on the platform of allowing people to worship God and read their Bibles for themselves. But to what extent do Protestant churches today really teach

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81 Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 166.
their people to do either?"82 In other words, local church fellowships that do not offer a pedagogy of worship for small groups are not equipping those community/life groups to have the highest level of impact that they could have. Considering this reality, worship instruction must take place. However, there can be challenges in this arena as well.

Addressing challenges that likely will be encountered when seeking to teach a worship pedagogy, John Witvliet writes, “The largest challenge in all this is that most students [people] have participated in worship practices that have already formed their theological imaginations.”83 Furthermore, it seems likely that those theological imaginations have been influenced by the friends and instructors around them.

In light of this presentation concerning a pedagogy that includes worship, Clarice Bowman offers a cautionary assessment regarding worship instruction. “The guidance of worship of children, youth and adults is often left in the hands of woefully untrained persons.”84 In such an environment as presented by Bowman, this type of pedagogical endeavor seems to lack an intentional theological direction. Instead, instruction seems tied to preferences. Generally speaking, it appears that people like music-worship that they know. As a means of addressing such a reality, John Witvliet writes, “Asking students to name both ‘their favorite worship song’ and ‘the song that has most nourished their faith’ (only rarely are they the same) will help them re-frame their working categories of music.”85

82 Bowman, 348.

83 Witvliet, “Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice: Music on Practical Theology and Pedagogy in Seminaries and Church-Related Colleges.”

84 Bowman, 350.

85 Witvliet, “Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice: Music on Practical Theology and Pedagogy in Seminaries and Church-Related Colleges.”
In the realm of worship instruction, John Witvliet has taught and written extensively. Although addressing worship pedagogy in a seminary or collegiate arena, Witvliet’s picture of practice and reflection also is applicable within the context of small groups: “Practice-oriented pedagogy . . . is a picture of robust liturgical participation followed by rigorous theological reflection. It is a picture of profound theological depth, interdisciplinary rigor, and pastoral concern.”

Equally important, offering further thought concerning questions that could be asked in worship instruction, Witvliet states, “Asking students both ‘what is your favorite style of worship?’ and ‘what moments in worship have transformed your outlook on the Christian life?’ begins to detach instinctive preferences from deeper questions of formation.”

Similarly, Best encourages such a distinction concerning music. “We need to discover the critical theological difference between being merely moved by music and being spiritually changed by it.”

Now that we have seen the weightiness that comes with a proper understanding of worship and the importance of instruction concerning a broad perspective of worship, we are ready to make the connection between worship and discipleship.

**Making Disciples/Discipleship**

In the minds of some people, the concept of making disciples—discipleship—carries a sense of magic or mysticism that only super-spiritual people will encounter as they seek to follow Christ. Instead of viewing discipleship as part of the “normal” Christian life, discipleship is compartmentalized for only those who have been “given the gift.” However, discipleship is not

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86 Witvliet, “Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice: Music on Practical Theology and Pedagogy in Seminaries and Church-Related Colleges.”

87 Ibid.

a specialized activity reserved for the spiritual elite. Instead, in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord Jesus Christ “normalized” discipleship when he issued this command to His followers: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Notice that Jesus’ parting words to His followers involves two key components: “go” and “make.” One must be willing to step outside of one’s comfort zone and embrace the reality of leaving “home” (whatever that zone of comfort may be). In addition, the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is given a directive to make disciples. To make disciples, and to understand how one makes disciples, one must be willing to be discipled. Furthermore, one must be willing to embrace the role of discipling others as an act of worship.

The first step in embracing the role of discipling others as an act of worship is pursuing the One who has called us to disciple others. The Apostle Paul encourages this perspective in his first recorded letter to the Christians in Corinth. “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). In addition, Mary Rynsburger and Mark Lamport champion the importance of knowing God. “Without knowledge of God, which comes from the foundation of God’s revelation of himself, belief is impossible, faith is impossible, obedience is impossible, and growth is impossible.” In addition, as important as knowledge is, one must also let the truth be fleshed out in daily life. “An individual grows not only by an increasing understanding of the truth, but through other means such as prayer, worship, service, fellowship, and suffering.”

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90 Ibid., 118.
Furthermore, as referenced in the prior chapter, in *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, pastor and author Mark Dever removes the component of mystery concerning discipleship by offering a wide-angle view of discipleship. Discipleship is “doing deliberate spiritual good to help [others] follow Christ.”

Aaron Keyes, a worship leader and recording artist, seems to offer agreement with Dever’s perspective regarding discipleship. Addressing the importance of discipleship in the life of the worship leader, Keyes writes, “We fool ourselves if we think transferring information is the sum total of discipleship. Discipleship is more than working through curriculum, more than learning the intellectual content of the Bible. Discipleship involves us intentionally allowing the Word to work through us.”

However, lest one think that a disciple maker and discipleship are more than he/she should be, Bill Hull removes any sense of specialized status from the term “disciple.” “A disciple, then, is a reborn follower of Jesus.” Offering additional clarification, Hull further states, “A disciple, then, is the normal Christian who follows Christ.”

Mike Harland, who has served as a pastor and who is the present Director for LifeWay Worship Resources, offers further encouragement along the same line. “Humility, kindness, selflessness, compassion, personal sacrifice, self-control, empathy, love for others, and a single-minded pursuit of God’s kingdom expansion are just some of the visible attributes of a worshipping disciple.”

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91 Dever, 17.


93 Hull, 32.

94 Ibid., 33.

encouraging words for those who view their personal lives as well as small groups as a means of encouraging others toward Christlikeness. It is normal for the follower of Christ to disciple others and reproduce oneself as an act of worship.

Finally, any discipleship involves an element of instruction. As already demonstrated, life-on-life interaction is important. However, there must be a reality of teaching someone else what has been learned in one’s personal life and study. In his journal article presenting the importance of teaching a worship and theological pedagogy, John Witvliet addresses the large-picture perspective of discipleship by offering an assessment of teaching worship. “A worship professor is not primarily interested in producing worship professors or liturgical critics but rather worshipers . . . who participate in worship more fully, actively, and consciously as part of a vital, faithful Christian life.”96 This sounds like “normal” discipleship.

One final aspect of discipleship for consideration is spiritual formation. Although the phrase is not found in the Bible, “spiritual formation” as a facet of growth in Christlikeness certainly is a scriptural concept. In biblical verbiage, spiritual formation could be presented as the process of progressive sanctification. In Acts Chapter 20, Luke chronicles Paul’s speech connecting knowledge of God’s Word to spiritual growth. “And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Additionally, Mary Rynsburger and Mark Lamport offer a connection between knowledge of God and growth in Christlikeness. “Growing in knowledge of who God is and of his will for creation is the essential prerequisite for growth toward Christian maturity.”97 Randy Frazee, pastor and author, offers further expansion of the

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96 Witvliet, “Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice: Music on Practical Theology and Pedagogy in Seminaries and Church-Related Colleges.”

97 Rynsburger and Lamport, 116.
importance of spiritual formation. “Spiritual growth involves practicing the ancient disciplines taught in the Bible and experienced throughout church history. Christian disciplines that foster our relationship with God—such as worship, prayer, Bible study, and single-mindedness—should be included.”

Although Frazee seems to present worship as separate from prayer, Bible study, and living/serving in community (“single-mindedness”), all of those aspects of worship foster a deeper relationship with God and should be part of any discipleship scenario.

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CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter addresses the specific method of research that was implemented as part of this thesis. In particular, the observational and analysis portion of the qualitative research process was used.

For this thesis, acts of worship observed were restricted to music/singing, prayer, and Scripture reading. In addition, explicit references to worship could be connected to those three actions. However, the presence of the worship action did not mandate a connection being made between the worship component and the life of worship that all believers are directed to have, as presented by the Apostle Paul. “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him” (Rom. 12:1 NLT).

Research Objective and Design

This thesis was formed with the intention of exposing a reality of the absence of an intentional worship component within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church.

The design of the research component of this thesis incorporated a human element: observation and analysis of various Community Groups within the larger Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church. In addition, the research component also incorporated a non-human element: analysis of existing Community Group ministry documents and analysis of new Community Group documents that were given to Community Group leaders and attendees over a fifty-two-week period.
Research Questions and Hypothesis

According to Paul Gray, John Williamson, David Karp, and John Dalphin, the Research Problem addresses “the question or questions concerning your topic that you believe are most important to answer.”

With the words of Gray, Williamson, Karp, and Dalphin in mind, the research portion of this thesis was designed to obtain information that could be utilized in answering the following research questions:

1. What content exists and is utilized in the various manifestations of the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church?
2. Is worship, as a subject, specifically addressed for attendees within the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church?
3. How does the incorporation of worship awareness in the Community Group setting encourage greater participation in the corporate worship setting as part of a worshiping community?

The hypothesis of this thesis is that an intentionally communicated worship component does not exist within the Community Group ministry and its physical manifestations under the umbrella of ministry at Grace Bible Church. As such, this thesis hypothesizes that a genuine disconnect exists between the concept of worship and the outworkings of a life of worship that are part of involvement in Community Groups.

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Participants

When utilizing a qualitative research method, it is important to define the target population one is seeking to help. According to Margaret R. Roller and Paul J. Lavrakas, “When starting to plan a qualitative research study, explicit consideration should be given to precisely articulating the population of participants or objects . . . that the study is investigating and for which the findings of the study are meant to apply.”100 In this research setting, the target population was defined as Grace Bible Church as a local church fellowship. Furthermore, the target was narrowed in scope to focus on Community Groups within the context of Grace Bible Church.

The precise number of participants included in the sample was a minimum of ten Community Groups, which included 125 people, within the larger framework of Grace Bible Church.

This research study focused on the presentation of content within each Community Group instead of the people as individual participants. However, as this researcher learned through interaction with various Community Groups, acknowledging and observing individual participants within the small group ministry setting also was beneficial.

Ethnicity of Participants

According to the Data USA website, Bozeman, Montana’s population is slightly over ninety percent Caucasian. The next two highest markers are Hispanic (roughly three percent) and Asian (over two percent).101

Within the geographic context of the city of Bozeman, Grace Bible Church serves as a cross-section of the general society of the Gallatin Valley. As such, the population of Grace Bible Church is overwhelmingly Caucasian. Understandably, the participants within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church reflect the same ethnic distribution.

Age of Participants

The first age-definition of people involved in Community Groups is that the overwhelming majority of participants are adults. More specifically, the age of people involved in Community Groups ranges from seventeen years of age to mid-eighties. Furthermore, the vast majority of Community Groups at Grace Bible Church are composed of a cross-section of the age of the adults involved in the ministry of the local church fellowship. With that stated, there are select Community Groups that are part of a smaller segment of the ministry (consider, for example, the Community Groups that are formatted as part of the CrossLife (college) ministry of Grace Bible Church). In addition, one Community Group that was observed also had involvement by a teenager who accompanied parents and was actively engaged in the meetings. Moreover, one of the Community Group scenarios included children for the opening of the Community Group before having them move to another room within the house.

Vocational Background of Participants

The people who are part of the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church come from a variety of backgrounds. Vocations for some of the people fall into the “professional” category, e.g., doctors, nurses, and engineers. Other people within the ministry are involved in education, whether elementary, secondary, or undergraduate and graduate realms. Furthermore, some of the people who are part of the ministry are involved in “blue collar” style work, e.g., construction workers, mechanics, and metal workers. In addition, other people involved in the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church have farm/ranch (agriculture) as their vocational background. Finally, some people involved in Grace Bible Church’s Community Group ministry “work” at being full-time collegiate students at Montana State University and Montana Bible College.

Stage of Life

The people involved in the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church come to the ministry from various stages of life. Some of the individuals are in an older arena of life, from 65 years of age and above. Other individuals within the ministry are younger than the prior group, but are in the “empty nest” stage of life with children who have grown up and left the home. Still other individuals in Community Groups have older children (teenagers) who are still part of the home scenario. Another portion of the individuals involved in the ministry have young children or no children. Finally, some individuals within Community Groups are single and at differing levels of age.
Christian Experience

The people involved in the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church come from vastly different spiritual and religious backgrounds. Some of the individuals in the ministry have been raised in Christian families, while others grew up in non-Christian families. In addition, some of the people in the ministry have known the effects of parental divorce, whether the families were Christian or non-Christian.

Furthermore, some of the individuals within the Community Group ministry have spent significant time (some years, and some decades) involved in the ministry endeavors of a local church fellowship of some sort (e.g., some people involved in this study have made it a practice to be at the local church fellowship every time the doors are open on weekends and during the week). In contrast, there are other people within the Community Group ministry whose church involvement before becoming a Christian had been limited to weddings, funerals, and an occasional Easter or Christmas service.

Setting

As part of a Qualitative Research Method, this researcher conducted non-obtrusive observations of multiple Community Groups in a variety of settings.

Some Community Group observations took place in a host home provided by one of the members of their specific Community Group. Even more, within the host home, the living room of the house was utilized as the meeting area for each respective Community Group. These rooms were filled with couches, rocking chairs, folding chairs, and bean-bag chairs. Some of the Community Groups were hosted in a family home. Other Community Groups were hosted in a house or apartment setting where single individuals share housing.
Other Community Group observations took place in the physical building structure occupied by the local church fellowship. In these settings, tables and chairs in classrooms or a multi-purpose room were utilized in a more sterile environment lacking the “house/home” feel of some of the other Community Groups.

In addition, some Community Group observations took place in public meeting areas located within local businesses. As such, these locales were far busier and noisier than the Community Group observations that took place in house settings or locations within the church building.

Finally, each Community Group had a slightly different perspective regarding length of meeting. As such, the observations of specific Community Groups lasted between a minimum of sixty-five minutes and a maximum of one hundred twenty minutes.

**Instrumentation**

According to Margaret Roller and Paul Lavrakas, qualitative research can be more observational in nature.

Qualitative research is distinguished by the fact that it places the researcher at the center of the data-gathering phase, and indeed the researcher ultimately is the ‘instrument’ by which information is collected. The research may be guided by written outlines of what to consider in an . . . observation or content analysis, but these are only accessories to be used by the principle data collection tool: the researcher.\(^\text{102}\)

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\(^{102}\) Roller and Lavrakas, 5.
Research Procedures

As part of the research process, study sheets provided for each of the groups within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church over a fifty-two-week setting were analyzed for inclusion of a worship component.

In addition, the overview/philosophy sheet for Community Groups at Grace Bible Church was considered and analyzed for evidence regarding worship instruction or an inclusion of a worship component.

Data Gathering and Analysis

In this thesis, the first portion of the data gathering process involved assessment of the ministry sheet that offered a rationale/philosophy for the Community Group Ministry. If a worship component was evident in this first portion of research and data gathering, there would be no need for continued development of the project. Since Grace Bible Church is the focal point of this thesis, the only Community Group ministry sheet that was reviewed is the ministry sheet that is given to people that are being pursued as small group leaders in this specific local church setting.

The second portion of the data-gathering process involved collecting print documents (bulletin inserts) that were provided to each Community Group over a fifty-two-week time frame. After collecting the documents, the data-gathering process included assessing the documents for the inclusion of a specific worship component. Finally, after the collection and assessment took place, the results of the assessment were analyzed to establish a pattern of activity and a possible blind-spot regarding worship pedagogy and instruction within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church. This data-gathering process was in line with
one of the qualitative research guidelines given by Margaret Roller and Paul Lavrakas. “The content analysis method in qualitative research is often used in combination with other qualitative methods.”

The third portion of the data-gathering process involved observations of specific Community Groups within the context that they would normally meet. In these settings, some observations took place as early as six o’clock in the morning. Other observations of Community Groups began as late as 7:30 in the evening. In this context of pursuing data, the written presentation regarding qualitative research was particularly helpful. *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* offers support regarding a non-intrusive, observational style of gathering data. “Nonparticipation observation is a relatively unobtrusive qualitative research strategy for gathering primary data about some aspect of the social world without interacting directly with its participants.”

**Research Goal**

As professors and researchers, Danica Hays and Anneliese Singh are well-qualified to explain the concept of a research goal. “A research goal is a *broad plan for achieving a desired result that considers what data need to be obtained, based on the needs of all those involved in the qualitative inquiry.*” With this perspective in mind, the research goal of this thesis was to obtain an understanding regarding the presence or absence of a worship component within the

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103 Roller and Lavrakas, 241.


Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church, as demonstrated through specific verbiage, physical activity, and a connection of such items to the lives of the people who were part of the small groups being observed.

Roller and Lavrakas also offer support concerning observation and analysis:

From a TQF [Total Quality Framework] perspective our definition of content analysis carries with it the ingredients for credible and analyzable data—by way of the systematic process that guides the researcher to reliable and valid measurement, processing, and verification—that ultimately will lead to useful research outcomes by way of thematic development and extraction of meaningful implications.106

In addition, the pursuit of “useful research outcomes” is part of the presentation by Hays and Singh in Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings. “Researchers using qualitative research questions seek to discover, explore a process, or describe experiences. That is, they typically attempt to obtain insights into particular processes that exist within a specific context.”107

**Research Procedures**

Weekly Print Material Assessment and Analysis

The Community Group ministry sheet detailing the intention and philosophy of Community Groups was assessed for any aspect of intentional worship involvement or any worship pedagogy instruction.

In addition, fifty-two weeks’ worth of print material given to the members of each Community Group was assessed for intentional direction regarding worship or the inclusion of a

106 Roller and Lavrakas, 232.

107 Hays and Singh, 129.
connection between Monday-through-Saturday life and the activities and discussion points provided for Community Group use. The print material was made available to Community Group participants as part of a bulletin insert. Even further, after the initial assessment, the weekly print material was analyzed and categorized for broad-scope assessment regarding a worship component.

Community Groups Speech Observation

The small group ministry at Grace Bible Church originally was established as a means of intellectual connection with the prior Sunday’s sermon and a way to build a sense of community within the larger church fellowship. Deviating from the point of origin, this research project was looking for verbiage that would suggest an understanding of a larger connection to worship. In each of the Community Groups that were assessed as part of this thesis, observation was conducted regarding the use of speech patterns that would attest to the inclusion of a worship component.

As part of the speech observation, the speech pattern of the person leading was considered first. Another aspect of speech observation involved listening for specific pairings of words that would be used by the Community Group leader and the rest of the people who were participating in the group.

Community Group Action Observation

The action-observation portion of the data-gathering process was focused on three specific outworkings of worship: Scripture reading, prayer, and music/singing. In this context, the observation included an “evident or not evident” reality: was the specific activity of worship a part of the Community Group scenario that was being observed? Furthermore, if the
outworking of worship was present in the small group setting, the observer/data gatherer was looking for a connection to be made by the leader or attendees between the specific worship activity, a personal life of worship as detailed in Romans Chapter 12, and the attitude and action that are part of the corporate worship gathering scenarios within this specific local church fellowship.

**Summary**

A qualitative research model was utilized for this thesis. As such, non-obtrusive observations were made of ten different Community Group settings. In addition, print material for Community Groups provided over fifty-two different weeks was assessed and analyzed for inclusion of an intentional worship component. Finally, the ministry rationale sheet was considered for specific direction regarding connection to worship in the actions of those leading the various Community Groups.

Now that we have considered the literature that addresses various components within this thesis, and addressed the method of research that was utilized in this project, in the next chapter we will present the findings that were uncovered as a result of the data gathering and analysis.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Pastor and theologian Michael Walters serves as a voice that reminds us of the primacy of worship. “Worship matters, first, because the failure to worship is the essence of sin.”108 Since every member of humanity worships something, the issue is not a failure to worship as much as it is a failure to recognize the God of the Bible as the rightful beneficiary of all worship.

Additionally, Joshua Rose helps us understand why small groups should contain a worship component. “Small groups, therefore, should provide an environment where a disciple can grow or learn in all aspects of Christlikeness.”109 The small group must do more than encourage community or intellectual involvement. The small group should be a place where discipleship takes place and an intentional worship component is utilized to connect the actions of life with the heart and actions of worship.

Although some practical expressions of worship (e.g., Scripture reading, prayer, and singing) may be employed in various small group settings, commentary (or lack thereof) may defeat the broader purpose of seeking to educate and disciple Community Group members regarding a life-of-worship mindset. This scenario of communicating a distinct difference between physical worship components became apparent when doing observational qualitative research in various Community Groups.


Even though the presence of a physical activity (e.g., Scripture reading and prayer) may seem to communicate “worship,” if there is no connection made between the activity and a life of worship, the local church fellowship may unintentionally reinforce the false belief that worship is a “separate” or distinct activity normally associated with music alone.

Data Description and Analysis

Community Group Philosophy and Ministry Overview Document Analysis

The first point of analysis for this thesis involved the ministry description sheet (including philosophy of ministry and purpose statement) that is part of the documents that have been developed for the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church. This instruction/philosophy sheet was developed by past staff members and has served as the Community Group ministry foundation, as well as presenting a broad overview concerning the direction for Community Groups. Even though this sheet was originally created for those who lead Community Groups, any individual who is interested in joining a Community Group receives the same overview sheet.

Since this research project was focused on one local church fellowship, only the philosophy/ministry overview sheet for Community Groups at Grace Bible Church was considered. The philosophy/overview document that was provided to this researcher is a one-page document and was analyzed for an inclusion of specific verbiage that offered a connection to worship or a worship component.

As stated at the beginning of the document, Community Groups at Grace Bible Church exist “to provide a context in which intimate Christ-centered relationships can be cultivated around the study and application of God’s Word as together we are conformed to the image of
In addition, three key components regarding Community Groups are listed: “The Word of God,” “Christ-centered Relationships,” and “Spiritual Growth.” These three key components are emphasized as important aspects of the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church.

In the remainder of the document, the practice of the scriptural “one anothers” through close relationships is championed. Although prayer, encouragement, Bible study, and fellowship are mentioned in the document, none of these items are tied to a personal or corporate perspective concerning worship. Moreover, in the analysis of the document, there is no evidence of any connection to an intentional worship component.

As part of this research study, the Grace Bible Church Community Group Philosophy and Ministry Overview document was analyzed for the inclusion of four individual points of emphasis: 1) Bible Content/Direction and Usage/Reference, 2) Worship Content and Reference, 3) Community Building, and 4) Participants’ Needs.

First, to help determine Bible Content/Direction and Usage/Reference on the Community Group ministry philosophy sheet, four distinct measures were used: 1) quotations of, or allusion to, Scripture; 2) direction to Scripture references; 3) inclusion of biblical concepts; and 4) specific mention of the Bible.

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110 Grace Bible Church Community Group Philosophy and Ministry Overview document.

111 Ibid.
In addition, to determine Worship Content and Reference as part of the Community Group ministry philosophy document, four different measurement implements were utilized: 1) use of the word “worship”; 2) direction to specific actions associated with worship; 3) connection between acts of worship and a lifestyle of worship; and 4) connection between acts of worship and corporate worship.

Next, to determine Community Building as part of the Community Group ministry philosophy sheet, five distinct items were used for assessment: 1) use of “community”; 2) direction regarding relationships in Community Groups; 3) addresses caring for others; 4) use of key “relational” words; and 5) encouragement toward a “sharing life.”
Finally, to determine whether or not participants’ needs are being addressed in the Community Group ministry sheet, four measurements were utilized: 1) direction to care for and encourage participants; 2) instruction to encourage participants’ personal growth; 3) direction to address difficult scenarios; and 4) exhortation to encourage participants’ growth in Christlikeness.

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<th>Directs the reader to encourage and care for participants.</th>
<th>Encourages directing members toward personal growth.</th>
<th>Directs the reader to address hard things.</th>
<th>Directs the reader to encourage growth in Christlikeness.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>evident</td>
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</table>

Figure 4: Community Group Philosophy and Overview Sheet-Needs

As demonstrated by the four charts assessing the Community Group ministry sheet, Community Building and Participants’ Needs were evident in the document. Furthermore, Bible Content/Direction and Usage/Reference also was noticeable, but only partially evident (e.g., Scripture and Bible study were mentioned, but no specific Bible references were utilized in the document). Finally, Worship Content and Reference was not evident in the document. Figure 5 presents these findings concerning the Community Group Philosophy and Ministry Overview sheet in a visual format.
In 1995, this researcher was called by God and affirmed by other leaders into full-time ministry at Grace Bible Church. Within the next year, the church leadership considered a recently published book: *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. In that book, pastor Rick Warren presents five different kinds of churches: the Soul Winning Church, the Experiencing God Church, the Family Reunion Church, the Classroom Church, and the Social Conscience Church. Grace Bible Church fits one description in a very precise manner:

*The Classroom Church.* A ‘classroom’ church occurs when the pastor sees his primary role as being a teacher. If teaching is his primary gift, he will emphasize preaching and teaching and de-emphasize the other tasks of the church. The pastor serves as the expert
instructor, and members come to church with notebooks, take notes, and go home. Key words for the classroom church are *expository preaching*, *Bible study*, *Greek and Hebrew*, *doctrine*, *knowledge*, *truth*, and *discipleship*. It is not unheard of for a classroom church to have the word *Bible* in its name.\(^\text{112}\)

This description from Warren was correctly identified by church leadership as the kind of institution that Grace Bible Church is. Although there have been attempts to broaden this reality, there is still a sense in which the church fellowship heavily is based on a classroom environment in which studying the Bible is championed over everything else. Although Bible study is an important aspect of worship, the application of Bible study, which should translate into a life of worship given to the Lord, is equally important. Furthermore, if Bible study is not intentionally communicated as an aspect of worship, the impression is given that Bible study is separate from “worship.”

Through the use of a paper tri-fold bulletin with sermon-notes section and a questionnaire insert—both of which are designed to be utilized by members of the congregation during the sermon portion of the corporate worship gathering—that is inserted in the bulletin, the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana primarily has been established as a discussion-oriented scenario. The main points of discussion in Community Groups are driven by a concentration on the sermon/message presented in the prior Sunday’s morning corporate worship gatherings. As demonstrated by these actions and encouragement toward a “correct” response, Community Groups have served as an intellectual exercise for those who are involved in them.

As part of this research project, fifty-two unique sermon notes with questionnaires were assessed. In addition, these fifty-two documents were further analyzed for inclusion of five

different elements: Bible Content/Direction/Usage/Reference, Intellectual Engagement, Worship Direction and Reference, Community Building, and Participants’ Needs. Distinguishing questionnaires’ data, figures utilizing columns and graphs help present this information.

To determine Bible Content/Direction/Usage/Reference in the fifty-two weekly Community Group questionnaires, six points of reference were used for measurement: 1) questionnaire offers direction to Scripture, 2) questionnaire encourages Bible study skills, 3) questionnaire seeks to help participants understand Scripture, 4) questionnaire encourages participants to use the Bible, 5) questionnaire addresses major themes of Scripture, and 6) questionnaire encourages application. Figure 6 provides fifty-two entries for each of the six points of reference addressing Bible Content/Direction/Usage/Reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offers direction to Scripture.</th>
<th>Encourages Bible study skills.</th>
<th>Helps participants understand the meaning of Scripture being studied.</th>
<th>Encourages participants to use the Bible.</th>
<th>Addresses major themes of Scripture: sin, judgment, redemption, and resurrection.</th>
<th>Encourages concept application to self, local church fellowship, and the rest of the world.</th>
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Figure 6: Community Group Weekly Questionnaires-Bible
Figures 7 through 12 provide a visual presentation for each of the six areas of measurement concerning Bible Content/Usage/Direction/Reference in the Community Group questionnaires.

Figure 7: Questionnaires-Scripture

Figure 8: Questionnaires-Bible Study Skills

Figure 9: Questionnaires-Understanding

Figure 10: Questionnaires-Bible Use
Although there are a few exceptions, the vast majority of analysis show evidence of Bible Content/Direction/Usage/Reference. As demonstrated by Figure 12, one outlier was the connection to application. Even though that analysis secured an overwhelming number of “partially evident” responses, in light of the other five means of measurement, this researcher believes that Bible Content/Direction/Usage/Reference is reasonably demonstrated in the Community Group questionnaires as “evident.”

To address the use of Intellect in the weekly Community Group questionnaires, four unique measurement tools were considered: 1) questions require a response, 2) issues that are addressed require deeper responses than yes/no, 3) questions seek to connect the sermon to theological concepts, and 4) the sheet requires personal preparation leading into the Community Group. Figure 13 provides fifty-two entries for each of the four points of reference addressing Intellect.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offers questions that require a response.</th>
<th>Addresses issues that require deeper responses than yes/no answers.</th>
<th>Offers questions that seek to connect the sermon to theological concepts like redemption, forgiveness, and sanctification.</th>
<th>Requires preparation.</th>
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</table>
Figures 14 through 17 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of measurement addressing Intellect in the Community Group weekly questionnaires.

Figure 13: Community Groups Weekly Questionnaires-Intellect

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| 51. evident | evident | evident | evident | evident |
| 52. evident | evident | evident | evident | evident |

Figure 14: Questionnaires-Response

Figure 15: Questionnaires-Yes/No
From this researcher’s perspective, each of the four areas of measurement demonstrated an overwhelming majority of “evident” responses. Although there a few “not evident” measures, over 90% of the measurements were “evident” and “partially evident.” In light of these findings, the analysis for inclusion of Intellect in the Community Group questionnaires is “evident.”

To determine the inclusion of Worship Direction and Reference in the weekly Community Group questionnaires, five measurements were utilized by this researcher: 1) inclusion of an intentionally communicated specific component for worship, 2) encouragement toward personal worship, 3) addressing specific principles related to worship, 4) direction regarding worship practices in Community Group, and 5) encouragement toward a biblical understanding of worship. Figure 18 provides fifty-two entries for each of the four points of reference addressing a Worship Component.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encourages worship as a reality for each person.</th>
<th>Addresses specific principles related to worship.</th>
<th>Gives direction regarding worship practices in the Community Group.</th>
<th>Encourages the Community Group to study the Bible for understanding regarding a lifestyle of worship.</th>
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Figures 19 through 22 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of measurement regarding the inclusion of an intentionally communicated Worship Component in the Community Group questionnaires.
The five areas of measurement for inclusion of Worship Direction and Reference in the Community Group questionnaires demonstrated an overwhelming “not evident” response of analysis. Even though there are a few replies in the “evident” and “partially evident” categories, these responses make up less than 9% of the total responses. Furthermore, although Bible use (prior point of measurement) is encouraged through the questionnaires, no connection is made between Bible use and worship. In summary, in the realm of inclusion of Worship Direction and Reference, the data demonstrated a clear “not evident” assessment.

To offer determination regarding Community Building in the weekly Community Group questionnaires, four distinct measurement tools were used: 1) encouragement toward relationship through group-application questions, 2) specific questions encourage relational aspects, 3) topics apply to the community as well as the individual, and 4) encouragement toward awareness of others. Figure 24 provides fifty-two entries for each of the four points of reference addressing Community Building in the Community Group weekly questionnaires.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Encourages building of relationships through group-application questions.</th>
<th>Contains specific questions that encourage a relational aspect with other participants.</th>
<th>Addresses topics that apply to the community in addition to the individual.</th>
<th>Encourages an awareness of others within the Community Group, local church fellowship, and the world.</th>
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Figure 24: Community Group Weekly Questionnaires-Community Building

Figures 25 through 28 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of measurement concerning Community Building in the Community Group weekly questionnaires.

Figure 25: Questionnaires-Group Application
Figure 26: Questionnaires-Others
The four areas of assessment regarding Community Building were difficult to categorize. As evidenced by the responses, one can see no overwhelmingly clear single response. Since “not evident” and a combination of “evident” and “partially evident” are almost even, this researcher determined a “partially evident” judgment regarding Community Building was the best assessment.

To help determine evidence of Participants’ Needs being addressed in the weekly Community Group questionnaires, five items were utilized for measurement: 1) encourages meeting spiritual needs of others, 2) encourages meeting fellowship needs of others, 3) encourages participants to respond to content, 4) provides opportunities for spiritual training, and 5) encourages growth in Christlikeness. Figure 29 provides fifty-two entries for each of the five points of reference addressing Participants’ Needs.
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<th>Content encourages opportunities to meet spiritual needs of others.</th>
<th>Encourages opportunities regarding meeting fellowship needs of others.</th>
<th>Encourages participants to respond to content.</th>
<th>Provides opportunities for spiritual training.</th>
<th>Encourages growth in Christlikeness.</th>
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Figure 29: Community Group Weekly Questionnaires-Participants’ Needs

Figures 30 through 34 provide a visual presentation for each of the five areas of measurement concerning the Community Group weekly questionnaires addressing Participants’ Needs.

Figure 30: Questionnaires-Spiritual Needs

Figure 31: Questionnaires-Fellowship Needs
Regarding meeting Participants’ Needs, the assessment of the fifty-two unique weekly Community Group questionnaires establishes an “evident” response. Findings indicated that the questionnaires encouraged participants to pursue personal spiritual needs and meet spiritual and fellowship needs of other people within the Community Group. However, findings did not clearly indicate that the questionnaires encouraged participants to meet the spiritual and fellowship needs of individuals outside the Community Group.
Description of Community Groups and Participants

Each of the Community Groups observed, though similar, operates as a distinct microcosm of the larger ministry known as Grace Bible Church. Listed in no particular order, the Community Groups that were part of data gathering and observation ranged in actual membership from seven to eighteen.

Community Group # 1 was composed of fifteen male and female individuals in the following age brackets: 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s. Further observation of the group included a mixture of married and single people.

Community Group # 2 had eight male participants whose ages were spread across the 20s, 30s, and 40s. Even though entirely male, this group’s makeup included married and single men.

Community Group # 3 was attended by ten men whose ages were in the 20s, 50s, and 60s. Similar to Community Group # 2, this group was composed of a selection of married and single men.

Community Group # 4 was the largest group observed throughout this process with eighteen attendees. The group was composed of mixed genders and included married couples and singles. Even further, the age brackets represented within this group included 20s, 30s, and 40s.

Community Group # 5 served as the lower-average group with twelve male and female participants. The group included married couples and single individuals. In addition, the group had a gap in ages of the membership: teen, 20s, and 40s.
Community Group # 6 was the smallest group observed throughout this project. Seven single and married women made up this group and were in the age bracket of late teens through early 20s.

Community Group # 7 was on the upper-end of this study’s average with thirteen members. The ages of the thirteen single men involved in this particular group were spread over late teen years and early 20s.

Community Group # 8 was composed of sixteen men, some married and some single, with ages spread across the broadest age spectrum encountered in this study: 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s.

Community Group # 9 was made up of single and married women with ages spread over the following decades: 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. Fifteen participants made up this Community Group.

Finally, Community Group # 10 had eleven adult members and several young children (each of which were connected to one of the married couples and spent time in another room during the meeting). This was the only group in this research study that was made up entirely of married couples (in each observation setting someone was gone, thus accounting for the odd number of participants) and had an equal male-female split. Finally, the ages represented by the members of this Community Group included people in their 20s and 30s.

Community Group Observations

Within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church, observations of various groups were conducted. As part of this thesis, ten distinct Community Groups within the larger ministry context of Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana were observed multiple times
over a two-and-a-half-month period of time (between September 15, 2018 and November 30, 2018). Although some of the Community Group observations lasted over ninety minutes (with the longest observation lasting 120 minutes), other observations concluded around the hour mark (with the shortest observation topping out at sixty-five minutes). During the data-gathering and recording stages of this thesis, a total time of twenty-nine hours and ten minutes was spent observing Community Groups. In addition, the average time spent in observation of each Community Group was just over eighty-seven minutes.

In the non-obtrusive observations of Community Groups, this researcher sought to discover four different measureable items: 1) Bible Use, 2) Participants’ Needs, 3) intentionally communicated Worship Component, and 4) Engagement of Intellect. As a means of establishing consistency of practice for the observations, each group was witnessed two times. Distinguishing this group-observation data, figures utilizing columns and pie charts present this information.

To measure Bible Use in the Community Groups, five action points were considered: 1) participants were taught that the Bible is God’s Word, 2) instruction included guidance regarding personal faith, 3) instruction sought to help participants understand the Scripture being studied, 4) participants brought and used Bibles, and 5) instruction included encouragement for participants to utilize Bible study skills. Figure 35 provides ten observational entries for each of the five points of reference assessing Bible Use during the first set of Community Group observations.
During observations, participants were taught that the Bible is God’s Word.

During observations, teaching included guidance regarding participants’ personal faith.

During observations, teaching sought to help participants understand the Scripture being studied.

During observations, participants used Bibles.

During observations, teaching included encouragement for participants to utilize Bible study skills.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>During observations, participants were taught that the Bible is God’s Word.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching included guidance regarding participants’ personal faith.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching sought to help participants understand the Scripture being studied.</th>
<th>During observations, participants used Bibles.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching included encouragement for participants to utilize Bible study skills.</th>
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Figure 35: Community Group Observations 1-Bible Use

Figures 36 through 40 (pie charts) provide a visual presentation for each of the five areas of measurement concerning Bible Use in the first round of Community Group observations.

Figure 36: Community Group Observations 1-God’s Word
Figure 37: Community Group Observations 1-Faith Guidance

Figure 38: Community Group Observations 1-Understanding Scripture

Figure 39: Community Group Observations 1-Bible
Figure 40: Community Group Observations 1-Bible Study Skills

Figure 41 provides ten observational entries for each of the four points of reference assessing Bible Use during the second set of Community Group observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During observations, participants were taught that the Bible is God's Word.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching included guidance regarding participants' personal faith.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching sought to help participants understand the Scripture being studied.</th>
<th>During observations, participants used Bibles.</th>
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Figure 41: Community Group Observations 2-Bible Use
Figures 42 through 46 provide a visual presentation for each of the five areas of measurement concerning the inclusion of Bible Use in the second round of Community Group observations.

**Figure 42: Community Group Observations 2-God’s Word**

- **Evidence** 70%
- **Partially evident** 30%
- **Not evident** 0%

**Figure 43: Community Group Observations 2-Faith Guidance**

- **Evidence** 70%
- **Partially evident** 30%
- **Not evident** 0%
Figure 44: Community Group Observations 2-Understanding Scripture

Figure 45: Community Group Observations 2-Bible

Figure 46: Community Group Observations 2-Bible Study Skills
The findings from the two Community Group observations clearly testify to Bible Use in the Community Group setting. Furthermore, there are negligible differences between the two sets of observations, which indicates consistency in how the Community Groups utilize the Bible. From this researcher’s perspective, the few “partially evident” responses do not outweigh the overwhelming majority of “evident” assessments. Additionally, use of the Bible may be an act of worship. However, this researcher determined that use of the Bible without intentional communication connecting such action to worship encourages a dichotomy between the two items.

To measure Participants’ Needs being addressed in the Community Groups, five points of observation were considered: 1) instruction encouraged opportunities to meet spiritual needs of others, 2) instruction encouraged opportunities regarding meeting fellowship needs of others, 3) instruction provided opportunities for spiritual training and growth, 4) instruction encouraged application to self, local church fellowship, and the rest of the world, and 5) instruction encouraged growth in Christlikeness. Figure 47 provides ten observational entries for each of the five points of reference assessing Participants’ Needs during the first set of Community Group observations.
Figures 48 through 52 provide a visual presentation for each of the five areas of measurement concerning Participants’ Needs being addressed in the first round of Community Group observations.

![Figure 48: Community Group Observations 1-Spiritual Needs](image)

![Figure 49: Community Group Observations 1-Fellowship Needs](image)
Figure 50: Community Group Observations 1-Spiritual Growth

Figure 51: Community Group Observations 1-Application

Figure 52: Community Group Observations 1-Christlikeness
Figure 53 provides ten observational entries for each of the five points of reference assessing Participants’ Needs during the second set of Community Group observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During observations, teaching encouraged opportunities to meet spiritual needs of others.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching encouraged opportunities regarding meeting fellowship needs of others.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching provided opportunities for spiritual training and growth.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching encouraged application to self, local church fellowship, and the rest of the world.</th>
<th>During observations, teaching encouraged growth in Christlikeness.</th>
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Figure 53: Community Group Observations 2-Participants’ Needs

Figures 54 through 58 provide a visual presentation for each of the five areas of measurement concerning Participants’ Needs being addressed in the second round of Community Group observations.
Figure 54: Community Group Observations 2-Spiritual Needs

Figure 55: Community Group Observations 2-Fellowship Needs

Figure 56: Community Group Observations 2-Spiritual Growth
In both sets of Community Group observations, there was clear evidence of encouragement to grow in Christlikeness and a presentation of opportunities for spiritual growth. The measurements of “partially evident” were tied to meeting the needs of others. Although there were slight differences between the two sets of observations, these differences were nominal and had no significant bearing on the final analysis. In light of these findings, this researcher assessed the meeting of Participants’ Needs as “evident” in both sets of Community Group observations.
Figure 59 provides ten observational entries for each of the four points of reference assessing the inclusion of an intentionally communicated Worship Component during the first set of Community Group observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During observations, the word &quot;worship&quot; was used (explicit).</th>
<th>During observations, singing, praying, and Bible reading were present as implicit actions of worship.</th>
<th>During observations, verbal connections were made between the actions of worship and the concept of a life of worship.</th>
<th>During observations, verbal connections were made between the actions of worship in the Community Group and the actions of worship in the local church fellowship's corporate worship gatherings.</th>
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Figure 59: Community Group Observations 1-Worship Component

Figures 60 through 63 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of reference assessing the inclusion of a Worship Component during the first set of Community Group observations.

Figure 60: Community Group Observations 1-Worship Verbiage
Figure 61: Community Group Observations 1-Worship Actions

- **Singing, praying, and Bible reading were present**
  - **Partially evident** 100%
  - **Not evident** 0%
  - **Evident** 0%

Figure 62: Community Group Observations 1-Worship and Life

- **Connection was made between actions of worship and a life of worship**
  - **Evident** 20%
  - **Partially evident** 0%
  - **Not evident** 80%

Figure 63: Community Group Observations 1-Worship Connection

- **Connection was made between worship in community group and corporate worship gathering**
  - **Evident** 20%
  - **Partially evident** 0%
  - **Not evident** 80%
Figure 64 provides ten observational entries for each of the four points of reference assessing the inclusion of an intentionally communicated Worship Component during the second set of Community Group observations.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>During observations, the word &quot;worship&quot; was used (explicit).</th>
<th>During observations, singing, praying, and Bible reading were present as implicit actions of worship.</th>
<th>During observations, verbal connections were made between the actions of worship and the concept of a life of worship.</th>
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Figure 64: Community Group Observations 2-Worship Component

Figures 65 through 68 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of reference assessing the inclusion of an intentionally communicated Worship Component during the second set of Community Group observations.

![Image of a pie chart showing the distribution of the word "worship" used (0% evident, 30% partially evident, 70% not evident)].

Figure 65: Community Group Observations 2-Worship Verbiage
Figure 66: Community Group Observations 2-Worship Actions

- **Singing, praying, and Bible reading were present**
  - Evident: 0%
  - Partially evident: 100%
  - Not evident: 0%

Figure 67: Community Group Observations 2-Worship and Life

- **Connection was made between actions of worship and a life of worship**
  - Evident: 30%
  - Partially evident: 70%
  - Not evident: 0%

Figure 68: Community Group Observations 2-Worship Connection

- **Connection was made between worship in community group and corporate worship gathering**
  - Evident: 0%
  - Partially evident: 100%
  - Not evident: 0%
The two sets of Community Group observations allowed for assessment of the inclusion of an intentionally communicated Worship Component. Even though the word “worship” was used in some Community Groups, it only showed up in eight out of twenty scenarios. Singing, praying, and Bible reading received a 100% “partially evident” assessment from this researcher. The “partially evident” marker was utilized as a means of addressing the presence of one or two of the listed components (never three). Although one or two of these actions of worship were present, little direction was given to connect the specific action of Scripture reading or prayer to a greater reality of worship. Twenty-five percent (five out of twenty) of the observational assessments detected a connection between actions of worship and a life of worship. Finally, less than ten percent of the group observations made any connection between worship in Community Groups and the corporate worship gathering. Some subtle differences were noticed between the two sets of Community Group observations (e.g., the word “worship” specifically was used in five groups during the first set of observations, but only in three groups in the second set of observations). However, these minor differences had no significant impact on the overall analysis and demonstrated consistency in the groups’ actions. In light of these findings, this researcher concluded a “not evident” measurement for the inclusion of an intentionally communicated Worship Component.

Figure 69 provides ten observational entries for each of the four points of reference used to determine engagement of Intellect during the first set of Community Group observations.
During the observations, encouragement was given to provide more than yes/no responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the observations, participants seemed intent on giving answers that were more than yes/no responses.</th>
<th>During the observations, participants readily seemed to engage in more discussion items than only those listed on the Community Group Weekly Sheet/Notes.</th>
<th>During the observations, teaching encouraged participants to respond to content.</th>
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Figure 69: Community Group Observations 1-Intellect

Figures 70 through 73 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of reference used to determine engagement of Intellect during the first set of Community Group observations.

Figure 70: Community Group Observations 1-Yes/No Encouragement
Figure 71: Community Group Observations 1-Yes/No Response

- Evident: 60%
- Partially evident: 40%
- Not evident: 0%

Figure 72: Community Group Observations 1-Discussion

- Evident: 80%
- Partially evident: 20%
- Not evident: 0%

Figure 73: Community Group Observations 1-Participation

- Evident: 100%
- Partially evident: 0%
- Not evident: 0%
Figure 74 provides ten observational entries for each of the four points of reference used to determine engagement of Intellect during the second set of Community Group observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the observations, encouragement was given to provide more than yes/no responses.</th>
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Figure 74: Community Group Observations 2-Intellect

Figures 75 through 78 provide a visual presentation for each of the four areas of reference used to determine engagement of Intellect during the second set of Community Group observations.

Figure 75: Community Group Observations 2-Yes/No Encouragement
Figure 76: Community Group Observations 2-Yes/No Response

Figure 77: Community Group Observations 2-Discussion

Figure 78: Community Group Observations 2-Participation
The two sets of Community Group observations provided a clear assessment of the encouragement regarding participants’ involvement of Intellect. The measurement of discussion taking place outside of the items on the questionnaire provided fourteen “evident” and six “partially evident” scores out of a possible twenty. Twenty percent of the observations concerning participants giving more than yes/no answers yielded a “partially evident” assessment, and eighty percent produced an “evident” assessment. Even though some of the observation points allowed for a “partially evident” response, this researcher believes the 100% demonstrations in encouragement regarding participation and encouragement for more than yes/no responses override the outliers. Furthermore, the slight variances in two categories of assessment between the two sets of observations had no meaningful bearing on the final analysis. The absence of significant variation gives credence to the perspective that the Community Groups were operating in their normal manner. In light of these findings, this researcher’s perspective is that involvement of Intellect was “evident” in the Community Group observations.

Summary

The three-tiered manner of research for this thesis allowed for various aspects of a larger ministry to be assessed for the inclusion of an intentionally communicated worship component. The Community Group Ministry Philosophy Sheet, the fifty-two unique weekly Community Group questionnaires, and the two sets of Community Group observations provided different angles of looking at the larger picture. The findings testify to the reality of a strong emphasis on intellectual engagement, Bible content, and meeting participants’ needs in the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church. However, since none of these elements were communicated as part of worship, equally as strong are the findings that testify to the absence of an intentionally
communicated worship component. Demonstrating mixed results are the findings regarding the building of community.

Following this presentation of data and data assessment and analysis, the final chapter of this thesis will offer a summary and conclusions.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This concluding chapter presents a summary and conclusions of this thesis. After presenting the research findings’ impact concerning the hypothesis, this researcher will offer specific directions that could be utilized for implementing an intentionally communicated worship component into the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church. In addition, these specific directions could be used by many church fellowships that champion the role of small group ministries in their specific ministry locations.

Summary of Purpose and Study

Chapter One offers the rationale behind this thesis and addresses the importance of identifying the presence of a worship component within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, MT. This chapter initiates the concept that a worship component is a necessary aspect of the Community Group ministry. In addition, definitions for various words and concepts are presented.

Chapter Two serves as the means of addressing material that already had been published by other individuals regarding the topic of this thesis. Since very little has been published that addresses the combination of small groups, intentional discipleship, and outworkings of worship, this researcher pursued written resources that focus on a particular portion of each of these topics.
Chapter Three initiates the research portion, describes research methods, and presents the specific technique of research that is utilized in this thesis. In particular, the observational and analysis portion of a qualitative research methodology is employed by this researcher.

Chapter Four continues the research portion and presents information that was secured through the three-tiered process of data collection and analysis. In this chapter, the Community Group Ministry Philosophy and Overview sheet and fifty-two weeks’ worth of Community Group questionnaires are analyzed for the inclusion of an intentionally communicated worship component. In addition, these documents are assessed for Bible use, addressing participants’ needs, engagement of the intellect, and building community. Another aspect of this data collection involves non-obtrusive observations of Community Groups in their natural settings. In this portion of the research, the researcher is looking for evidence of an intentionally communicated worship component in Community Group settings. In the same observations, the researcher considers whether or not participants’ needs are being addressed, whether or not the Bible is being used, and whether or not engagement of intellect is encouraged for participants.

This research project was conceived and further designed to discern the reality of an intentional worship component in small groups, particularly the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church. As stated in Chapter Four, the hypothesis of this thesis is that an intentionally communicated worship component does not exist within the Community Group ministry and its physical manifestations under the umbrella of Christian ministry at Grace Bible Church. As such, this thesis hypothesizes that a noticeable disconnect exists between the biblical presentation of worship and the outworkings of a life of worship that are part of involvement in Community Groups.
Summary of Research Findings

The research findings of this thesis support the initial hypothesis that postulates an absence of any intentionally communicated worship component within the Community Group ministry setting. As evidenced by the analysis of documents and observations of Community Groups, the concept of worship as an all-of-life scenario is overwhelmingly absent. Furthermore, no intentional connection is made between prayer, Scripture reading, and singing as specific actions of worship that hold ties to a person’s individual worship or involvement in the larger corporate worship gathering.

The data collection and analysis contributes to several expected discoveries. In particular, this researcher anticipated a heavy involvement of Bible in all aspects of the Community Group ministry. The evidence provided through data collection and assessment testifies to the reality of Bible use.

According to Rick Warren’s work in *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission*, Grace Bible Church is accurately categorized as a “classroom church.” As such, this researcher predicted a clear involvement of intellect in the lives of participants. Again, this prediction is confirmed to be true by the data that was collected and analyzed.

In a similar manner, the collection and analysis of data confirms the importance of caring for the needs of the participants in the various Community Groups. Although no scenario can perfectly address the specific needs of each individual in attendance, the observation of Community Groups and analysis of extensive documents testify to the reality of participants’ needs being acknowledged and addressed.
The data collection and analysis portion of this thesis provides overwhelming evidence that a worship component is not part of the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church. Although some observable actions of worship (e.g., prayer, Scripture reading, and singing) were employed in the various Community Group settings that were observed by this researcher, no intentional connection was made between the specific acts of worship and a Romans Chapter 12 directive concerning all of life as worship.

Finally, a genuine care and concern for one another was demonstrated by participants during Community Group observations. However, an unexpected discovery took place concerning the building of community when this researcher collected data from the Community Group documents and analyzed the information. According to the Community Group Philosophy and Ministry Overview sheet, the Community Group ministry is intended to personalize a larger church fellowship by making building of relationships more accessible. This researcher was surprised to find that the data collection and analysis of fifty-two different weekly Community Group questionnaires does not support the stated goal of community building found in the Community Group Philosophy and Ministry Overview sheet.

**Summary of Limitations**

Various mainstream authors have addressed the use of small groups in environments that are not tied to church fellowships or religious scenarios. This research project considers religious small groups and specifically addresses the use of Community Groups in one local church fellowship setting. Offering further focus and definition, this research project allows for principles of application in a plethora of different church fellowships, even though it is specifically centered within the singular ministry setting of Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana. The method of research is limited to a non-obtrusive observational and analysis
qualitative model, in which this researcher served as the instrument of data collection and examination. Furthermore, ten different Community Groups including one hundred twenty-five participants were observed for inclusion in the findings of this thesis.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This thesis addresses small groups from a collective/group mindset instead of addressing specific individuals. This big-picture perspective provides a unique avenue from which a broad viewpoint may be assessed and analyzed.

As this researcher concludes this research project, several areas regarding possible future research stands out. First, future research could be conducted regarding differences between male and female involvement within the ministry setting of Community Groups. Since gender differentiation was not specifically part of this research project, this researcher believes that further research is needed to more accurately identify how men and women interact within small groups. In addition, such a study including gender observations within the Community Groups could give insight into how (or if) specific actions of worship are demonstrated differently by men and women.

Another possibility regarding future research would involve specifically appraising participants as *individuals* instead of parts of the observable group. In particular, further research could be conducted regarding participants’ personal worship practices outside of the group and their impact on the corporate actions of worship that take place within the Community Group setting. Since this thesis dealt with observations of small groups, the individual participants were not targeted as specific portions of observable data. This research project focuses on Community
Groups as *groups* with general observations of individuals within the group. However, the individual members of the small groups were not studied in specific ways.

This research project focused on the ministry of Grace Bible Church. A final consideration for future research would be broadening the focus of the research from one local church fellowship (in this thesis, Grace Bible Church in Bozeman, Montana) to several church fellowships within a shared geographic setting. Although this researcher believes similar results would be achieved through a broader sample of research, having additional local church practices for the sake of observation and analysis would be beneficial for serving the Church.

**Conclusions**

**Areas for Growth**

As is true in many other local church fellowship settings, Community Groups are a vital part of the larger ministry of Grace Bible Church. However, the Community Group ministry has areas in which growth would be helpful.

First, a preliminary concern that must be addressed is the apparent disconnect between acts of worship in the corporate worship gathering and a life of worship that is partially lived out in Community Groups. Vernon Whaley gives an historical presentation regarding those who maintained a measure of disconnect between the acts of worship in a corporate worship gathering and the life of worship that each follower of Christ should seek to exemplify. “See, for them [Israelites who are addressed by the prophets Isaiah and Amos], worship was something they did in the *house of worship*. But it wasn’t trickling down into their everyday lives, to their *ethics*, to
the way they treated people, conducted business, and responded to the less fortunate. Worship was just one big, pretentious charade filled with hollow rituals.\textsuperscript{113}

Instead of cultivating a compartmentalized attitude regarding worship, worship should be an all-of-life attitude and activity. W. Robert Godfrey echoes this perspective and testifies to the important role that worship has in our relationship with God. “The restoration of the fellowship between God and his people is expressed most fully in worship. As that fellowship was broken by sin and rebellion, so its restoration must be expressed in obedience to God.”\textsuperscript{114} When addressing His disciples, the Lord Jesus Christ also communicates this connection between worship (as expressed through love) and obedience. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

As the deliberate focus of this research project, the addition of an intentionally communicated 	extit{worship component}, which includes the corresponding training to make this a reality, is the first area that should be addressed in the small group setting. Although Scripture reading and prayer are acts of worship, if no intentional connection is made, the actions are perceived as separate from worship. Pastor and worship leader Bob Kauflin would support refining of a worship perspective. “Worship matters. It matters to God because he is the one ultimately worthy of all worship. It matters to us because worshiping God is the reason for which we were created.”\textsuperscript{115} Kauflin’s words offer great insight. Since an intentionally communicated


The second element within the Community Group ministry that could be addressed is the relational aspect of building community. Stated another way, Community Groups should seek to encourage relationships and nurture relational fellowship as a demonstration of worship. The biblical presentation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as the Trinity is the perfect example of community. In a similar sense, humans are created to be relational and live in community. Furthermore, since Community Groups are made up of individuals, they should be relational as well. As such, the personal interaction in such a setting can be challenging. Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp stress the challenges that come with relationships when they write, “All of our relationships are less than perfect. They require work if they are going to thrive.” Jonathan Holmes echoes this unique challenge concerning relationships. “Throughout our lives, our sin nature continues to press us toward relational isolation, separation, and alienation from God, as well as from one another.” Holmes’ words serve as a reminder of the encouragement toward relational intimacy that C. S. Lewis encourages in The Four Loves.

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your

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heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

These thoughts from Lane, Tripp, Holmes, and Lewis seem to echo the biblical perspective presented in the book of Proverbs that offers exhortation against isolation. “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment” (Prov. 18:1). Although personal relationships can be challenging, participants of Community Groups need to be reminded that isolation is never a friend.

Holmes offers additional development of the concept. “We have trouble even grasping that God’s vision is for an embodied friendship that abounds in the ordinary details of life—laughing, working, worshiping, eating meals, sharing heartaches, and encountering trials . . . together. Biblical friendship is intended by God as an all-encompassing spiritual discipline that engages every aspect of who we are.” The words Holmes uses—“laughing, working, worshiping, eating meals, sharing heartaches, and encountering trials . . . together”—are words that should describe the relationships that are encouraged and fostered in Community Groups. Even more, these words from Holmes seem to echo the thoughts the author of Hebrews presents as an exhortation to readers. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24-25). Douglas McKelvey extends this prayer as a means of encouraging community within the framework of small groups.

You alone, O God, by Your gracious and life-giving Spirit have power to knit our imperfect hearts, our weaknesses, our strengths, our stories, and our gifts, one to another.

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119 Holmes, 31.
Unite Your people and multiply our meager offerings, O Lord, that all might resound to Your glory. May our acts of service and creation, frail and wanting as they are, be met and multiplied by the mysterious workings of Your Spirit who weaves all things together toward a redemption more good and glorious than we yet have eyes to see, or courage to hope for. May our love and our labors now echo Your love and Your labors, O Lord. Let all that we do here, in these our brief lives, in this our brief moment to love, in this the work You have ordained for this community, flower in winsome and beautiful foretaste of greater glories yet to come.\textsuperscript{120}

Each member of the local manifestation of the Body of Christ needs the other members. The participants in Community Groups need to remember the instruction from the Apostle Paul. “As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:20, 26-27). Yes, God saves each person as an individual. But He does not save each person to operate alone as an individual. Instead, God saves each person as an individual to be part of the local church community that is a manifestation of the larger Body of Christ.

The final aspect of developing relationships that should be addressed is the thought of Community Groups as “family.” In seeking to initiate a worship component within the small groups setting, one must embrace small groups as an important aspect of church body life. Doing so will have consequences. In his doctorate thesis “Biblical Principles of Small Group Ministry,” Shawn Barr states, “The best word picture for the church is family, and the family is made up of not just immediate family, but extended family as well. The church as family goes beyond the extended family to include others that are not blood related.”\textsuperscript{121} Small groups should be viewed


as family. In addition, worship as a “family” should be a high priority for those who profess to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recommendations

As Grace Bible Church seeks to utilize Community Groups as a particular means of encouraging growth concerning a lifestyle of worship and ministering to one another, the intentional embracing of a worship pedagogy should be part of the process. Through the study and analysis of documents and observations of Community Groups, this researcher believes five distinct practices could serve as an encouragement for initiating a perspective of worship within the Community Group setting.

First, opening the Community Group questionnaire with a directive regarding a heart of thankfulness as a demonstration of worship would be helpful. As biblical examples of connecting worship with thanksgiving, consider these directives from the Apostle Paul regarding an attitude of thanksgiving: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6); “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:15-16); “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2); “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Tim. 2:1). This encouragement toward thanksgiving as an act of worship could be accomplished by having Community Group participants answer a question at the beginning of
the session. “As an act of worship, what is something in your life over this past week for which you can offer public thanks to God in this Community Group setting?”

The second practice involves giving specific direction concerning worship through music in small groups. Offering wise delineation regarding terms, Frank Page and Lavon Gray state, “Contrary to popular opinion, music is not synonymous with worship. In our modern worship culture, due to marketing and branding, many have lost sight that music in worship is a functional art and never an end in itself.” Page and Gray offer a healthy reminder that worship is not defined by music. This presentation is an accurate perspective and a proper correction. Even with that in mind, music use as an act of worship in the Community Group setting is a vital component of corporate worship and a personal life of worship.

Although addressing music in the large corporate worship gathering, John Witvliet’s testimony regarding an important role music plays also applies to worship in many small-group scenarios. “First, consider the straightforward claim that congregational song is means of spiritual nourishment.” Witvliet then offers a broadening of the concept by stating, “Good music can also inoculate us from spiritual disease.” A music-worship component within the Community Group ministry would serve as another collective act of worship that could provide spiritual nourishment and a strong defense against spiritual infections initiated through errant doctrine or unintentional endorsement of specific doctrines. Following this line of reasoning, Lavon Gray offers encouragement regarding caution in the realm of music selection for

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124 Ibid., 235.
corporate worship. “If we are not cautious, these influences [a potpourri of theological guidance] . . . can lead to a hybrid perspective, if you will, mixing a little bit of Pentecostalism with various theological positions and worship practices. And the result is theological confusion.”

In our culture, new is often perceived as better. In this realm, many churches have abandoned the use of hymnals in the main corporate worship gathering. Likewise, countless hymnals collect dust while sitting in disuse and many of the songs that reside in the hymnals have become neglected treasures. Using older hymnals as a tool for worship in the Community Group setting could be tremendously effective in encouraging a particular act of worship.

Part of this action of worship would need to involve communication between Community Group leaders and the pastor who oversees the small group ministry. The pastor could provide general information regarding the direction of discussion for the upcoming week and offer a specific song in the hymnal that might offer a connection to the topic addressed by the sermon and corresponding Community Group questionnaire.

In addition, using older hymnals that are no longer utilized in the corporate worship gatherings would encourage the Community Groups to use/learn songs that are part of past generations of Christianity. Harold Best stresses the importance of joining older and newer music together in worship of God. “While there is nothing inherently wrong with change, there is something wrong with the wholesale rejection of tradition. Christianity is not just new, it is for

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126 If hymnals are not readily accessible in your local church fellowship setting, this researcher recommends checking with other local church fellowships to see if they have non-utilized hymnals. If so, ask if their non-utilized hymnals could be used for your small groups worship project. Utilizing internet networking, contacting other church fellowships around the country would be an additional option.
all time. Christianity is not just contemporary language, it is classic language, time-honored and
time-polished expression.”127 Pastor Robert Morgan echoes the presentation offered by Best. “If
we don’t know our past, we will not have a guide for our future.”128 Although newer songs may
be used as well, the exhortation to use older songs would serve as a means of connecting people
in the Community Groups to past generations of worshipers and reminding participants of the
historical nature of the Christian faith.

Indeed, it matters what we sing.

The third practice that should be addressed is the handling of Scripture reading in
Community Groups. Vernon Whaley encourages a high view regarding the handling and reading
of God’s Word. “True worship always involves the believer responding to God’s revealed
truth.”129 In addressing Scripture reading with Community Groups, it is imperative to remind
people that reading Scripture is an act of worship in and of itself. Another important element for
reading Scripture in Community Groups is reminding participants about the unparalleled impact
connected to God’s Word. The author of Hebrews emphasizes the incomparable power of the
Word of God. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts
and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). “When the reading of Scripture is with clarity,
conviction, and power, it sets the Word of God before the people in a way that demonstrates its

128 Robert Morgan, “The Heritage of Our Hymns—Part 1” (video of lecture, Liberty University,
Lynchburg, VA, 2016), accessed March 30, 2017. https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/list
Content.jsp?course_id=_354156_1&content_id=_16916848_1.
129 Vernon Whaley, Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship
authority and demands a response. The reading of Scripture should be one of the most powerful parts of worship—every word spoken from the Word is from God.”¹³⁰ This thought process fits in line with the presentation from the Apostle Paul in the second recorded letter to Timothy. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!” (2 Tim. 2:8-9)

The fourth practice of worship that should be addressed in the practices of Community Groups is prayer. Like Scripture reading, prayer is an act of worship and should be addressed in such a manner. Sadly, prayer is not as large a part of the life of a follower of Christ as it should be. Generally speaking, this may be because we believe we are strong enough and wise enough on our own. When we don’t pray, we are living out the deception that we can handle things on our own. The child of God should have a different perspective. Donald Whitney offers specific encouragement against a lack of prayer that would be a helpful consideration for all Community Groups. “If congregational or small group prayer isn’t part of your Christian life, there’s a problem. . . . Prayer with others from the body of believers was one of the four marks of the church in Acts 2:42. . . . This verse doesn’t say they all prayed aloud, but it does mean that they prayed together. If you are unwilling to pray with others, you are too independent spiritually.”¹³¹ Mark Labberton continues this assault against self-sufficiency in regard to prayer. “In prayer we practice being powerless, and we seek God’s power for the powerless people we name. It is as

¹³⁰ Allen P. Ross, Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006), 506.

though we are claiming and extending power into lives and places, circumstances and relationships where that power can really make a difference.”

Finally, providing a biblical context, consideration of these two presentations from the Apostle Paul regarding prayer also would be helpful for Community Groups. “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). “To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:11-12).

The fifth practice of worship that this researcher believes should be addressed in the Community Group ministry at Grace Bible Church is service. This thought process of serving others fits in with the command from the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the church in Philippi and should be part of every follower of Christ’s life mission. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3 NKJV). Serving others is a means of living out the reality of pursuing the interests of others above our own. This is challenging and good. When we are focused on others and serving others, we are not focused on and serving ourselves. Nate Palmer’s text addressing servanthood as an aspect of worship is a helpful reminder in this consideration of service. “The most important point, and the most easily forgotten, [is] we do not serve to earn God’s love or favor. As Christians, our standing with God—our very salvation—does not depend on whether we serve, but that Christ first served us.”


133 Nate Palmer, Servanthood as Worship: The Privilege of Life in a Local Church (Adelphi: Cruciform Press, 2010), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 175.
In Matthew Chapter 20, the mother of James and John asks Jesus to place her sons near God the Father. In this context, James and John do not seem to mind that their mom is doing this. Jesus’ response is a tremendous exhortation for each participant in the Community Group ministry. “And whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:27-28).

Paul’s words to the believers in Rome serve as a great close to this exhortation toward service for those involved in Community Groups. “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord” (Rom. 12:9-11). Imagine the impact Community Groups could have within their ranks and on those outside if the belief becomes practice: “outdo one another in showing honor.”

As individuals grow in their personal understanding of worship and its application in the Community Group setting, the involvement of the same people will bring about an increased awareness and interest in the corporate worship gathering. However, these actions are not to earn the esteem of others. “The right motivation for your worship and your ministry is not to be accepted or esteemed by others, but to be pleasing to God.”

Doing actions of worship for impressing others will have no eternal benefit. We need to remember well that our “worship is unto the Lord. After all, our worship here is just a rehearsal for our worship in eternity.” These are good words to consider. Indeed, each person who is involved in the Community Group ministry setting should have a desire to please the Lord. May each one of us who professes to

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134 Mack and Swavely, 236.

follow Christ long to hear the words spoken by the Lord during His time on earth, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:23).
APPENDIX 1: WORSHIP PEDAGOGY FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Introduction

Why should we be concerned about the presence of an intentionally communicated worship component within the Community Group ministry of Grace Bible Church? Why should we seek to implement a worship pedagogy in that ministry setting? Consider these words that address a theology of worship from pastor and musician Mike Cosper. “Whether you know it or not, intend it or not, you carry a deep well of ideas about what worship is. . . . You’ve built this knowledge over the years and decades of your life, adding to it each time you’ve gathered with the church. One might say, ‘I don’t really have a theology of worship,’ but in fact everyone does. That’s because we are habit-formed people.”¹³⁶

The opening verses of Romans Chapter 12 serve as a foundation for a lifestyle of worship. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2).

There seems to be a relative disconnect between acts of worship in a lifestyle of worship and corporate worship gatherings and acts of worship within a small group setting. To counteract this problem regarding worship, the intentional addition of a worship component into the small group setting will be helpful.

This appendix serves as the direction regarding the inclusion of a worship pedagogy within small groups.

This worship pedagogy is based on the three-fold perspective regarding actions of worship that Donald Whitney presents in *Family Worship* (Bible reading, prayer, and singing) and then bridges into other manifestations of worship.

This worship pedagogy is formatted as something that could be done as an individual, as well as a group. The worship pedagogy is broken into six parts. Each portion of the worship pedagogy can operate as a stand-alone session/meeting. However, when combined, the different elements of worship will bond together for a far greater understanding of the broad application of worship in the life of the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since each member of the Community Group will have completed a theology of worship, this document will serve as a means of encouraging future study and a lifestyle of worship over a lifetime. As part of the Community Group ministry, it is recommended that the theology of worship is intentionally addressed at the beginning of each new calendar session. Once the framework is established that all of life is an act of worship, the connections made into future study material should feel less forced.

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137 Whitney, *Family Worship*, 44.
Worship Pedagogy Component 1: The God We Worship

We all worship someone or something. There are no exceptions. As we begin this six-week study of building a theology of worship, keep in mind we are always worshiping. At some times, we worship ourselves. At other times, we might be inclined to worship God. There are other times when we might also worship some idol (e.g., money, power, possessions, children, family, etc.). In Exodus Chapter Twenty, God issues an exclusive statement regarding worship: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). In addition, when asked regarding the greatest commandment, Jesus responded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:36). In light of this reality, we should seek to worship God. To worship God, we must know the God we profess to worship.

John Witvliet states that we must begin our study of worship by addressing the One we profess to worship: God. “It is relatively easy to write or teach about worship in ways that give exclusive attention to architecture, musical styles, prayer forms, vestments, and patterns of leadership but nothing about the God who is addressed in worship.”138 A. W. Tozer is another voice that stresses the importance of knowing God. “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”139 Tozer broadens the application of this concept. “Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God.”140

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138 John Witvliet, “Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice: Music on Practical Theology and Pedagogy in Seminaries and Church-Related Colleges.”


140 Ibid., 2.
Since one’s perspective of God impacts how one worships, it is important to pursue God as He has presented Himself. God’s Word contains various attributes of who God is. The best way to build one’s perspective of God is to consider His attributes as detailed in His Word.

Each attribute of God is followed by a Scripture verse (or verses) that testify to that attribute. In the Community Group, encourage each person to initiate their theology of worship by addressing characteristics of God. Since this portion of the worship pedagogy is so heavily reliant on considering a plethora of Scripture passages, this section of building a theology of worship may need to be spread over two different Community Group settings.

Consider these attributes of God: holy (Is. 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 Jn. 1:5); eternal (Ps. 90:1-2; Rev. 1:8; Rev. 22:13); immutable (Jas. 1:17); wise (Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 1:18-24; Eph. 3:10; Jas. 1:5; Jas. 3:17); faithful (Ps. 33:4; Ps. 36:5; Ps. 57:10; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 89:14; Lam. 3:22-23; Rom. 3:3); steadfast love (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 89:24; Ps. 89:33; Lam. 3:22-23); merciful (Ex. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 145:8; Joel 2:13); righteous (2 Chron. 19:7; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 6:10); gracious (Ex. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 145:8; Joel 2:13); good (Mk. 10:18; 2 Cor. 1:3; 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Jn. 4:8); sovereign (Prov. 16:9; Is. 46:8-11; Eph. 1:11).

Let’s spend the rest of our time in the Community Group looking up the various verses that are given along with each attribute of God. As a means of allowing all the passages of Scripture to be addressed while not overwhelming the group with the sheer volume of verses, assign a couple of verses from each attribute of God to a group of two or three people. Allow these groups time to read the verses and consider what is communicated regarding that specific attribute of God. After addressing these verses in the sub-groups, allow time for people to share verses that seem particularly helpful in communicating the attribute.
Encourage one another in the Community Group to select at least one verse for each attribute of God as a means of building a theology of God as He has presented Himself in the Bible. Plan to come to the next Community Group ready to share a few of the attributes of God you have used to build this first portion of your personal theology of worship.
Worship Pedagogy Component 2: Worship Involves Scripture

Let’s open this session by sharing a few of the attributes of God we have incorporated into the first portion of the theology of worship each of us is building. (Allow time for this interaction to take place.)

As a reminder from last session, the opening verses of Romans Chapter 12 serve as a foundation for a lifestyle of worship. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2).

After addressing the reality and attributes of God, the second part of a theology of worship that needs to be addressed is Scripture. A. W. Tozer reminds us of the importance of the Bible. “All worship should begin with the Bible.”141 Bob Kauflin follows this line of reasoning from Tozer. “We can’t worship God apart from his Word. It defines, directs, and inspires our worship. Scripture provides doctrinal fuel for our emotional fire.”142

Many Christians may profess that the Bible is God’s Word. However, when one looks at the daily habits of these same Christians, that profession may not be seen in action. This is a sad reality. Why should we be concerned about worship involving Scripture? Let’s look at Paul’s interaction with his spiritual son, Timothy, to gain some insight.

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In his second recorded letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul presents the greatness of God’s Word and its importance in the lives of those who profess to follow Him. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Earlier in the same letter to Timothy, Paul issues a reminder to Timothy that has broad application for all Christians. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). So, the question for application we need to consider is this: “How do we rightly handle God’s Word of truth?”

Why should we be concerned about our worship involving Scripture? Paul’s directive in Romans Chapter 12 serves as our guide: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). There really are only two options: being conformed to the world or being transformed by renewing our minds. Tim Challies addresses the danger of not being active in pursuing the renewal of one’s mind. “This choice is set before you each day: will you allow the world to conform your mind, or will you invite God to transform your mind? To not choose is to make a choice—the world is so immersive, so powerful, and so present that unless you actively resist it, you will inevitably be conformed to it and consumed by it.”143 The way we are able to renew our minds as an act of worship, which connects back to Romans 12:1, is through immersion in the Word of God. To do this, we must read God’s Word. This is not

meant to be insult anyone’s intelligence. This is a simple truth. To be impacted by God’s Word, we must take the time to read God’s Word.

Tim Challies offers a practical assessment of the importance of being in God’s Word as an act of worship. “To be conformed to this world, you simply need to immerse yourself in it, to allow yourself to be influenced by it. It takes no effort and brings no true reward. To be transformed by the renewing of your mind, you need to immerse yourself in the Word of God, to allow yourself to be influenced by it. It takes great effort and brings great reward.”

In Psalm 119, the psalmist communicates a similar theme. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word” (Ps. 119:9). Consider this description of God’s Word in the book of Psalms. Each of the nouns used at the beginning of phrases are ways of addressing God’s Word.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (Ps. 19:7-11).

Similarly, John MacArthur writes, “Only in the Scriptures are the mind of God, the will of God, the purpose of God, and the plan of God revealed.”

Let’s spend the rest of this Community Group session adding to our personal theology of worship by addressing the importance of God’s Word.

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144 Challies, Run to Win: The Lifelong Pursuits of a Godly Man, 28.

In our next session, we will see that worship involves prayer.
Worship Pedagogy Component 3: Worship Involves Prayer

“Prayer. It is almost inconceivable to me that something called worship can be held without significant prayer, but that is precisely what is happening. There is usually a short prayer at the beginning of the service, though even that is fading away.”¹⁴⁶ Even though he is addressing prayer in the corporate worship gathering, this assessment from John Jefferson Davis is applicable to all of us. A. W. Tozer removes any mystery from the spiritual discipline of prayer when he states, “The key to prayer is simply praying.”¹⁴⁷

Do we open our day with a short prayer and then ignore God the rest of the day? Or, we might be inclined to open a meal with a prayer and then not think about how we are worshiping God for extended periods of time. Why do we do this? Why do we relegate prayer to such a minimal role in our spiritual disciplines? Consider this as a reality that might influence why we do not pray. If we do not truly believe we need the Lord’s intervention, we are going to pray as though we do not need the Lord’s intervention. This will lead to us acting as though we do not need the Lord’s intervention. At its core, a lack of prayer may be tied to one’s perceived self-sufficiency. As a challenging contrast to this belief, in the first recorded letter to the church in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul stresses the importance of prayer as part of our normal worship activity. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

Prayer is an act of worship and should be part of the theology of worship that each of us is building. Consider these words regarding prayer from David Platt:

It is the way of Christ. Instead of asserting ourselves, we crucify ourselves. Instead of imagining all the things we can accomplish, we ask God to do what only he can


¹⁴⁷ Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, 181.
accomplish. . . . Instead of dependence on ourselves, we express radical desperation for the power of his Spirit, and we trust that Jesus stands ready to give us everything we ask for so that he might make much of our Father in the world.148

As we seek to incorporate a prayerful attitude of submission into our practice and theology of worship, we need to recognize that building any good habit can be difficult. David Jeremiah testifies to the difficult nature of prayer. “Prayer is work, the hardest work you will ever do. It is grueling labor. It is agonizing. It is coming to God and coming to grips with the realities of your life.”149

In building our theology of worship, we should recognize prayer is more than praying for the physical needs of others. Yes, praying for the physical needs of others is important. However, as an act of worship, there are many other things we can pray for other people. In particular, our prayer for others should involve praying about their spiritual needs.

Let’s spend some time considering these various passages of Scripture that present the act of worshipping through prayer through addressing the spiritual needs of other people. Any of these passages of Scripture can be utilized in building your own theology of worship.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine (Rom. 1.8-12).

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious


inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might (Eph. 1.16-19).

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Eph. 3.14-21).

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1.9-11).

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1.9-12).

Considering the Apostle Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesus as an example, we see that he [Paul] concerned himself almost exclusively with spiritual issues, rather than earthly or physical ones . . . Certainly such earthly and physical needs are often legitimate subjects for prayer (cf. Phil. 4:6; Jas. 5:13-16), but Paul’s example teaches us that the primary focus of our prayers for the body should be the spiritual needs of its members and their effectiveness in ministry.150

In addition, Mack and Swavely offer a broader perspective regarding praying for the local church fellowship as a whole body. “We as Christians today should also remember to pray for our church as a body, not only because we can benefit everyone in the church at one time through

150 Mack and Swavely, 225-226.
our prayer, but also because when we are thinking of the church as a *unit*, we will think in ways that promote *unity* (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27).”\(^{151}\)

Prayer is an important element/component of worship. It is essential that we continue to remind ourselves and those around us that our prayers are *acts of worship*. Through prayer, we praise God for His character and His works. In addition, we pray for others, both saved and non-saved, and ourselves. All of this is an act of worship.

As a means of further help developing the spiritual discipline of prayer in our personal lives and the Community Group setting, consider these five suggestions regarding personal and corporate prayer.

**Come desperate.** The psalmist opens Psalm 61 with a cry of desperation. “Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy” (Ps. 61:1-3). For many, lack of prayer is a reality. We don’t pray because we don’t trust God enough. We are far more inclined to trust ourselves. To grow in prayer, we need to recognize our deficiency and God’s all-sufficiency.

**Come confessing/repenting.** In Luke Chapter 18, Jesus tells the parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector. Jesus concludes the parable by stating, “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other” (Luke 18:13-14). To grow in prayer, we need to have a healthy understanding of our own sin. However, we also need to have a healthy understanding of God’s willingness to forgive. We can only receive

\(^{151}\) Mack and Swavely, 215-216.
forgiveness if we recognize our need for forgiveness. To grow in prayer, we need to come to Him confessing our sin and trusting in His grace and mercy.

Come broken. King David’s sin with Bathsheba (including his directive to have Uriah killed) is well-known by many. In Psalm 51, David pleads with God to create within him a clean heart. The earlier portion of this entire scenario is found in Psalm 32. In that setting, we see David refusing to acknowledge his sin before God: “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer” (Ps. 32:3-4). However, David did not stay in that position. “I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Ps. 32:5). David’s latter pattern of coming to the Lord in a broken state is something that each of us should endeavor to embrace.

Come needy/humbly. When Jesus encounters blind Bartimaeus in Mark Chapter 10, Bartimaeus has no delusions regarding his need. He knows that he cannot see. He knows that Jesus is the One who can heal him. So, Bartimaeus ignores the crowd around him and cries out for the Lord to notice him and heal him. This attitude that recognizes one’s genuine need is the attitude each of us must embrace if we hope to grow in prayer. As part of this, we need to recognize that we are needy. The author of Hebrews states that we have been given access to the throne room in heaven because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the work of Christ, we are given direction regarding approaching God through prayer. “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 10:16). If we do not see ourselves as needy, we likely will not pray. To grow
in this spiritual discipline of prayer, each of us must be aware of our genuine need and humbly approach the throne of God.

Come thirsty. In Psalm 42, the Sons of Korah offer an insight regarding genuine relationship with God. “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Ps. 42:1-2). In reading these words, one might be inclined to think of a serene image of a deer lazily walking alongside a stream of water. That is the wrong picture. Instead, we must think of this deer as heavily lathered with sweat. It has been running, perhaps being chased by wild animals that seek to devour it. The deer realizes that it needs water. It needs water for refreshment. It needs water for physical health. It needs water, or it will die. That changes the picture we should be envisioning. When we pray to God the Father, we must realize our true need for Him. He is Life. He is the source of living water. Each one of us needs this water. To grow in our habit and discipline of prayer, we must come to God as those who are genuinely thirsty!

Lord willing, next week we will continue to build our personal theology of worship by considering that worship involves music/singing.
Worship Pedagogy Component 4: Worship Involves Music/Singing

“Music: don’t make it more than it should be; don’t make it less than it is.”

The next portion of the personal theology of worship that we are building is “worship involves music/singing.” Being bluntly honest, this is what many of us think about when we use the word “worship.” When our culture uses the word worship, many people equate it with music/singing. Although music/singing is part of worship, it does not define worship. Over the past few weeks, we have seen that biblical worship begins with having a proper perspective of who God is. In addition, as each of us has been building a personal theology of worship, we have seen that worship involves reading/studying Scripture and prayer.

Both Psalm 96 and Psalm 98 open with this directive, “Sing to the LORD a new song” (Ps. 96:1, Ps. 98:1). Later in the Psalms, the psalmist offers a slight change to the same directive: “Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!” (Ps. 149:1) Indeed, as we can see in the biblical book of Psalms, God cares about His people worshiping Him through music and singing.

Lest we erroneously believe that God is only concerned about music and worship in the Old Testament, we can see examples of music as worship in the New Testament. In Matthew, we see Jesus singing with the disciples. “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30).

In the books of Acts we see Paul and Silas using music and prayer as a means of worshiping God. “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, the

152 Sauskojus.
prisoners were listening to them” (Acts. 16:25). Notice that this act of worship was a testimony to the prisoners who were around them: “and the prisoners were listening to them.”

In the book of Revelation, John reminds us that worship through music will be part of the eternal landscape in heaven. “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth’” (Rev. 5:9). “And they sing the song of Moses, . . . and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed’” (Rev. 15:3-4). Additionally, in that setting, each of us will sing with perfect voices!

In his epistle to the Christians in Colossae, the Apostle Paul stresses the importance of music as an act of worship. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:16-17).

In addition, in his letter to the followers of Christ in Ephesus, Paul champions the importance of lyric content of music as worship in the life of the Church: “. . . be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:18-20).
In these parallel passages of Scripture, the Holy Spirit uses the Apostle Paul to exhort Christians throughout the ages to use music as an act of worship directed toward God. Furthermore, music as worship has a distinct role of encouraging and exhorting other people in the body of Christ. Colossians Chapter 3 and Ephesians Chapter 5 present the importance of singing to one another. Yes, our music/singing should bring glory to God. According to God’s Word, however, music as worship should also teach and admonish one another.

One specific point to be considered from the passage in Ephesians is Paul’s use of the word “addressing.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible, King James Version, New American Standard Bible, and New International Version all translate the same Greek word as “speaking.” There is an important distinction that needs to be made here. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul could have used the same Greek word in both letters. However, Paul used a different word in Ephesians. In doing so, it is this author’s belief that God intended to address the lyrical content of what was being sung. In other words, it matters what we sing!

As we consider that worship involves music, we should contemplate the reality that the lyrical content of songs is what matters. Every time we sing as a local church fellowship, we are encouraging one another with theology. Some of what people sing is biblical theology, while other things that people sing are not biblical theology.

In constructing one’s personal theology of worship, and considering that worship involves music, we should seek to pursue music that encourages a biblical mindset regarding theology. Consider this exhortation from Harold Best addressing the lyrical content of songs.
“Being emotionally moved by music is not the same as being spiritually or morally shaped by it.”\textsuperscript{153}

The music that is best for us may not be the music that we like to listen to when we are alone. One would never envision giving only one type of food to a child as that child moved from infancy to toddlerhood and toward adulthood. Each one of us needs nutrients and minerals that are provided in various food groups. Calcium, which strengthens the bones, comes through milk and similar products. Iron, which is found in large quantities in specific vegetables like spinach, is useful for the body as a part of hemoglobin. When our bodies do not have enough iron, the body cannot produce enough oxygen-carrying red blood cells. Potassium and folic acid are found in fruit and are necessary for body maintenance. Just as these different types of food provide nourishment for our physical bodies, our spiritual health needs different types of music to provide a balanced diet.

With this in mind, what songs testifying to God’s character are necessary for your continued spiritual growth? What songs are going to encourage you to take your eyes off yourself and focus on the Lord? What songs are going to be helpful for maintaining a biblical mindset as you are preparing to die? Those same songs are the songs we should sing to one another during our corporate worship gatherings and the Community Group setting. In each of those scenarios, we are preparing one another for death.

\textsuperscript{153} Best, \textit{Music through the Eyes of Faith}, 151.
As we finish this portion of developing a theology of worship, contemplate this observation concerning music and its role in worship. “Music is freely made, by faith, as an act of worship, in direct response to the overflowing grace of God in Christ Jesus.”\textsuperscript{154}

In our last two sessions that are addressing this worship pedagogy as a means of building a personal theology of worship, we will consider that worship involves thankfulness, brokenness, and service.

\textsuperscript{154}Best, \textit{Music through the Eyes of Faith}, 158.
Worship Pedagogy Components 5 & 6: Worship Involves Thankfulness and Brokenness

Our society can be characterized as an entitled society. We believe we deserve vastly more than anything we receive. This breeds an attitude of ungratefulness. To combat that, we should seek to have an attitude of thankfulness. We are combining two different components within this session because they are so closely connected. Pride and an attitude of ungratefulness may walk hand-in-hand. In his first recorded letter to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul challenges the Corinthians regarding a sense of pride. “What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it” (1 Cor. 4:7)? Boasting in one’s perceived strengths or giftedness will serve as a barrier to cultivating a genuine heart of thankfulness.

We considered Colossians Chapter 3 in past weeks to address how worship involves music. In today’s Community Group, we can see that Colossians addresses thankfulness. “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). The parallel passage in Ephesians Chapter 5 offers a similar presentation. “Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

Interestingly, in both settings, thankfulness is presented immediately after worshiping God through music. In light of that connection, we can see the importance that God places on thanksgiving as a part of worship.

Generally speaking, thankful people are also humble. If one struggles with an ungrateful heart, that same person likely has an elevated view of what he/she deserves. C. J. Mahaney addresses this concept of what we deserve. “Let each of us recognize every day that whatever
grace we receive from God is so much more than we’re worthy of, and indescribably better than the hell we all deserve.” If we keep in mind that what we deserve is everlasting hell, then anything outside of that will seem to be a tremendous blessing.

As we continue to build the personal theology of worship, it is good for us to contemplate the importance of having a thankful/grateful heart and a heart that is pursuing humility. Another manner of addressing humility is brokenness. This is a particular arena in which developing this personal theology of worship could be difficult.

Understandably, we want our lives to be worth something; we want to have a positive impact. In a negative sense, we want our lives to be noticeable. We want our lives to matter. We want to get to the end of our lives and have folks miss us at our own funerals. We want to be remembered. However, generally speaking, we don’t want to be remembered as broken. Each and every member of the human race struggles with the reality of pride and perceived self-sufficiency in his/her life. This is a problem. In his letter to the followers of Christ in Rome, the Apostle Paul addresses perceived self-sufficiency. “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned” (Rom.12:3). In addition, the book of Proverbs states, “Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 16:5). Indeed, pride/arrogance is sin, and we must be willing to fight against it. In Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God’s Call, Vernon Whaley issues a profound connection between an attitude of brokenness and acceptable worship to God.

**Brokenness is a prerequisite for genuine worship.** We must be broken in spirit, broken of self, broken . . . and surrendered. . . . But before He can restore us to beauty, we must be

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broken before Him. We must come to Him, with open hands, and surrender our wills as things unclean to a holy God. It is then, during our moment of total surrender, that He will reveal Himself at His best—as Repairer, Restorer, and lover of our broken souls. And we will worship Him for it!156

The book of James offers some sobering thoughts concerning the greatness (and longevity) of one’s life. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (Jas. 4:13-14). Understandably, there is nothing particularly special or memorable about being a mist or vapor. Quite honestly, if one is even aware of the mist or vapor, it is barely noticed, seems to serve no particularly important function, and then it is gone. That is a self-deflating reality. To the sin-corrupted thought process of every member of humanity, the reality of our lives as a mist seems a grave injustice. Sadly, we abhor the thought of our lives being a vapor. We want to matter.

We bristle at the concept of someone else being in authority over us. We bristle, just as Adam and Eve did, at the thought that God might be keeping something from us. Consider the account in Genesis Chapter 3. “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen. 3:4-5). Indeed, at our sin-filled core, each one of us wants to be like God. Each one of us wants to have God’s authority. Each one of us wants to have God’s power. Each one of us wants to call the shots. Each one of us wants to be God. A. W. Tozer stresses the

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156 Whaley, Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God’s Call, 213.
importance of humility and brokenness. “God's people are not as humble as they ought to be, and I believe this is why we do not truly see God in His sovereignty.”

The Lord used the prophet Isaiah to testify regarding those whom the Lord seeks.

“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (Is. 66:1-2). Following in the wake of this concept, Matt Papa writes as one who knows the importance of pursuing humility and brokenness. “When we see God, we get small. We lose a sense of our self. We must. His is true excellence. His is true glory. All would-be identities vanish like a shadow in the presence of I AM. Pride cannot exist in His presence.”

As we conclude this Community Group addressing worship involving thankfulness and brokenness, these words from A. W. Tozer should serve as an encouragement and an exhortation. “Worship will humble a person as nothing else can. The egotistical, self-important man cannot worship God any more than the arrogant devil can worship God. There must be humility in the heart before there can be worship.”

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157 Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, 121.


159 Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, 108.
If we are to be truly thankful and broken in our worship of the Lord, we must embrace the attitude of worship presented by John the baptizer. “He [the Lord Jesus Christ] must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30).
Worship Pedagogy Component 7: Worship Involves Service

Up until this meeting, we have been reminded of the significance of knowing God and developing a personal theology of worship that includes Scripture, prayer, music/singing, and thankfulness and brokenness.

This final Community Group, seeking to establish a pedagogy of worship through developing a personal theology of worship, is going to address worship involving service. Service as worship is not a new concept. In the book of Exodus, Moses approaches Pharaoh asking that the children of Israel be set free to go serve/worship God (Ex. 7).

Nate Palmer echoes this connection between worship and serving. “Do you realize that serving is a constant activity? It's like breathing. There is never a moment when we are not serving someone.” Just as each one of us worships all the time, each one of us serves in a continual fashion. The only question is whom are we serving? Palmer testifies to the sad reality that much of the time we are serving self. “Most of the time we are simply serving ourselves—pouring our energy and hope for happiness into the nurture of our own desires. But at each moment, we are serving either the desires of our flesh or the desires of God.”

We cannot serve God as an act of worship while serving ourselves. Serving as an act of worship must be tied to serving others. Consider these words of exhortation the Apostle Paul presents to the followers of Christ in Rome. “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing

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161 Ibid.
honor” (Rom. 12:9-10). Following in the line of reasoning presented here, Palmer reminds us of the connection between serving and serving God’s people. “In the Bible, God’s command to serve him is most always associated with a specific context: the gathered presence of his people.”

Sadly, we want others to serve us. It is easier to have others seek to meet your needs than for you get beyond yourself and seek to meet the needs of others. This selfish mindset regarding serving as part of worship flies in direct conflict against what the Apostle Paul presents in the book of Philippians. “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:3-5).

Each one of us is always worshiping something or someone. In a similar manner, each one of us is always serving something or someone. Palmer provides a good conclusion for the series and a great starting point for future Community Group discussions. “We always serve who we see as the king of our kingdom. That's why servanthood and worship are essentially the same thing.”

Over the course of this Community Group study, regarding building a personal theology of worship, we have seen that worship involves music. In addition, we have seen that worship involves much more than music (e.g., Scripture, prayer, thankfulness, brokenness, and service).

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162 Palmer, Location 268.

163 This author has stated on numerous occasions that dying to self would be easy if it didn’t involve dying and didn’t involve myself. If others could die to self for me, that would be simple. Similarly, in our sinfulness, we often desire for someone else to serve others for us!

164 Palmer, Location 119.
As we have sought to broaden our understanding regarding what worship is, and how various acts of worship are fleshed out in our lives, this study also should have an impact on how we relate to one another in our Community Group. Finally, correctly applied, this study will have an impact on how we think and act concerning worship in our corporate worship gatherings.
Bibliography


Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War!


