

INTENTIONAL WORSHIP DURING TIMES OF MOURNING:

THE WORSHIP LEADER'S PLAN FOR PRAISE

by

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Abstract

The intent of this study is to examine the characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief. This thesis also provides strategies for the worship leader, congregation, and pastoral leadership regarding how one grieves. Guided by the actual experiences of grieving worship leaders, this qualitative thematic analysis identifies perspectives that have not yet been explored and documented concerning the lives of Christian worship leaders. Perspectives on grief have emerged as themes through exploration of a small body of existing literature and personal interviews with participants who serve in their local churches and community. While serving in their leadership roles at various churches, worship leaders, musicians, choir directors, pastors, and music teachers experience setbacks, disappointment, and pain just as other members of the congregation. Even though these leaders are in a position that requires them to serve in front of others, he or she is not exempt from pain. The findings of this study may assist the worship leader and members of the body of Christ in conquering hindrances or stumbling blocks while leading worship in seasons of grief. This study will examine the expectations of worship leaders who are leading during times of pain and seeks to help churches cultivate and nurture any person in leadership who may feel ashamed about dealing with grief, trauma, or loss.

Keywords: Grief, Trauma, Worship Leaders

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

There are times when the worship leader must lead worship in the midst of experiencing loss. This responsibility can be overwhelming and difficult. The grieving worship leader should have permission to grieve while being given resources and encouragement through the healing process. There is a need to understand the primary roles of the worship leader as well as the background on the stages of grief.

Roles of the Worship Leader

Worship leaders are essential in the church today, usually set the tone of the service. Constance Cherry noted, “Music architects...bring order and beauty together, arranging for the necessary parameters for music to best function in worship that will enhance the relationship that occurs there between God and people. He or she understands music’s place in the worship service, its relationship to other components, and it’s capabilities for encouraging holy encounters.”¹ Worship leaders accomplish this by selecting appropriate songs, rehearsing with the band, communicating with the pastor about the goals of the ministry, engaging the people in the congregation during worship, being prayerful, leading songs, and discipling others. These individuals are the music architects who help build the worship scene.

One role of the worship leader is to have musical skill. The worship leader realizes he or she is not just responsible for crafting the service. Worship is not confined to professionally trained singers and those who have beautiful voices. However, the individual understands that knowing how to sing is vital in being a great worship leader and being the overseer of the

¹ Cherry, Constance. *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016

worship team. If a worship leader does not know how stay in the musical keys, harmonize, and blend with other singers, the outcome will not be pleasing to the musical ear nor will it help the worship ministry be effective.

The worship leader acknowledges the ministry of worship leading should be based more on calling than talent. Cherry stated, “Pastoral musicians have developed skill. They possess more than natural talent; they have intentionally invested in training to maximize their skill set(s) as a means to serve Christ and his church in a manner that is worthy of their calling. They seek to honor God through the ongoing nurture of the gifts God has given them.”² The worship leader does not become content with just having musical ability. The individual aims to reach the congregation and community with songs that can cause others to know Jesus for themselves.

In addition to planning services, Navarro explained four basic elements that are crucial to becoming an effective worship leader: discipleship, theology, leadership, and artistry.³ These elements are essential if the worship leader wants to spiritually grow in their ministry. In this role of a worship leader, the individual is to also prepare songs to lead for worship. This requires a lot of preparation and thought into what is appropriate and necessary for the congregation. The worship leader must have a plan and know the direction in which the pastor wants to go and ultimately where the service is heading.

A primary role of the worship leader is that of discipler. A Christian disciple is a person who first believes in Christ, claims to be His follower and wants to live like Him. In a 2017 article, Onyinah stated, “Discipleship in the Christian sense is the process of making someone

² Cherry, Constance. *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016

³ Navarro, Kevin J. *The Complete Worship Leader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.

become like Christ.”⁴ Further, a disciple is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ all over the world. Anderson and Skinner stated, “God calls us to be disciples of Christ. He graciously extends the invitation to join him, but there is an expectation for people made in his image (Gen. 1:27)⁵ who profess to follow him (Matt. 16:24)⁶. The invited ones are to participate wholeheartedly and engage in followership.”⁷ The authors continue on by stating, “It is important to notice that power, authority and teaching are all centered in Christ and not in human efforts. This is foundational to making disciples. No matter how gifted the individual or how welcoming the community, disciple-making is fueled by the transformational work of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

When the worship leader demonstrates and teaches what it means to worship God, he or she can aid others in surrendering to and living for Christ. The worship leader demonstrates what it means to lift their hands during worship, sing songs of inspiration, and praise God through song and prayer. The worship leader is responsible for leading the people in an atmosphere of worship. Cherry corroborated this concept: “Whether remunerated or volunteer, they have been placed in designated leadership for this ministry by the will of God and the church. Pastoral musicians understand that music serves the greater purposes of biblical worship, and they help

⁴ Onyinah, Opoku. "The Meaning of Discipleship." *International Review of Mission*, vol. 106, no. 2, Dec. 2017, p. 216+. *Gale General OneFile*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A521877305/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=81a5cdb9. Accessed 24 Mar. 2020.

⁵ Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Anderson, T. L., & Skinner, S. A. (2019). Feelings: Discipleship that understands the affective processes of a disciple of christ. *Christian Education Journal*, 16(1), 66-78.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0739891318820333>

⁸ Ibid

participants to become fully engaged in the fulfilling of those purposes.”⁹ The worship leader acknowledges the purpose of music in worship is to help bring people closer to Christ.

The worship leader must grasp a biblical theology and foundation of worship. Towns and Whaley stated, “Biblical worship encompasses our heart’s desire, our love for God, and our commitment to worship in spirit (our emotions) and in truth (our intellect).”¹⁰ The worship leader should prioritize biblical principles over musical ability. The worship leader must realize he or she is to honor and render service to God. Knowing what worship is and what it means through scripture will aid the worship leader in their commitment to serving God. As the worship leader sees how the Bible’s teaching on worship relates to evangelism, obedience, and faith, he or she will be able to give Him honorable and acceptable worship.

Additionally, a solid foundation of worship requires a personal relationship with the Lord. Whaley stated, “When we worship Him, we get to know Him. The more we know Him, the more we want to be with Him. And as we spend time with Him, we long to shower Him with love and worship. In turn, He rains down His love upon us, with reckless abandon—because we worshipped.”¹¹ To be a successful worship leader, one must learn how to put God first, have a relationship with Him and use our gifts to glorify Him. The individual must understand biblical worship and desire to have a personal relationship with God. The worship leader realizes their lifestyle outside of the church must match what he or she portrays on Sunday mornings. The

⁹ Cherry, Constance. *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016

¹⁰ Towns, Elmer L., and Vernon M. Whaley. *Worship Through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012.

¹¹ Whaley, Vernon M. *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2009.

individual realizes that the people being led in the congregation are needing to see authentic and pure worship from them.

Another major role of the worship leader is to demonstrate being a leader. Tom Kraeuter stated, “leading praise and worship requires an ongoing relationship with the Lord. The role of the worship leader is not primarily musical. It is, first and foremost, spiritual. You will not be able to lead worship effectively over the long term if you do not maintain a personal, worshipful relationship with God.”¹²

In a 2017 article by Chris Lowney, he speaks on leadership in ministry in the Catholic church. He states, “professionally talented and devout lay colleagues have stepped up to serve in leadership or governance positions. But too often, they implicitly construe their governance role as focused only on their professional gifts.”¹³ Being a great leader in ministry can’t solely be based on what musical abilities a person has. Lowney goes on to say, “We need to multiply the leadership talent we bring to bear on our many challenges. And, we need a quality of leadership that is resourceful, ingenious, spiritually deep, prophetic and dedicated.”¹⁴

Another role of the worship leader is to nurture their artistry. The worship leader must practice in their own personal time as well as practice with the band. The worship leader realizes that not every time of worship is spontaneous. It may take hours at a time to cultivate their craft. The worship leader helps the worship team come together and sound harmonious in ways that are geared towards lifting the name of Jesus. In Rory Noland’s *The Worshipping Artist*, he states,

¹² Kraeuter, Tom. *The Worship Leader’s Handbook: Practical Answers to Tough Questions*. Emerald Books; Revised 2nd edition. 2007

¹³ Lowney, C. (2017). Ministry leadership's next great leap. *Health Progress*, 98(3), 17-19. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1929001568?accountid=12085>

¹⁴ Ibid, 19.

“Great artists are in touch with their emotions. Your art, your best work, comes from deep within and very often reflects your own personal journey. A heart that abides in Christ produces Spirit-filled art.”¹⁵ The worship leader should be creative and practice their craft until it becomes presentable for worship. The individual must learn to get in touch with their emotions and their passions so he or she can display their very best worship.

The worship leader’s responsibility is immense and he or she have roles that should not be taken lightly. The worship leader has many roles such as having musical skill, being a discipler, preparing songs to lead for worship, grasping biblical theology, having a personal relationship with God, being a leader, and nurturing their artistry. It is a role that is much needed in the church. The worship leader helps to shape the church culture and promote the church’s mission and goals.

Stages of Grief

While the worship leader carries many responsibilities in leading the church congregation, the leader is no less vulnerable to grief and loss. It is possible that the worship leader may have to deal with personal grief while also serving the congregation. Peter Jen Der Pan defined grief as, “a normal, healthy, spontaneous, natural, unlearned, emotional healing process that occurs following a significant loss. Grief reactions may occur not only after a death but also after significant life changes or transitions, such as the loss of a pet, job or marriage, or on retirement.”¹⁶ The worship leader, as a person, is likely to experience grief whether it be a

¹⁵ Noland, Rory. *The Worshiping Artist: Equipping You and Your Ministry Team to Lead Others in Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2007 (ISBN: 9780310273349).

¹⁶ Peter Jen Der Pan, Liang-Yu F. Deng, S.L. Tsai, Ho-Yuan J. Chen & Sheng-Shiou Jenny Yuan (2014) Development and validation of a Christian-based Grief Recovery Scale, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 42:1, 99-114

loss of a job, marital issues, death of a loved one, or other personal situations. Grief does not skip over the worship leader just because he or she is serving in ministry.

There are many stages of grief. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler defined the five stages of grief as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Ross and Kessler explained that even though these stages are common responses of people who have experienced loss, the stages do not have to happen in a specific order. Further, not everyone will experience all the stages.¹⁷

The first stage of grief is denial. Jackson stated, “Denial is common in religion, politics, medicine and all of life. The dictionary definitions range from refusing to comply with a request, to refusing to believe that a statement or allegation is true. An extreme form of denial is the rejection of a doctrine or belief despite historical evidence of its validity.”¹⁸ Denial can be considered as disbelief, rejection, and even total shock of what is occurring in one’s life. Most individuals experiencing grief do not want to believe that what he or she has experienced, really happened. Denial usually comes when a person questions if the circumstances he or she has experienced actually took place. Rabinowitz and Peirson provided the example of a 76-year-old person who, after smoking cigarettes for almost 60 years and being diagnosed with lung cancer, denied her diagnosis even after being seen by various specialists and attributing her pain to heartburn.¹⁹ When a person experiences grief, he or she may not want or be able to accept and take in negative thoughts, feelings, or other undesirable information.

¹⁷ Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*. Scribner 2014

¹⁸ Jackson, Graham. Denial Journal Compilation. *Int J Clin Pract*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd March 2006, 60, 3, 253-257.

¹⁹ Rabinowitz, T., & Peirson, R. (2006). “Nothing is wrong, doctor”: understanding and managing denial in patients with cancer. *Cancer Investigation*, 24(1), 68–76.

The second stage of grief is anger. Sudi Kate Gliebe explained, “Contrary to popular belief, anger is not a thing or a force. Anger is an action. Anger is something people do, not something people have.”²⁰ Anger, as stated in Kessler’s text, is a necessary stage of the healing process. The author stated,

It may feel-all consuming, but as long as it doesn’t consume you for a long period of time, it is part of your emotional management. It is a useful emotion until you’ve moved past the first waves of it. Then you will be ready to go deeper. In the process of grief and grieving you will have many subsequent visits with anger in its many forms.²¹

The author noted that the underlying cause of anger is pain. “People often tell us our anger is misplaced, inappropriate, or disproportionate...Unfortunately for them, they too will know the anger of loss someday. But for now, your job is to honor your anger by allowing yourself to be angry. Scream if you need to. Find a solitary place and let it out.”²² When a grieving person becomes angry with a difficult situation, there must be a way to address the hurt without alienating them or making them feel like he or she is not serving appropriately.

The next stage of grief is bargaining. Bargaining is defined as negotiating to try to change the outcome of the circumstance. Bechman stated, “Traditionally, the bargaining stage for people...can involve attempting to bargain with whatever god the person believes in. Bargaining rarely provides a sustainable solution, especially if it’s a matter of life and death.” When a person bargains with God, he or she is willing to do anything and everything to change the situation. In Valerie Rodriguez’s article, author Linveh was quoted saying;

²⁰ Gliebe, Sudi Kate. "Helping families deal with anger: a biblical perspective." *Christian Education Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, p. 65+. *Gale General OneFile*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A289359996/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=3d75ca24. Accessed 16 Mar. 2020.

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

Bargaining signifies a reaction through which an individual attempts: (a) to negotiate a deal with God or someone more tangible (e.g., dead parent) regarding the obliteration of his or her physical impairment in the case of a chronic, irreversible disability. The content of this negotiation resembles a contract between the individual and the all-powered entity to reverse the present stage of affairs in response to a promise.²³

Depression is the fourth stage of grief. Blazer described depression as suffering within. It is more than simply worrying about things going wrong in life; depression affects the individual emotionally and how he or she handles things physically as well. When a person deals with depression, he or she may view everything in life through a negative lens, including families, friends, and even themselves.²⁴ Kubler-Ross noted, "It's important to understand that this depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great loss... We must accept sadness as an appropriate, natural stage of loss without letting an unmanaged, ongoing depression leech our quality of life."

In Knox's, *From Mourning to Praise*, she discusses grief and depression, and how the two ties together. She stated, "Contrary to popular thinking, depression by itself is not an automatic pointer to some hidden flaw in our spiritual life. Even righteous people can feel abandoned. We do not have to feel guilty when we are unable to think happy thoughts. To state the truth another way, the Bible does not contain a sliding scale that reads "Happy/Spiritual" on

²³ Livneh, H. (1991). A unified approach to existing models of adaptation to disability: A model of adaptation. In Marinelli, R. P., Dell Orto, A. E. (Eds.), *The psychological & social impact of disability* (3rd ed., pp. 181–196). New York, NY: Springer.

²⁴ Blazer, Dan G. "The depression epidemic: why we're more down than ever--and the crucial role churches play in healing." *Christianity Today*, vol. 53, no. 3, Mar. 2009, p. 22+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A195134786/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=bb1bf890. Accessed 16 Mar. 2020.

the end and “Depressed/Unspiritual” on the other.”²⁵ Knox lets the reader know being experiencing depression due to grief does not diminish the individual’s relationship with God.

Kubler-Ross and Kessler explained,

There is wonder in the power of grief. We don’t appreciate its healing powers, yet they are extraordinary and wondrous. Grief transforms the broken, wounded soul, a soul that no longer wants to get up in the morning, a soul that can find no reason for living, a soul that has suffered an unbelievable loss. Grief alone has the power to heal. Grief always works. Grief always heals. Many problems in our lives stem from grief unresolved and unhealed. When we do not work through our grief, we lose an opportunity to heal our soul, psyche, and heart.²⁶

Acknowledging grief and allowing others to grieve in their own way will be more beneficial to all who may witness the healing.

Acceptance is the fifth stage of grief. In defining acceptance, Chaturvedi stated, “The role of spiritual acceptance has not been mentioned directly, although experiences like inner peace, tranquility and letting go, or regaining what is lost or being taken away, are more spiritual rather than emotional or intellectual.”²⁷ Kubler-Ross and Kessler both stated, “We can never replace what has been lost, but we can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, new

²⁵ Knox, Douglas. *From Mourning to Praise: A Biblical Guide through Grief and Loss*. WestBowPress 2017

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Chaturvedi, S. K. (2009). Acceptance, grief and meaning. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 194(6), 561. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1192/bjp.194.6.561>

interdependencies.”²⁸ Grieve has to take its course. In the meantime, the individual must let themselves grow, change, and evolve.

The five stages of grief include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These stages are universal and affect people from all over the world and from all walks of life. Although most people experience all stages of grief, not all experience the stages in the same order and at the same time. These stages are simply tools to help individuals identify what he or she is dealing with and how to make sense of their grief.

Ministry Leaders and Grief

Given the public roles of the worship leader and the nature of grief, it is a logical conclusion that the worship leader will experience grief at some point within his or her ministry and will likely be expected to continue in a serving role. The grieving worship leader can feel as though pain has to be masked and hidden from the congregation. It is logical to assume that the worship leader may experience denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

A journal article by Kathy Malloch and Tim-Forster-O’Grady discusses the feelings of grief by healthcare leaders. These individuals dealt with the emotional dealings with patients as well as their deaths. Grief caused the leaders to experience brokenness and feelings of failure when he or she could not save or care for their patients as he or she would hope to. Some leaders experienced different stages of grief, although the stages were not in any precise order.

If the worship leader is dealing with the stages of grief, without support from their leaders, their ministry can be negatively impacted. Stewart stated, “We need a culture of loving care for all our leadership. Congregations need to ensure that their ministers are leading balanced

²⁸ Ibid

and healthy lives. Everybody needs to ensure that the load is not piled onto too few.”²⁹ When the church, including the congregation, understands the needs of the grieving worship leader, he or she can assist in the individual receiving complete healing from God.

Problem Statement

Despite the notion that churches offer resources and encouragement to individuals who are experiencing trauma or loss, worship leaders may continue to experience grief without receiving comfort from their leaders or congregation. There is a lack of support and accountability from members, leaders, and even pastoral administration. Worship leaders are left to feel as though their leading should continue despite their personal difficulties. A worship leader should feel a sense of support from the church, instead of perhaps feeling as though the gift of ministry is the only important factor. When a worship leader feels as though his or her hurts are being ignored, there is a possibility healing will be delayed. Thus, it is necessary for the worship leader, congregations, and other ministry leaders to understand grief so that support strategies can be developed.

Churches may expect the worship leader to mask their pain while ministering to God’s people. This is a problem in the Christian community. In, *No More Faking Fine*, Esther Fleece stated, “If we don’t allow painful emotions to surface, then we are setting expectations for ourselves that even God cannot meet. Nobody laments more than God Himself. And we are called to be like Him.”³⁰ When worship leaders feel as if he or she is not supposed to express sorrow because of the leadership position, it can delay healing.

²⁹ Stewart, F. (2013, 03). Minding the minister. *The Presbyterian Record*, 137, 28. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1319838581?accountid=12085>

³⁰ Fleece, Esther. *No More Faking Fine: Ending the Pretending*. Zondervan 2017

There is a great body of literature on trauma, loss, and dealing with grief. However, a knowledge gap exists between worship leader and grief; understanding more about grieving worship leaders may help. Additional research on the grieving worship leader will help churches and leaders understand what to do and what not to do when aiding a grieving worship leader.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative thematic analysis is to determine the characteristics of grieving worship leaders and strategies they can be used to support them. This research will help churches to understand grief that may be experienced by worship leaders and to provide insight for cultivating and nurturing worship leaders who may feel ashamed about dealing with grief. These findings will also identify interpersonal actions and behaviors that are not beneficial to encouraging the grieving worship leader to seek help.

When the worship leader is expected to hide pain, true worship is hindered.³¹ Being able to show the congregation how God can deliver a person even in a high position, can cause others to be restored and set free. Giving the worship leader permission to grieve will allow others to witness how God can use painful situations for good. There must be a plan in place that can effectively reassure the grieving worship leader. Leaders should aim to have resources available for the grieving worship leader, so the worship leader can feel comfortable acknowledging their need for assistance.

³¹ Smit, John-Peter. *Taking Pains to Grow* The Presbyterian Record Vol. 132, Iss. 3, (Mar 2008): 18-22.

Significance of the Study

A study on worship leaders is significant for church leaders to better understand grief and to take of their worship leaders. According to author Patricia Sanchez, after the worship leader's need is addressed, the individual can feel at ease knowing he or she won't be looked down upon for being in despair.³² An individual's job as a worship leader can be impacted negatively if the person is not cared for in the right way. When churches realize that healing is a process and the worship leader's feelings are significant, the healing process can begin, and the leader can serve without hesitation.

It is also necessary for congregations to better identify when their worship leaders are in pain. It is critical that churches care about their worship leader beyond the talent he or she possesses. It is necessary for the church to recognize when their leaders are undergoing stress and needing to be tended to spiritually.³³ Being encouraged and prayed for by the church where the worship leader serves will help maneuver through their trying time.

When the worship leader is going through or experiencing any type of pain such as loss, grief, or suffering, it is hard for them to function in the way he or she should. The worship leader may not be effective in their ministry unless their needs are addressed or met. When churches and even worship leaders find strategies to use, everyone involved can benefit.³⁴ People in the congregation can be assured that if the worship leader can grieve and feel accepted, he or she might also receive acceptance during vulnerability.

³² Sanchez, Patricia. *Measuring Up*. National Catholic Reporter(Vol. 48, Issue 10.) March 2012

³³ Smit, John-Peter. *Taking Pains to Grow*. The Presbyterian Record Vol. 132, Iss. 3, (Mar 2008)

³⁴ Knox, Douglas. *From Mourning to Praise: A Biblical Guide through Grief and Loss*. WestBowPress 2017

This study is significant for the worship leader to experience healing and community. Author Inge V. Del Rosario stated, “Grief transforms. Grief changes you, as few other experiences can.”³⁵ Although the worship leader may only see the pain that is happening during their current situation, healing can be on the other side. Letting the worship leader know feelings of pain will not always be as painful can help the individual experience healing and see how their community can rally around them during the process.

Research Questions

Research questions concerning the challenges of worshipping in the time of mourning should address issues that are pertinent to the worship leader and those in ministry. The research questions for this study were:

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief?

Research Question 2: What strategies could worship leaders dealing with personal trauma use in order to maintain authenticity?

The worship leader may continue to mask pain, making it difficult to discern the characteristics of grief. Thus, it is important to identify characteristics of the grieving worship leader so that he or she may receive support. A worship leader is required to sing and lead people to Christ even in their midst of their troubles. Being able to identify the characteristics of grief should encourage the worship ministry staff and congregation to approach the worship leader in love, while providing assistance. Therefore, the second research question is necessary

³⁵ Del Rosario, Inge V. A Journey into Grief. *Journal of Religion and Health*; New York Vol. 43, Iss. 1, (Mar 2004): 19-28.

to study how worship leaders, congregations, and ministry leaders can work together to facilitate worship leader authenticity and healing. The research questions connect to the statement of purpose because there must be a way to let the grieving worship leader know he or she has a right to mourn and grieve without feeling guilty. When a worship leader can be transparent in his or her worship leading, before the people, the congregation can witness healing and deliverance.

Core Concepts

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to identify core concepts. S. M. Katherine defined grief as the response to bereavement, including a variety of psychological and physiological symptoms that evolve over time. The manifestations and temporal evolution of grief are variable and unique to each loss; however, there are commonalities that clinicians can recognize.³⁶

Grief

Grief is experienced when people lose a child, go through a divorce, lose a friendship, or even a family member due to an illness. When people experience a loss of any kind, he or she can respond to grief in different ways. Grief can cause people to be overwhelmed with emotions and this could also be true of the grieving worship leader. When a worship leader has ranging emotions, the ministry can be negatively impacted. In the event of loss, grief should be understandable.

Mourning

Mourning is a period of time after a person suffers a great loss. Worden's text offered four tasks of mourning which included: to accept the reality of the loss, to process the pain of

³⁶ Katherine, S. M. (2015). Complicated grief. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 372(2), 153-160.

grief; to adjust to a world without the deceased, and to find enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life.³⁷ Mourning is a person's emotional response to a horrible event in life and can be detrimental to worship. No one experiences grief in the same way. Churches must remember that even though a worship leader has the task of creating or aiding in an atmosphere of worship, he or she is not exempt from the trauma, grief, or mourning that may take place in his or her lives.

Worship

Worship is what mankind was created to do. A. W. Tozer stated, "Ultimately, this man is to enter God's presence and unashamedly worship God, looking upon his face while the ages roll. That is why man was created; that is man's chief end."³⁸ One should worship regardless of circumstances. Worship is personal time with God and one's response to Him, in both good times and bad times.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to help the reader understand the context of each term in this study:

Grief: "The loss of a loved one to death is the most recognized form of grief, but grief also emerges from the loss of home, family, function or ability."³⁹

³⁷ Judith E. Hefren & Bruce A. Thyer (2012) The Effectiveness of Guided Mourning for Adults with Complicated Mourning, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 22:8, 988-1002, DOI: [10.1080/10911359.2012.707946](https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2012.707946)

³⁸ Tozer, A. W. *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*. Compiled and edited by James L. Snyder. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2009.

³⁹ Sikstrom L, Saikaly R, Ferguson G, Mosher PJ, Bonato S, Soklaridis S (2019) Being there: A scoping review of grief support training in medical education. *PLoS ONE* 14(11): e0224325. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224325>

Loss: “The state or feeling of grief when deprived of someone or something of value. Loss can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. Tangible losses are those we can see: death of a loved one; downsizing of a job; ashes of a burned building; physical deterioration of aging; the move of adult offspring away from their childhood home.”⁴⁰

Lament: A way for a person or group experiencing some deep pain or sorrow to move towards God, even if God may seem to be the cause of the suffering passionate expression of grief or sorrow.⁴¹

Mourning: “The cultural or public display of grief through one's behaviors.”⁴²

Trauma: “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster.”⁴³

Worship: “The expression of a relationship in which God the Father reveals himself and his love in Christ, and by his Holy Spirit administers grace, to which we respond in faith, gratitude, and obedience.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Chandler, A. (2010). Accommodating loss. *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, 90(2), 12-13. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/356653195?accountid=12085>

⁴¹ Dickie, J. F. (2019). The importance of lament in pastoral ministry: Biblical basis and some applications. *Verbum Et Ecclesia*, 40(1) doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4102/ve.v40i1.2002>

⁴² Wittmann D; Keshavan M, Psychiatry [Psychiatry], ISSN: 0033-2747, 2007 Summer; Vol. 70 (2), pp. 154-66; Publisher: Taylor & Francis; PMID: 17661540

⁴³ American Psychological Association. (2013, August 15). *Recovering emotionally from disaster*. <http://www.apa.org/topics/recovering-disasters>

⁴⁴ Schaper, Robert. In *His Presence: Appreciating Your Worship Tradition* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 15-16.

Hypotheses

The following are the working hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief include, feeling embarrassed or shameful, masking grief, and continuing to serve during that time which may lead to burnout.

As a worship leader, it may be expected for the individual to have it all together while singing and leading the people in song during service. Many worship leaders feel shameful when he or she exhibit signs of weakness. Having those feelings can lead to embarrassment and the withholding of emotions.

A worship leader may feel like their ultimate responsibility is to continue to serve while masking their grief, because it is their job. Believing that the work of the worship leader is still required, despite the church acknowledging their trauma, can cause other problems such as burnout within ministry. Stewart stated, "It is hard for many ministers to find time and energy for personal worship, prayer and Bible study when so much of their lives are spent in leading these activities for others. How ironic that spiritual leaders experience the very spiritual dryness he or she works so hard to help others avoid."⁴⁵ Congregations must ensure that their worship leaders and those who serve are not burdened down in ministry.

Hypothesis 2: The strategies worship leaders could use to maintain authenticity while dealing with personal trauma include practicing transparency, praying for understanding, receiving counseling, and continuing to serve in the role of worship leader.

⁴⁵ Stewart, F. (2013, 03). Minding the minister. *The Presbyterian Record*, 137, 28. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1319838581?accountid=12085>

It is logical to assume that these strategies will help because it will allow the worship leader an opportunity to express their feelings, seek God, and obtain counsel from professionals who are trained on the topics of grief and loss. The worship leader can remain authentic and true, while also demonstrating that he or she is willing to receive assistance.

In a 2016 article, Maggie Ferrell, stated, “Transparency is about information and sharing information that may be welcomed or uncomfortable.”⁴⁶ When a worship leader is transparent about the things going in life, it may make he or she feel uncomfortable; yet there are many benefits to transparency. The many benefits could include someone being blessed by his or her testimony, individuals being able to relate to the situation, and ultimately the individuals acknowledging him or her are not the only one experiencing the issue. When a person in the congregation can see how the worship leader overcame his or her time of grief, it shows the congregants him and her can also have the same victory.

In a 2009 article, Meravigliia stated, “Prayer has been defined as “communication with God as an experience and expression of the human spirit.”⁴⁷ In this study, it showed that people found more comfort in prayer, felt closer to God, and felt more compassion and forgiveness.”⁴⁸ When individuals pray to God, He is able to hear their plea and answer them in His own way.

⁴⁶ Farrell, Maggie (Column Editor) (2016) Transparency, *Journal of Library Administration*, 56:4, 444-452, DOI: [10.1080/01930826.2016.1157426](https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2016.1157426)

⁴⁷ Meraviglia M (2006) Effects of spirituality in breast cancer survivors. *Onc Nurs Forum* 33: E1–E7 doi:10.1188/06

⁴⁸ Levine, E. G., Aviv, C., Yoo, G., Ewing, C., & Au, A. (2009). The benefits of prayer on mood and well-being of breast cancer survivors. *Supportive Care in Cancer*, 17(3), 295-306.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s00520-008-0482-5>

People talk to God through prayer, however talking to professional and spiritual counselors also has its advantages. Stella Potgieter stated, “People who experience difficulties are not always able or willing to seek professional therapy, nor is it always necessary, but many need at least another person's assistance. And this is where the Church can meet people in their need.”⁴⁹ Although people might be ashamed to admit he or she receives counseling, counseling is a process that has many benefits. When an individual receives counseling, the person can express his or her emotions, communicate his or her fears, and better manage his or her anger. Counseling can also help boost an individual's self-esteem and confidence.

Continuing to serve in the role of the worship leader during that time can also assist in the healing process. 2 Chronicles 15:7 states, “But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.”⁵⁰ When a worship leader is dealing with loss, participating in worship services and serving alongside others may be satisfying.

The worship leader knows the importance of practice and when leading worship is required. A worship leader is used to having a routine and structure. Ruth Segal stated, “routines are patterned behaviors that have instrumental goals. Routines give life order.”⁵¹ It is important for the worship leader to continue to operate in their gift. Although it might be hard to accept as true, God will reward those who continue to serve and trust Him during hard times.

⁴⁹ Potgieter, Stella D. "Communities: development of church-based counselling teams." *HTS Teologiese Studies*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2015. *Gale Academic OneFile*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A455782872/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=46980eae. Accessed 28 Mar. 2020.

⁵⁰ Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁵¹ Segal, Ruth. "Family routines and rituals: a context for occupational therapy interventions." *AJOT: American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, vol. 58, no. 5, 2004, p. 499+. *Gale OneFile: Health and Medicine*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A208219602/HRCA?u=vic_liberty&sid=HRCA&xid=90a89999. Accessed 28 Mar. 2020.

Worship leaders dealing with personal trauma should feel at ease letting others know he or she is not exempt from experiencing the same heartache others feel. Even though a worship leader has musical skills and talents others might not possess, he or she is still likely to be dealt with life's challenges and troubles. The worship leader needs to be able to process their pain in a healthy way while also still being able to use their gifts to glorify God.

Research Methods

For this study, the goal was to identify common themes within the responses of the participants. The plan of research included interviewing worship leaders who were knowledgeable about the topic of grief and have experienced it firsthand. This study involved face-to-face interviews and email questionnaires. The following steps were taken: Interview questions and surveys were prepared to ask the participants, the IRB application was completed with IRB approval, consent was given from the participants and data was collected from 22 worship leaders. After the data was collected, the information was analyzed and synthesized. The data provided insights into the characteristics of grieving worship leaders and strategies that can be used to aid in remaining authentic worshipers amidst the grieving process.

Summary

In conclusion, the worship leader has many roles and demands placed on them including being a discipler, nurturing their artistry, preparing songs for worship, leading, and serving alongside the band and other ministry leaders. It is imperative that the church and congregation understand the stages of grief the worship leader may experience, including denial, acceptance, depression, bargaining, and anger. The purpose this study is to examine characteristics of the worship leader experiencing grief and methods for leading with authenticity while continuing to lead worship.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that pertains to grief and loss, revealing why further information is still needed to assist the grieving worship leader. The literature review consists of six sections. First, literature is reviewed from studies of those who have experienced grief in different ways, such as bereavement, death, and losing family members due to cancer. This will provide information on how individuals have coped with lament and other difficulties. In the second section, biblical perspectives regarding grief and loss were described. Information on Job, the Psalms, and Jesus as the binder up of broken hearts was provided. In the third section, literature was reviewed about the demands of the church leaders. Within section three, a closer examination was made on the demands of the worship leader as related to burnout, which included how the individual is expected to still worship, go about their daily routine, and follow through with their responsibilities, despite their immediate sufferings. The fourth section of the literature review examined literature pertaining to the reasons why people do not express grief. The fifth section included research on guilt that might be associated with speaking out about trauma. Finally, the sixth section examined options such as counseling and therapy which pastors and administration can offer to the individuals who are grieving.

Grief and Loss

Many articles and journals were examined pertaining to grief and loss. With the articles, many of these individuals experienced the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, and experienced trauma. Articles and journals of those who have experienced grief or loss, questions of why grief happened, and how him or her dealt with grief, were all addressed and presented.

In 2017, Hamilton *et al.* conducted a study on African American family members who had experienced the loss of a family member due to cancer, seeking to understand how the loss corresponded with their spirituality. The study showed that spirituality played a major part in how the individuals communicated their issues to God and how to encourage others who had or were dealing with grief and loss. Data came from 19 men and women by using a qualitative descriptive design, including criterion sampling, open-ended semi structured interviews, and qualitative content analysis. The participants had to at least be 18 years old and younger than 89, had an experience of death with a family member caused by cancer, be affiliated with a religion and be likely to use religious practices in their everyday lives.⁵² Participants were asked to discuss the use of religious practices following the death of a family member to cancer or during their own experience with a life-threatening illness. The results of this study indicated that, “Participants made sense of the death of their loved one using the following five themes: Ready for life after death; I was there; I live to honor their memory; God’s wisdom is infinite; and God prepares you and brings you through. These five themes were grounded in conceptualizations of spirituality as connectedness to God, self, and others.”⁵³ The participants reflected upon a heavy reliance on God during their time of loss. The researchers concluded African Americans need support from the health care providers and others while dealing with end of life and grief and bereavement experiences. Their findings also supported that during the loss of a loved one, spirituality is important to African Americans.

⁵² Hamilton, J. B., Best, N. C., Wells, J. S., & Worthy, V. C. (2018). Making sense of loss through spirituality: Perspectives of african american family members who have experienced the death of a close family member to cancer. *Palliative & Supportive Care*, 16(6), 662.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1017/S1478951517000955>

⁵³ Ibid

In 2003, two studies of 89 students at St. Francis Xavier University were conducted to see how participants grew due to their experience with loss and trauma. The purpose of the first study was to see if the recall of a time of loss would cause people to perceive life as meaningful. The participants consisted of 46 students drawn from the mass testing of the Psychology pool. These students were told that as a part of the experiment he or she would participate in a study of personality and perceptions of life events and had to write about unpleasant life experiences dealing with loss or death. Students were either asked to complete a 19-item version of the Fear of Personal Death Scale⁵⁴, engage in a control task, or describe, for three minutes, a time in his or her life when him or her came close to death or experienced a trauma or loss.⁵⁵ In Study 2, 43 undergraduates were randomly assigned to a mortality salience condition where he or she had to think about death. Participants were given a filler questionnaire, presented with a news story, and given a series of questions to answer. The findings in Study 1 indicated that a quick recall of an episode that was traumatic in one's life led participants to believe life was meaningful. The findings in Study 2 indicated that, "reminders of death in conjunction with a threat to ones view of the world lead people to exaggerate the extent to which their life seems meaningful."⁵⁶ From the findings, the researchers suggested that even in the time of loss, people can hope for new relationships, new goals, new perspectives and new meanings of life.

In a 2015 study by Gordon Parker *et.al*, a quantitative analysis was conducted to see if bereavement, leading to depression, was equivalent to other life-related stressors such as grief, loss, and death. Two hundred-eight Participants were invited to participate in a face-to-face

⁵⁴ Florian, V., & Mikulincer, M. (1997). Fear of death and the judgment of social transgressions: A multidimensional test of Terror Management Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 369-380.

⁵⁵ Davis, C. G., & McKearney, J. M. (2003). How do people grow from their experience with trauma or loss? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 22(5), 477-492.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org/czproxy.liberty.edu/10.1521/jscp.22.5.477.22928>

⁵⁶ Ibid

interview about depression and sadness. Only 200 interviews were deemed reliable for the study. The authors explained, “Participants were asked to report their exposure to 16 differing stressors and, given definitions of depression, grief, sadness and stress, to rate (in order of importance) their primary and secondary reactions if so experienced.”⁵⁷ The researchers concluded that the participants’ responses could have reflected how the definitions of the emotional responses were given. The results from the study concluded grief was the main response in dealing with death and bereavement was unlikely to cause depression.

Walker and Shaffer’s 2007 study was conducted on 300 incarcerated teenagers at a California Youth authority facility, 150 female juvenile offenders at the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility, and a later research study at the same facility with 133 incarcerated youth. The study revealed at least 94 percent of all the participants had experienced losing loved ones to death. While there seemed to be a lot of outlets for grieving adults, there seemed to be few for grieving teens. Therefore, *The Growing Through Loss program* was developed for the youth to be able to have healthy coping skills, while being able to share their emotions in a safe and nonjudgmental setting. The authors stated, “The grief group experience provides a place for hurting adolescents to vent and discuss the anxieties and fears often associated with the grief process.”⁵⁸ The findings showed that since the implantation of the program, over 5,000 youth have completed the program while being in the correctional facilities. The researchers concluded that people need a safe space and non-judgmental setting to grieve.

⁵⁷ Parker, G., Paterson, A., & Pavlovic, Dusan Hadzi. (2015). Emotional response patterns of depression, grief, sadness and stress to differing life events: A quantitative analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. Volume 175, 1 April 2015, Pages 229-232

⁵⁸ Walker, P., & Shaffer, M. (2007). Reducing depression among adolescents dealing with grief and loss: a program evaluation report. *Health & Social Work*, 32(1), 67–68.

These findings were important in learning how individuals respond to grief and how support, during and after a loss is helpful. The studies showed that although all the individuals dealt with grief, it was experienced in different ways. While these findings were beneficial in understanding grief and loss, it did not extend to the unique position of the worship leader.

Biblical Perspectives of Grief and Loss

The Example of Job

There is a significant amount of literature on the topics of mourning, loss, and grief. However, for Christians, there is an even greater source of information about loss. The Bible provides the example of Job, who was a blameless and upright man who experienced losing everything close to him. Additionally, the Psalms, a book full of inspiration, provides comfort in the form of encouragement and lament. Ultimately, knowing Jesus' role as the binder up of broken hearts, aids believers in understanding and coping with grief.

The Bible presents the story of Job, a man of great wealth who had many livestock and a large family. Job was a good man who tried his very best to live an honest and upright life. Even though God boasted about Job to Satan, the devil told God the only reason Job was so good was because of everything with which the Lord had blessed him. Satan told God, "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." (Job 1:10-11).⁵⁹ God ultimately gave Satan permission to test a Job's faith and bring difficult times in his life. Job lost

⁵⁹ Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

his servants, his animals, and even his sons and daughters. Job grieved by shaving his head and tearing up his robe. (Job 1:20)⁶⁰ With all Job experienced, he never cursed God or blamed Him for anything that was going wrong in His life; he fell to the ground and worshiped God. The story of Job indicated that believers are not exempt from difficult circumstances and are called to worship through the pain.

The Psalms

The Psalms is a book full of emotions, including grief and lament. Don Wyrzten stated, “The Psalter’s lyricists and composers wrote honest and beautiful songs about their struggles and triumphs. Some of what they wrote seems messy to a purely rationalistic mind, but it all rings true to a full view of reality.”⁶¹ The Psalms is full of full of praise and prayer. The Psalmists praised Him in the good and continued to pray through the bad. As such, worship leaders are expected to also praise God through songs, whether he or she is happy or sad. For example, Psalms 10 states, “Lord why do You stand so far away? Why do You hide in times of trouble...?”⁶² Just as David lamented to God, so can we. Wyrzten stated, “As David did, I can pour out my soul to God and let my raw emotions flow out to my Creator.”⁶³ When the worship leader finds themselves in desperate need of God, it is ok for them to be honest to God while crying out to Him. Psalm 22:1 provides another example: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from my deliverance and from my words of groaning?” When a person is grieving, God might seem so far away. The Psalms provide comfort for the grieving

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Wyrzten, Don. *A Musician Looks at the Psalms: 365 Daily Meditations*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, p.29. 2004.

⁶² Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

believer. According to Fleece, “The songs of lament are the very songs we need for healing and wholeness.”⁶⁴ Just as the Psalmist wrote and sang about a variety of emotions, including lament, so should believers sing songs of lamentation.

Grief and the role of Jesus

When one is grieving, Jesus is there to give comfort. When one is dealing with any type of loss, He is there to be strength. When there is confusion all around, He is there to give peace. Romans 15:13 states, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁵ The role of Jesus is to bind up the broken hearted.

Christ was sent to console those who grieve. Scripture states that Jesus came, “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”(Isaiah 61:3)⁶⁶ Jesus can turn sorrow into songs of praise. Of Isaiah 61, Matthew Henry noted know that Jesus had been appointed, directed, and ordained to be many things for the people in the world. He was to be a comforter to all who mourned and those who sought after Him. Henry stated, “There is enough in him to *comfort all who mourn*, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to

⁶⁴ Fleece, Esther. *No More Faking Fine: Ending the Pretending*. Zondervan 2017.

⁶⁵ Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁶⁶ Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

those who *mourn in Zion*, who sorrow *after a godly sort*, according to God.”⁶⁷ Those who mourn are not to seek the world for comfort but seek God so that He can get the glory.

An example of Jesus comforting those who mourn comes from the story of Mary and Martha. Lazarus became sick and died. Mary and Martha experienced their brother dying and called for Jesus to come and heal him. The sisters knew that Jesus had healed others before and Mary and Martha wanted Him to do the same for Lazarus. John 11:32 demonstrated the grief Mary experienced: “Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”⁶⁸ Although the sisters called for Jesus, the sisters felt there was nothing Jesus could do at the time because He did not arrive until two days after their brothers’ death. Mary met Jesus and was comforted by His words, assuring her that her brother would rise again. Martha ultimately met with Jesus and was also relieved of her distress. Just as Martha and Mary received bad news and dealt with death, the sisters also experienced Jesus weeping with them. Even though Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus, he wept because the sisters were brokenhearted. Jesus empathized with the grief of the sisters and ultimately bound up their broken hearts.

Demands of the Church Leaders and Burnout

Leiter Maslach defined burnout as, “a state of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustions a person experiences in response to an excessive and prolonged stress.”⁶⁹ When an

⁶⁷ Henry, Matthew. Isaiah 61 Bible Commentary.
<https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=mh&b=23&c=61>. 2020

⁶⁸ Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁶⁹ Maslach C, Leiter MP. Early predictors of job burnout and engagement. J App Psychol. 2008;93:498–512

individual works too much or too hard, it can cause burnout. Working too hard or doing too much can affect a person physically, emotionally, and mentally.

In a 2014 Mandy Robbins and Leslie Francis, conducted a study on clergywomen in the Church of England who had experienced burnout due to being responsible for too many churches. A 24-page questionnaire was sent out and 867 clergywomen provided data needed for the research. The data was analyzed using a seven-point semantic scale. The findings showed 46% of clergywomen were emotionally exhausted and felt tired of fulfilling their ministry roles. The findings also revealed that 42% of clergywomen were frustrated with the tasks he or she had to accomplish.⁷⁰ The researchers concluded that although the participants were satisfied in their ministries, fatigue and frustration was still experienced due to burnout.

In a 2010 article by Ross Schafer and Steve Jacobsen, the researchers spoke on factors that contributed to clergy burnout. Some factors included board expectations, role conflict, the challenge of multi-tasking, public/private boundaries, physical health, stress, and depression. In the article, the researchers explained that some critical issues that clergy face are being overweight, having heart disease, and mental health issues. A national study was conducted on over 2,500 religious pastors from Duke Divinity School. In this study, 76 percent were found to be overweight and 40 percent reported feeling worn out most of the time while in pastoral leadership. Further in the article, the researchers described a tool clergy could use to explain the choices available to the individuals and to help the clergy clarify situations the individuals were in. This 20-minute self-assessment wellness audit helps the individuals prioritize activities, while

⁷⁰ Robbins, M., & Francis, L. J. (2014). Taking Responsibility for Multiple Churches: A Study in Burnout among Anglican Clergywomen in England. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 27(2), 261–280. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1163/15709256-12341310>

also helping reduce stress. The authors concluded that clergy can prevent burnout by practicing, “selflessness, self-awareness, and self-care in their work.”⁷¹ The authors continued, “A spiritual leader cannot be all things to all people all the time.”⁷² The authors further concluded that learning how to say “yes” or “no” and delegating to other leaders in the church to complete tasks, would also create a healthier congregation.

In a 2010 article, Maureen H. Miner stated, “Burnout is typically characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.”⁷³ A study was conducted to examine ministry orientation to clergy burnout while surveying 2,132 church leaders in Australia, from all Christian denominations. These individuals were asked to complete a questionnaire about burnout. The data was examined by using a confirmatory factor analysis, a multiple indicator multiple cause model, and structural equation modeling. The findings of the study showed burnout mediated an orientation to ministry and satisfaction to ministry.⁷⁴ Burnout could have led to low job satisfaction, low performance, low and high turnovers in any profession. The researchers also concluded burnout played a major role in the healthy psychological functioning of Christian clergy. Being involved in church ministry can be stressful and burnout can be a negative result.

⁷¹ Schaefer, A. G., & Jacobsen, S. (2009). SURVIVING CLERGY BURNOUT. *Encounter*, 70(1), 37-66. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/216769312?accountid=12085>

⁷² Ibid, 66.

⁷³ Miner, M. H., Sterland, S., & Dowson, M. (2010). *Ministry orientation and ministry outcomes: Evaluation of a new multidimensional model of clergy burnout and job satisfaction*. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (2010), 83, 167–188

⁷⁴ Ibid, 167.

Amy Cameron's 2006 study was completed on ministers in Canada who were spiritually exhausted.⁷⁵ In this study, 77% of those surveyed felt more like a boss than a pastor, 18% could not name a single friend within the church, and 80% felt guilty taking off work even if their workload was over 50 hours. The researcher concluded that trying to balance family with church, being exhausted, and feeling isolated were some of the reasons why the ministers felt stressed and experienced burnout.

In a 2018 article in the Choral Journal, 16 members of the American Choral Directors Association were a part of a retreat program that provided sessions to help musicians cope with the stressors of being overworked, overwhelmed, and underpaid. After a discussion occurred about being overworked and burnt out, leaders Ken Medema, Sid Davis, and Mat Greer came up with the idea to have the first Interlude Retreat. At this 3-day retreat, held at the Prince Conference Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, sessions were made available for musicians to find better ways to function, create less stressful work environments, and relieve stress. The 16 participants were able to "rest, renew, and re-imagine."⁷⁶ The author stated, "there is no doubt that we all work in a profession that includes great stresses, sometimes hurtful criticism, and infrequent periods of rest and quiet."⁷⁷ It was further noted that it was important for the musician to receive rest when he or she is weary and burnt out.

⁷⁵ Cameron, Amy. "Clergy spiritually exhausted, stressed out: a new report shows Canadian ministry is 'in crisis'." *Presbyterian Record*, vol. 130, no. 4, Apr. 2006, p. 10+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A144014765/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=5f1e9168. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 46

⁷⁷ Hallelujah, amen! A focus on music in worship. (2018). *The Choral Journal*, 58(11), 44-46. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2056435083?accountid=12085>

In a 2000 qualitative study, 262 Australian Protestant ministers completed a sample regarding the demands of ministry and church burnout. The sample and questionnaires given included the Orientation to the Demands of Ministry scale⁷⁸ which was developed to “measure burnout, anxiety, depression, religious self-esteem and religious problem-solving.”⁷⁹ The findings of the study suggested that people having a hard time dealing with the stress of ministry could modify their ministry orientation as a strategy to cope. The researchers further concluded that ministers who had more difficulty with connectedness with their spirituality and competence experienced a great deal of burnout than those who had less difficulty.

In a 2015 study by Greg Scott, *et. al.*, 51 rural pastors were involved in an 18-month evaluative study using a self-administered survey and telephone data regarding isolation, loneliness, and burnout. The study was designed to help pastors overcome burnout and even an imbalance between their personal and professional life. The findings showed that pastors and clergy suffered from a great deal of isolation and loneliness.⁸⁰ Although the study helped improve some conditions in the pastors’ lives and connect with other leaders, the researchers concluded that pastors experience stress and burnout from doing a lot of social work that he or she is not professionally trained to do.

In 2013, another study was conducted to examine, “clergy work-related psychological health, stress, and burnout.”⁸¹ The study was conducted on 340 clergy who were part of the

⁷⁸ Miner, M., S. Sterland and M. Dowson (2006). Coping with Ministry: Development of a Multidimensional Measure of Orientations to the Demands of Ministry. *Review of Religious Research* 48(1)212-30.

⁷⁹ Miner, M., Sterland, S., & Dowson, M. (2009). Orientation to the Demands of Ministry: Construct Validity and Relationship with Burnout. *Review of Religious Research*, 50(4), 463-479.

⁸⁰ Scott, G., & Lovell, R. (2015). The rural pastors initiative: Addressing isolation and burnout in rural ministry. *Pastoral Psychology*, 64(1), 71-97. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-013-0591-z>

⁸¹ Randall, K. J. (2013). Clergy burnout: Two different measures. *Pastoral Psychology*, 62(3), 333-341. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-012-0506-4>

Church of Wales and Church of England. The participants partook in a self-report postal seventh year-questionnaire. The findings concluded that almost half of them found themselves frustrated in their attempts to accomplish tasks that were important to them, while two fifths found themselves drained. The researcher further concluded that although the clergy were happy to be serving in ministry, he or she experienced fatigue and frustration.

Similarly, to clergy members, a 1993 article identified that music teachers can feel left out and unappreciated. In the article, the researcher wanted to encourage music teachers from all over the world to get past negative feelings and encourage mutual respect from those whom he or she serves alongside. The author expressed how music teachers can feel ignored, not respected by their peers and misunderstood, arguing that the teacher could either let the negative situation consume them or could make the best of the situation by showing their colleagues how great it feels to be appreciated, by appreciating them. The author continued by stating, “A pat on the back given feels just as good as a pat on the back received, and it can change your whole outlook.”⁸² Teachers were encouraged to continue to find something positive in the situation, even when he or she is not acknowledged for all the great he or she does.

While these findings were beneficial in understanding demands of clergy and burnout, it did not extend the findings to the unique position of the worship leader. Worship leaders may experience being overworked, exhaustion, and overwhelming emotions, leading to burnout. If individuals are not mindful of the causes of burnout and how it can affect them, it can negatively impact their professional, personal, and private life. Furthermore, more literature should be

⁸² Johnson, B. L. (1993). Upbeat advice for downbeat teachers. *Music Educators Journal*, 79(9), 37. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.2307/3398632>

available when clergy or the worship leader become exhausted while fulfilling their role in ministry.

Hiding Grief

The grieving worship leader may still be required to lead while experiencing a great deal of mourning. This may be difficult for the worship leader because he or she is still expected to engage the congregation, despite how he or she may feel. There are moments when the worship leader is likely expected to not show emotion about things that might be going on in his or her life. The individual might also feel as if his or her worship will be hindered if he or she does not show strength in front of the congregation.

When an individual goes through a loss or deals with trauma, one might be expected to hide their grief. A 1991 study was conducted to describe the effects of suicide of a parent or sibling during childhood and the need to hide the pain. Interviews were conducted in a private office at a university. A grounded theory approach was used to study eleven participants who experienced the loss of a parent and seven others who experienced the loss of a sibling to suicide. The researchers found several themes that emerged from the data which included experiencing the pain, hiding the pain, and healing the pain. The authors stated, "Hiding was accomplished through denying, avoiding, secrecy, fleeing, working, and addictive behavior."⁸³ The authors concluded the children who survived the suicide, experienced unresolved and painful grief while being an adult. The research suggests people who experience suicide by their parent or sibling have a hard time dealing with bereavement.

⁸³ Demi, Alice Sterner, and Carol Howell. "Hiding and Healing: Resolving the Suicide of a Parent or Sibling." *Archives of psychiatric nursing*. 5.6 (1991): 350–356.

Breen's 2019 study was conducted to determine why bereaved individuals do not utilize counseling or therapy. After the study was approved by The Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, participants were invited to participate through social media. Once the criteria were met, a modified attitude questionnaire⁸⁴ was completed by participants, which included a convenience sample of 81 men and 75 women who resided in Australia. The researchers stated, "The results show that individuals may base their attitudes toward grief counseling primarily on their cognitive and also their affective responses."⁸⁵ It was revealed that some participants did not seek out grief counseling because he or she did not find it helpful. The results of the study also showed, "some participants were concerned about the usefulness of grief counseling, particularly as they perceived the quality of counseling to rely on the attributes and training of the counselor."⁸⁶ The researchers concluded that actively promoting positive, yet accurate, beliefs about grief counseling and therapy would help bereaved individuals to seek such treatments.

Rosbrow's 2019 work discussed vicissitudes of grief. Rosbrow expressed that if a person's grief is visible to others, it may make the person feel misunderstood and exposed. He stated, "The more shame a person feels, the more she wants to hide from the view of others, out of embarrassment and self-consciousness. This cycles with a guilty feeling over not being able to

⁸⁴ Eagly, A. H., Mladinic, A., & Otto, S. (1994). Cognitive and affective bases of attitudes toward social groups and social policies. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 30(2), 113–137. doi:10.1006/jesp.1994.1006

⁸⁵ Lauren J. Breen, Cameron J. Croucamp & Clare S. Rees (2019) What do people really think about grief counseling? Examining community attitudes, *Death Studies*, 43:10, 611-618, DOI: [10.1080/07481187.2018.1506527](https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2018.1506527)

⁸⁶ Ibid., 615.

show up and be present and with one's own and others' grief.⁸⁷ The research suggests that people usually hide their grief because he or she may feel shame and resentment about grieving.

A 2008 study was conducted on 32 people who lost a family member to murder between 1994 -1999 in Union Count, Washington, D.C. The participants expressed their emotions about the bereavement, strategies on managing their grief, and how others responded to their loss inappropriately. The data was analyzed using the ground theory approach. The researcher noted, "although most bereaved victims felt distressed over others' reluctance to hear about their grief, many worked to hide their grief in front of others."⁸⁸ The findings showed that the participants hid grief because him or her felt it was a burden to others and it would be hard for other people to understand their grief. Some participants voiced concerns on how people felt he or she were grieving for too long a time frame and just wanted him or her to get over it, while others stated his or her crying was uncomfortable for others. The researcher further concluded the participants pretended to feel good in order to appease others while also avoiding the topic of pain altogether.

While these findings were beneficial in understanding why individuals hide grief, the studies did not extend their findings to the unique position of the worship leader. A worship leader needs to have permission to grieve and be able to express it without judgment. Further research should be conducted to examine how congregations can nurture the grieving worship leader.

⁸⁷Rosbrow, Thomas (2019) On Grief, Guilt, Shame, and Nostalgia. Discussion of "Who Has the Right to Mourn?: Relational Deference and the Ranking of Grief", *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 29:4, 501-506, DOI: [10.1080/10481885.2019.1632656](https://doi.org/10.1080/10481885.2019.1632656)

⁸⁸ Goodrum, S. (2008). When the Management of Grief Becomes Everyday Life: The Aftermath of Murder. *Symbolic Interaction*, 31(4), 422-442. doi:10.1525/si.2008.31.4.422

Guilt associated with trauma

A traumatic experience can cause a person to feel different types of emotions, weighing heavy upon the mind and emotions while also causing distress. A person that has experienced trauma needs support and guidance, so he or she can navigate through the time of grieving. Feeling guilty can be a result of experiencing trauma or other related disturbances. Knowing how to assist a person who has dealt with a traumatic experience can also benefit the grieving worship leader in regaining hope.

A journal article by Kathy Malloch and Tim Forter-O'Grady, addressed the shame of making mistakes. The authors explained that people in the healthcare field have been impacted emotionally from making mistakes or causing errors with patients. Malloch and Forter-O'Grady stated, "Getting stuck in personal grief or remorse or in assigning blame to others does not prevent recurrence. There is a tremendous fear of making the wrong decision, doing the wrong thing, and making an irretrievable error, not only from the clinical perspective but also from a leadership perspective."⁸⁹ Some people in the medical field experience feelings of brokenness and failure, while also experiencing breakdowns. However, when an error is made, the individual can recover from it if he or she identifies the necessary actions to do so. Taking responsibility, being open, learning how to correct the error, and taking active measures to change the situation can help turn brokenness into recovery. This research suggested that those who experience grief due to personal mistakes can experience freedom and recovery.

⁸⁹ Malloch, Kathy, and Tim Forter-O'Grady. "Healing brokenness: error as opportunity." *Patient Care Management*, vol. 18, no. 1, Oct. 2002, p. 7+. *Gale OneFile: Health and Medicine*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A92690452/HRCA?u=vic_liberty&sid=HRCA&xid=873648f4. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.

In a 2014 study by Nor Jana Saim, *et.al.*, content analysis was conducted on 17 unwed teenage moms in Malaysia, ages 12-18 years old. Of the participant, 13 of had experienced the trauma of rape. The study researched the reactions of the participants parents and the fathers of the children. Three themes developed including secrecy, rejection and repression. Four additional themes emerged, which included feeling detached, trapped, unworthy, and ambiguous.⁹⁰ The participants felt guilty about having babies out of wedlock and felt unworthy of making decisions for themselves and for their babies' wellbeing. The researchers concluded that "most of the participants received no support from their family members or significant others and resulted in them feeling rejected and traumatized." This research suggested that those who experience trauma may or may not be supported by family and need outside support for assistance.

Colin A. Ross's research with trauma survivors discussed the impact of severe chronic childhood trauma on feelings of unworthiness, specifically of God's love. Ross mentioned that the child who has experienced severe chronic trauma feels as though, "I am causing the abuse; I deserve the abuse; I am unworthy and unlovable."⁹¹ Children who grew up to be adults with even more guilt, felt as though the abuse he or she experienced was his or her fault. The author also noted that once the survivor realized the childhood abuse was the fault of the perpetrator, he or she no longer blamed God or themselves for the negative experience. This research suggested that client's views of God were distorted because of the trauma he or she experienced as

⁹⁰ Saim, Nor Jana, et al. "Teenagers' experiences of pregnancy and the parents' and partners' reactions: a Malaysian perspective." *Journal of Family Violence*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2014, p. 465+. *Gale OneFile: Health and Medicine*, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A369129181/HRCA?u=vic_liberty&sid=HRCA&xid=e65f2b92.

⁹¹ Ross, Colin A. 2016. "Talking about God with Trauma Survivors." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 70 (4): 429–37. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mnh&AN=28068503&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

children. The author further concluded that it is not the therapist's job to change the client's view of God, it is their responsibility to help change the client's negative self-beliefs.

Also studying the effects of childhood trauma, Street's study utilized path analysis to see how traumatic events from childhood were linked to trauma-related gifts in adulthood.⁹² Sixty-three women who experienced physical and psychological abuse by their romantic partners participated in the investigation. The study was conducted by using a Traumatic Stress Survey which is a 23- item self-report measure. he researcher stated, "the results of this investigation indicated that individuals with more extensive histories of potentially traumatic events in childhood were more likely to report the experience of trauma-related guilt after exposure to domestic violence victimization in adulthood."⁹³ The researchers concluded that when the participants experienced trauma-related guilt, it led them to avoid coping strategies.

A 2015 study by Kendall C. Browne, *et.al*, was conducted on 149 male veterans who served during the Iraq and Afghanistan and reported PTSD symptoms. After the participants completed a questionnaire, path analysis was used to examine if stress related to trauma impacted posttraumatic guilt and associated depression. The resulted indicated that further research is "needed to evaluate whether distress specific to guilt cognitions operates differentially on posttraumatic guilt when compared to distress more broadly related to trauma memories."⁹⁴ The findings by the researchers suggested that stress was the strongest in correlation to PTSD symptoms. The research indicated that trauma produces stress.

⁹² Street, A. E., Gibson, L. E., & Holohan, D. R. (2005). Impact of childhood traumatic events, trauma-related guilt, and avoidant coping strategies on PTSD symptoms in female survivors of domestic violence. *Journal Of Traumatic Stress*, 18(3), 245–252.

⁹³ *Ibid*

⁹⁴ Browne, K.C., Trim, R.S., Myers, U.S. and Norman, S.B. (2015), Trauma-Related Guilt: Conceptual Development and Relationship With Posttraumatic Stress and Depressive Symptoms. *JOURNAL OF TRAUMATIC STRESS*, 28: 134-141. doi:[10.1002/jts.21999](https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21999)

Studying the relationship of guilt and addiction, Langman *et.al.*, expressed that guilt can be a result from being addicted to drugs or alcohol and from the bearings it has on others. The study was conducted to see if guilt, along with spirituality and forgiveness were associated to people who were recovering addicts. Descriptive statistics were used with 36 women and 45 men recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. The findings showed that it was difficult for the participants to forgive themselves and the “group reported experiencing intense guilt.” The implications of this study were that individuals who are being treated for their addiction need to also be treated for PTSD from past traumatic experiences.

Guilt is associated with trauma, regardless if the trauma is inflicted or self-imposed. These studies showed how trauma can deter people from healing or receiving support. While these findings were beneficial in understanding individual’s grief associated with trauma, it did not extend the findings to the unique position of the worship leader.

Support Strategies for Coping

When an individual goes through a difficult time, options such as counseling or therapy should be considered. There should be strategies and resources available to them to achieve healing and closure. Seeking assistance in addition to prayer and other means, can lead to positive results. The worship leader is not exempt from having these options extended to them.

In a 2011 study by R. Hamilton, *et al.*, 38 breast cancer survivors in Canada participated in a quasi-experimental intervention to determine if positive self-talk interventions were effective as a coping strategy. The researchers concluded that, “Participants engaged willingly with the content and expressed a need for this type of workshop because they continually need to cope

with cancer survivorship issues.”⁹⁵ The authors further concluded that self-talk can have a positive effect on the well-being of those who have experienced grief or trauma.

In 2015, a discourse analysis study was done on 107 participants who sought grief support from an online group. The study focused on how a person was received and welcomed when expressing grief about the loss of a loved one or general grief. The researchers concluded that grief groups, “Aside from social media, online grief support groups, in particular, are becoming an increasingly popular resource for the bereaved.”⁹⁶ The findings showed that out of the 107 posts, all but one received a reply. The responses included validation, acceptance, and welcoming back to future posts. The results indicated that support groups were beneficial for coping with grief.

A 2012 case study was conducted to see how spirituality could be incorporated into the counseling environment of grieving adolescents.⁹⁷ The participant, Cora, was a 16-year-old high school student who experienced the loss of her mother due to a drunk driver. She initially found comfort in God, however, as time went on, she began to be angry at God for taking the life of the drunk driver instead. She eventually sought out a counselor to help her deal with the death of her mom. Cora used interventions such as rituals, bibliotherapy, art therapy, and journaling and letter writing. Ultimately, Cora began to express her emotions and thoughts in a healthy format, while making meaning of her mother’s death in a spiritual way. The researchers noted that when

⁹⁵ Hamilton, R., Miedema, B., MacIntyre, L. and Easley, J. 1. Using a positive self-talk intervention to enhance coping skills in breast cancer survivors: lessons from a community based group delivery model. *Current Oncology*. 18, 2 (1), e46-e53. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.3747/co.v18i2.706>.

⁹⁶ Trena M. Paulus & Mary Alice Varga (2015) “Please Know That You Are Not Alone with Your Pain”: Responses to Newcomer Posts in an Online Grief Support Forum, *Death Studies*, 39:10, 633-640, DOI: [10.1080/07481187.2015.1047060](https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2015.1047060)

⁹⁷ Muselman, Dannette M., and Wiggins, Marsha I. Spirituality and Loss: Approaches for Counseling Grieving Adolescents. (2012) Vol. 57. Issue 2. 229-240

counseling the bereaved, counselors need to become knowledgeable about clients' religious or spiritual beliefs about death because such beliefs may serve as vehicles through which clients make meaning out of and cope with loss.⁹⁸ The researchers concluded that spirituality played a major role in counseling bereaved adolescents and believe counselors could assist young clients when him or her make connections between religion and grief. Spiritual interventions can be a great resource in therapy and counseling for individuals experiencing loss, death, and grief.

Junghyum Kim's study was conducted to examine the roles of social support and coping strategies.⁹⁹ Using a mediation and moderation model, the study was conducted on 231 women from Wisconsin and Detroit, Michigan who were living below poverty and had breast cancer. The study was conducted by examining two hypothesized models; a mediation model tested by structural equation modeling and a moderation model tested by a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The findings implicated that breast cancer patients who received social support from others had a more positive outlook about themselves and their illness. The researchers concluded that although everyone might not be able to receive social support, the empathy of others could be beneficial in coping with grief.

A study by Annette Heck, *et.al.*, "was done to examine the extent and types of clergy stress, the strategies used in coping with stressors, and the relationship between stressors and coping mechanisms in a sample of 261 Seventh-day Adventist pastors in North America."¹⁰⁰ A

⁹⁸ Frame, M. W. (2003). *Integrating religion and spirituality into counseling: A comprehensive approach*. Pacific Grove, CA : Brooks/Cole.

⁹⁹ Kim, J., Yeob, J., Shaw, B., McTavish, F., & Gustafson, D. (2010). The Roles of Social Support and Coping Strategies in Predicting Breast Cancer Patients' Emotional Well-being: Testing Mediation and Moderation Models. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 15(4), 543–552. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105309355338>

¹⁰⁰ Heck, A., Drumm, R., McBride, D., & Sedlacek, D. (2018). Seventh-day adventist clergy: Understanding stressors and coping mechanisms. *Review of Religious Research*, 60(1), 115-132.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s13644-017-0312-7>

Clergy Stress Survey and Ways of Coping survey was completed by the participants. The researchers used a primary analysis and the data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The findings indicated that the main stressors that pastors experienced was a lack of social support. Clergy also reported that the coping strategy to which he or she most related was reflecting on their personal growth and changing within. Ultimately, the researchers concluded, “For many clerics, their primary coping strategies include having a strong network of support, having a supportive congregation, and engaging in self-care activities.”¹⁰¹

In a 2020 study by Krystal Hays and Jennifer Shepard Payne, 35 pastors participated in a thematic analysis which showed that individuals who experience suffering and depression prefer support from their clergy instead of professional treatment services. During the study, a question was asked, “If the church is where we are to come for healing, how do we handle people who are depressed, suicidal, suffering from PTSD or anxiety?”¹⁰² The researchers concluded that when clergy reveal their personal experiences, are vulnerable and show transparency and humility, it can help the parishioner recover in a more effective way.

Hess’s 2016 case study followed the role of a chaplain as he attempted to aid a grieving parishioner. Chaplain Nolan was sought after by the family of a dying man who was on hospice. Although the man nor his family considered themselves to be spiritual, the family still requested the chaplain’s care. In this study, the dying man had a brief encounter with the chaplain. However, during the time of crisis, the chaplain was not able to reach him on an emotional level. The author concluded that emotional support and counseling is needed regardless of whether

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Hays, K., & Shepard Payne, J. (2020). Lived Experience, Transparency, Help, and Humility: Four Characteristics of Clergy Responding to Mental and Emotional Problems. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 74(1), 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305019872437>

spirituality plays a part in counseling. The author noted, “all chaplains can educate themselves in the essential concepts of the psychological disciplines and behavioral sciences in their efforts to provide whole person care to the patients and families they serve.”¹⁰³ The researcher further concluded that chaplains should continue to be competent in the spiritual and professional areas of their organizations, so he or she can provide excellent spiritual and hospice care.

While these findings were beneficial in understanding options for counseling strategies for coping, it did not extend their findings to the unique position of the worship leader. Worship leaders should feel supported through their grief. The individuals should not feel guilty or embarrassed for seeking counseling or other beneficial services because of the grief he or she experiences. More research should be done to assist the worship leader in discovering therapeutic resources and strategies.

Summary

In conclusion, there was a significant amount of information pertaining to grief and loss, biblical perspectives on grief and loss, grief and the role of Jesus, demands of church leaders and burnout, hiding grief, guilt associated with trauma, and options for support strategies for coping. The studies examined people who were able to acknowledge that grief existed, be able to associate their spirituality with finding meaning in their loss, and even find resources to help them cope with the loss of loved ones. However, none of the sources extended their findings to grieving worship leaders. More information is needed to determine the characteristics of grieving

¹⁰³ Hess, Denise (2016) Myths and Systems: A Response to “‘He Needs to Talk!’: A Chaplain’s Case Study of Nonreligious Spiritual Care”, *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 22:1, 17-27, DOI: [10.1080/08854726.2015.1113808](https://doi.org/10.1080/08854726.2015.1113808)

worship leaders and strategies that can be used to promote worship leader authenticity through grief.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

This chapter explains the method used to conduct the qualitative thematic analysis to determine the worship leader's plan for grief. The purpose is to identify the design, list the research questions and hypotheses, identify the participants and describe the setting of the interviews. Additionally, the procedure of distributing the survey questions, how the information was protected, and data analysis are also discussed.

Design

The qualitative thematic analysis approach was selected for this study to examine the challenges of a grieving worship leader and to bring awareness to churches and organizations as it helps aid the individual. The thematic design gives the researcher freedom to find out new information while the research is being conducted. According to Creswell, this "quality of research involves emerging questions and procedures, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data."¹⁰⁴ This research design allowed the researcher to base the data from the individual's personal experience while identifying thematic patterns. Braun and Clarke argued that "thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions. It is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set."¹⁰⁵ The qualitative thematic design was the best method because it was an approach that was flexible and allowed for a great amount of data.

¹⁰⁴ Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014. 4

¹⁰⁵ Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief?

Research Question 2: What strategies could worship leaders dealing with personal trauma use in order to maintain authenticity?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study were:

Hypothesis 1: The characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief include, feeling embarrassed or shameful, masking grief, and continuing to serve during that time which may lead to burnout.

Hypothesis 2: The strategies worship leaders could use to maintain authenticity while dealing with personal trauma include practicing transparency, praying for understanding, receiving counseling, and continuing to serve in the role of worship leader.

Participants

The participants were recruited using a flyer that was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The flyer was then posted on the researcher's Facebook page and interested participants responded to the post. The participant identities were known to the researcher but kept confidential. The participants consisted of 12 males and 10 females who were African Americans. The participants were between the ages of 18-60, lived in the Dallas/Ft Worth area, attended a church, and held a position as a leader within their specific ministries.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	12	54.5
Female	10	45.4
Denomination		
Non-Denominational	10	45.4
Baptist	8	36.3
Church of God in Christ	3	13.6
Seventh-day Adventist	1	4.5
Length of Leadership Role within the church		
1 year or less	3	13.6
2-8 years	2	9.0
9-15 years	8	36.3
16-24 years	5	22.7
Over 25 years	4	18.1

Setting

The study was performed in November 2019 and conducted by interview at a designated and agreed upon location at Mt. Hebron Bible Church (GMH), in Dallas, Texas. A permission letter to conduct the study was emailed to and granted by Fred Conwright, Senior Pastor of the church. Upon arrival, the participants were escorted to a private classroom only occupied by the participant and the researcher. The room was setup with a table and chairs, with the researcher and participant facing each other. The room was well lit with bright lighting, with nothing located or placed on the walls. The individuals did not interact with anyone else, as the participant and the researcher were in the room alone. After signing the informed consent form, the researcher began the interview.

Nineteen interviews were conducted between November 23 and 27, while three others were conducted within the first two weeks of December 2019. Out of the 22 interviews, 20 were

conducted in person. For convenience, 2 participants requested to email answers to the interview questions. These participants were given the interview questions and consent form via email. After the documents were filled out and completed, the participants scanned their answers and emailed to the researcher.

Procedure

A Recruitment flyer was created, approved by Liberty University Institutional Review Board, and then shared on Facebook. The aim was to recruit between 20-25 individuals, a number usually substantial to gain insight about personal grieving experiences. The criteria were that individuals had to be at least 18 years of age or older and had to be serving in the role of a worship leader, choir director, worship pastor, minister of music, or musician. The participants who answered yes to all questions and deemed themselves to be eligible, responded in a private message or in the comment section. Out of the 27 who responded about the study, 22 agreed to participate.

Participants were asked to participate in an audio recorded interview that would ask them to reflect on their experiences while serving in ministry during times of pain. During the interview, written and verbal confirmation was used to verify that participants were 18 or older, and individuals were presented with informed consent information prior to participating. The individuals were told there was no compensation and the only potential risk would be a breach in confidentiality if the data was lost or stolen. A signature was retained, and the form was returned to the researchers before the interview began.

Taking part in the study was completely voluntary, and participants were welcome to discontinue participation at any time. The individuals were asked to state their name and were

then asked a series of questions such as: 1) Has there been any time in ministry where you felt like it was hard to minister or lead people in worship, 2) Did the congregation make you feel ashamed for having a transparent moment, 3) What do you suggest leaders do when their worship leaders or worship pastors are in mourning. For a complete list of interview questions, see appendix A. The interviews lasted between 10- 90 minutes, due to participants freedom to expound on the questions as much as he or she desired. After the participants completed the interview, the individuals were asked to review their interview transcript audio recording for accuracy.¹⁰⁶ The data was secured by keeping the information in a password-locked computer, in a separate folder. The faculty mentor/chair and the researcher were the only ones who had access to the data.

Data Analysis

The study was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis from interview transcripts of the participants. The data was closely examined to identify common topics, patterns, and ideas. The interview questions allowed the participants to express their opinions and views about the topic.¹⁰⁷ The personal experiences of the participants gave insight to the inductive approach being used. After listening to the participant's audio recording, there was a need to become familiar with the data. The interviews were transcribed and highlighted. After taking initial notes, coding was done by highlighting sections of the transcripts. Subsequently, labels were created after highlighting the phrases, using various colors to differentiate between the main

¹⁰⁶ Hagens, Victoria & Dobrow, Mark & Chafe, Roger. (2009). Interviewee Transcript Review: Assessing the impact on qualitative research. *BMC medical research methodology*. 9. 47. 10.1186/1471-2288-9-47.

¹⁰⁷ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(1)
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.3402/qhw.v9.26152>

points. When the codes were identified, themes began to generate and were compiled depending on the relevancy of each one.¹⁰⁸ Once the themes were finalized and names and definitions were provided to help understand the findings.

Summary

In this chapter, methods were described pertaining to the chosen research design, participant selection, and how the interviews were conducted. During this chapter, the setting of the interviews, details of the interview room, and interview questions were also discussed and presented. Lastly, how the data was analyzed and what method of thematic analysis used, was documented. The results of this study are presented in Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the research that was conducted pertaining to the grieving worship leader. With these findings, the characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief is presented. Also, within this chapter are strategies used by the worship leader to maintain authenticity while serving in ministry. Many additional themes emerged throughout the study and will be discussed.

Characteristics of a Grieving Worship Leader

A thematic analysis was conducted to answer the research question: What are the characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief? The participants were able to express how grief played a major role in their worship, or the lack thereof. There were 12 males and 10 females included in the study, all of whom were ministry leaders, musicians, and pastors, in the church. Within the study it was determined that 10 individuals were dealing with deaths in the family, 3 had experienced divorce, 4 had personal, child and marital issues that weighed heavily on their hearts, and 2 dealt with depression and suicidal thoughts. All these experiences shaped the participant's emotions that were expressed and the roles in which he or she served.

The characteristics were identified as feeling unappreciated, public and private grief, feelings of being unworthy, feelings of brokenness, and feelings of being overwhelmed and depleted. The participants gave insight on how these characteristics impacted their worship and their duties as a leader in the church.

Feeling Unappreciated

The first theme that emerged from the interviews was feeling unappreciated. In a 2017 article by Shanuki Jayamaha *et al.*, unappreciation was defined as having a low level of support and feeling unvalued.¹⁰⁹ Although some participants in this study felt as if their pastors were attentive to their grief, some felt as if their leaders were more concerned about them serving in their role on Sunday mornings. After analyzing the data, some of the codes identified were “used” and “unseen”.

Participant 3 stated, “We need to feel important and not just a member of your staff.” Participant 8 stated, “Don’t treat your leader like they are a robot.” Participant 10 expressed, “I felt used because of my gift! I don’t feel people wanted to disciple me. I think they just saw me for my gift.” Participant 11 voiced, “Don’t complain about my job. Give me space.” In addition to the theme of unappreciation, many of the participants indicated he or she wanted their pastor to care about their well-being.

Public and Private Grief

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was public and private grief. The codes that were identified were “ashamed”, “judged”, “embarrassed”, “criticized”, and “bashed”. The issues caused individuals to grieve both publicly and privately. While some participants felt their matters needed to be kept private, some felt ashamed for grieving in front of the congregation. Participant 5 stated, “I didn’t grieve publicly because I was embarrassed.” Many participants felt it was best to grieve behind closed doors, so the individuals wouldn’t be judged

¹⁰⁹ Jayamaha, S. D., Girmé, Y. U., & Overall, N. C. (2017). When attachment anxiety impedes support provision: The role of feeling unvalued and unappreciated. *Journal of Family Psychology, 31*(2), 181-191. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1037/fam0000222>

by how he or she grieved and what the grief was about. Participant 12 felt uncomfortable grieving publicly because she understood that her leaders were already aware of the situation. Due to this reason, the individual felt as if it was best to keep things to herself and deal with the issue alone. This participant continued on by stating, “I grieved by praying in my prayer closet. I chose to cry and write in my personal journal.” Choosing to grieve in private for a different reason, participant 15 revealed that he felt as if the congregation did not need to see him sad while serving.

While some contributors to the study opted for private grief, some individuals chose to grieve publicly through worship. Participant 10 stated, “Who else is going to lead? Worship leaders lead themselves daily. We have to lead in season and out of season.” The participant continued by stating, “I received my biggest breakthrough during grief.” Participant 2 felt that “serving publicly and showing purity, could bring people closer to Christ.” Letting the congregation know it is ok to hurt publicly could diminish the pressure of grieving privately.

Unworthiness

The third theme that emerged from the interviews was feeling unworthy. The codes that were identified were “unclean”, and “detached”. While interviewing leaders in the church, it was determined that some felt sensitive and had the desire to shut down. While worship leaders and other leaders in the church felt as if he or she must put on a strong front, it did not take away the emotion of feeling delicate. Participant 10 stated, “Because I had a baby out of wedlock, I felt unworthy and unclean.” This individual felt that the sin overshadowed her purpose in Christ. Participant 13 noted, “I didn’t feel good enough to be behind the mic and on that platform.” Many participants had feelings of wanting to be accepted no matter the grief him or her were facing. Participant 8 stated, “Expectations of the leaders don’t match those that are serving.” The

participants expressed that the issue he or she was dealing with seemed to be more magnified than everyone else's. Participant 4 and 19 did not want to be abandoned, criticized, or have the finger pointed at them.

Feelings of Brokenness

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews was the feeling of being broken. In a 2017 article by Maha Sudki Hmedian Nahal *et.al.*, brokenness was defined as feeling lost and having uncertainty.¹¹⁰ The codes that were identified were “isolated”, “depression”, “broken” “lonely”. While listening to the interviews, feelings of brokenness were heard through speech. Participant 10 stated, “I felt broken and didn’t want my leaders to take what was comfortable to me. I couldn’t lose myself because of my mistake.” When the participants spoke on their time of grieving it was obvious some individuals experienced feeling broken and low in spirit. Participant 9 expressed, “It felt impossible. I just had to push past it. I had to worship past the present and I still had to preach and lead.” While some felt broken during their time of mourning, Participant 6 voiced, “God can use you in your brokenness. People will see Jesus in me when I’m broken.” Although some leaders experienced brokenness at one point during their hard time, healing from God was still in view.

Feeling Overwhelmed and Depleted

The fifth theme that emerged from the interviews was the feeling of being overwhelmed and depleted. In a 2019 article by Edwin-Nikko R. Kabigting, feeling overwhelmed was

¹¹⁰ Nahal, M. S. H., Wigert, H., Imam, A., & Axelsson, Å. B. (2017). From Feeling Broken to Looking Beyond Broken: Palestinian Mothers’ Experiences of Having a Child With Spina Bifida. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 23(2), 226–251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1074840717697436>

described as feeling smothered and overcome with excess work.¹¹¹ The codes that were identified were “overworked”, and “tired”. Being a worship leader and leader in the church requires serving even when you are physically exhausted. Participant 14 expressed, “We need God and prayer, but we also need actual guidance. We get tired too.” The individuals continued to express how it felt to be drowned in their work. Being required to work excessively and not having time off can cause a person in ministry to feel depleted. Participants 3 and 13 requested time to heal while he or she processed the grief, while Participant 22 expressed, “Allow me to process before you require me to worship.” Putting more demands on the leader can cause him or her to not have energy or the desire to serve.

Discussion

Through the study, many characteristics of the grieving worship leader were revealed. The five themes that emerged from the interviews were feeling unappreciated, private and public grief, feelings of sensitivity, feelings of brokenness, and feeling overwhelmed and depleted. These themes supported the first hypothesis of this study which stated: The characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief include, feeling embarrassed or shameful, masking grief, and continuing to serve during that time, which may lead to burnout. Additional characteristics that were not previously hypothesized included: public grief, the feelings of being unappreciated, unworthy, brokenness, overwhelmed and depleted. The church should be able to recognize these characteristics in leaders and recognize when he or she is dealing with a difficult situation.

¹¹¹ Kabigting, E.-N. R. (2019). Conceptual Foreknowings: Integrative Review of Feeling Overwhelmed. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 32(1), 54–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894318418807931>

Strategies for a Grieving Worship Leader

A thematic analysis was also used to answer the second research question: What strategies could worship leaders dealing with personal trauma use to maintain authenticity? The strategies were identified as remaining vulnerable, praising through grief, selecting the right songs for congregational and private worship, self-talk, and community. The participants gave insight on how these strategies can and will be successful for the leader that is in mourning.

Remaining Vulnerable

The first theme that emerged from the interviews was the need to remain vulnerable. In a 2006 article by Emily Gundy, vulnerability was defined as “capable of being physically or mentally wounded or assailable.”¹¹² The codes that were identified were “transparency” and “trust”. Individuals in the study revealed that although their pain was immense, being able to share their testimonies allowed them to move forward in their grief. Some individuals expressed that he or she needed to be able to share testimonies while ministering or preaching. Participant 12 stated, “I believe there is transparency on the altar and healing behind the microphone. Participant 5 stated, “I remained vulnerable with people I could trust.” Additionally, Participant 2 stated that his pastor told him, “it was ok to hurt because he was human.” Participant 10 expressed, “As a worship leader, we need to be able to let the worship leaders coming up after us know that they will experience grief like us too.” Letting individuals know that worship leaders hurt too, shows others that its ok to address these topics.

¹¹² GRUNDY, E. (2006). Ageing and vulnerable elderly people: European perspectives. *Ageing and Society*, 26, 105-134. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1017/S0144686X05004484>

Praising through grief

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was a strategy that included praising through the grief. While completing the study, a few of the participants mentioned that had it not been for their praise, preaching, or singing, he or she probably wouldn't have made it through. The codes that were identified were "intentional worship" and "prayer". Participant 7 stated, "Worship leaders? People need to see you worship through your pain." Furthermore, 16 stated, "I had to walk in faith. Walk in God. It wasn't about me, but what I was called to do." Participant 19 expressed, "When you're worshipping, you can't just focus on what you are dealing with it." The participants did not want to stop singing or giving God the praise that was due to Him. Participant 6 felt as though she didn't have the energy, but she kept praising. Participant 12 expressed that she "praised through their pain" while having to serve in ministry two days after losing her sister to cancer. Participant 14 stated prayer was her plan for praise. The participant stated, "prayer is what got me through. I emptied myself. If I didn't pray, I wouldn't have been able to get through this." The worship leaders, pastors, and other leaders expressed that praise was their weapon to defeat the enemy.

Worshipping while grieving gave the participants an opportunity to concentrate on worship. Participant 9 stated, "That's the place where we can really experience His love. Nothing is impossible with Him." Additionally, Participant 19 stated, "Praise and worship saved my life." Furthermore, Participant 10 stated, "It's worship that sustained me during mourning." Most individuals continued to praise through their troubles because he or she knew God was still there in the midst.

Selecting the right songs in congregational and private worship

The third theme that emerged during the interviews was the need to select the right songs while ministering at church and in their own private time. Songs that were heard in service or sang by the worship leaders had to have lyrics that spoke of victory and other positive happenings. Participant 9 stated that he “Choose songs that will not put you back in that place.” The individual felt it was important to listen to songs that would encourage him and keep him inspired to press on. Participant 13 stated, “I just write songs and remember what my mission is. All about God, not me.” Participant 1 stated he chooses “upbeat” songs, so he doesn’t feel down and sad.

While some individuals chose songs for worship that had doctrine and biblical principles in them, another individual chose songs that would encourage them in their private time. Participant 14 stated, “It might seem crazy, but whenever I felt sad about what I was going through, I would play the theme music from the James Bond movies.” Additionally, Participant 5 stated, “I have to have my own playlist of songs to help me feel like I wasn’t defeated.” The song choices for the participants kept him or her in a positive head space and did not immediately remind him or her of what he or she was facing.

In a 2014 article by Amey Ujlambkar, *et.al.*, a study was done to see if the researchers were able to determine the mood of the participants based on the mood of the piece of music. The researchers stated, “Music shares a very special relation with human emotions. People often choose to listen to a song or music which best fits their mood at that instant.”¹¹³ In this study, 50

¹¹³ Ujlambkar, A., Upadhye, O., Deshpande, A., & Suryawanshi, G. (2014). Mood based music categorization system for bollywood music. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Research*, 4(1), 223-230. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1612542579?accountid=12085>

songs were selected and surveyed by 100 participants using an algorithm analysis. The findings showed that when the participants listened to Indian Bollywood music the success rate was at 70 percent for detecting their mood. When the participants listened to Western music, the success rate was at 30 percent. The research suggested that lyrics in the songs and audio features determined the participants' facial expressions and moods.

Self-Talk

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews was the need to do self-talk. In a 2015 article by Judy L. Van Raalte *et.al.*, self-talk was described as inner dialogue, inner voice or speech, and self-statements.¹¹⁴ The codes that was identified was “pep-talk” and “confidence”. The participants revealed that he or she had to remind themselves to not give up.

Participant 2 stated he had to give himself a “self-talk, reflect on the good, and remember the analogy of the half cup of water.” Participant 21 revealed he had to remind himself that “God is still God and the moment didn’t catch God by surprise.” Additionally, Participant 12 reminded herself that “Christianity isn’t perfection.” Knowing how to encourage and speak over herself helped motivate her when her situations looked dark. Participant 9 used self-talk as a strategy because he knew “It will consume our thought and minds and make us ineffective if we don't invite Him in.”

Community

The fifth theme that emerged from the interviews was the need to have community. To the participants, having community meant having caring people in his or her corner who knew he

¹¹⁴ Judy L. Van Raalte, Andrew Vincent, Britton W. Brewer, Self-talk: Review and sport-specific model, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, Volume 22, 2016, Pages 139-148, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.08.004>.

or she was hurting. The codes that were identified were “support”, “team”, and “surroundings”. The participants expressed that having good connections and positivity in the atmosphere played a major part in getting past their grief. Participant 11 stated that, “If I didn’t have the personal connections and were not surrounded by the right people, I would have lost it.” Participant 4 wanted people in their congregation to simply say, “I see you.”, while Participant 9 expressed, “Don’t allow the leader to just shut down. Let us grieve but don’t let us stay in that place.”

Participants also mentioned that feeling support from someone professionally trained in therapeutic services could provide support. Participant 16 stated, “We lose a lot of people because we don’t have a process in place for the mourners.” Additionally, Participants 14, 19, and 21 expressed that counseling sessions and having frequent meetings with leadership could also offer support. The classes and sessions would help people know how to handle others in the church who might be grieving.

Additional Themes

In addition to the themes that emerged regarding the research questions, other themes were identified as having time to grieve, less pastoring and scripture from the pastors, having additional musicians to support the ministry and needing opportunities to vent and needing someone to just listen.

Time to Grieve

The first additional theme that emerged during the interviews was having a time to grieve. Participants stressed that he or she needed time to deal with his or her situation without having the pressure of needing to get back to serve in ministry. Participant 9 stated to pastors, “Don’t speed them through their process and don’t grade their process by someone else’s.”

Participant 7 was told that in her ministry, she was “still required to preach and was told to push through!” Participant 6 stated, “Please don’t rush us”, while Participant 10 urged leaders to, “Don’t make us get up”. The individuals articulated concern that pastors need to give him or her the adequate time or space to recover from the mourning he or she experiences.

Less Pastoring and Scripture

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was that worship leaders needed less pastoring and scripture from their ministers and clergy. The codes that were identified were “concerned” and “empathetic”. The participants did not want his or her leaders to give text from the Bible, him or her just wanted the pastors to be a listening ear. Participant 21 stated, “Don’t preach at them, Help them! Discernment! Be compassionate.” Participant 10 stated, “worship leaders should have someone that won’t give them scripture.” Participant 22 stated that she wanted her leaders and pastors to just, “Give the ministry of presence and to check on her.” Participant 5 stated, “Become less of a pastor. Step away from the job and allow us to rest.” Additionally, Participant 21 stated, “Don’t over spiritualize things, just be there.” These individuals want their leaders to be relational and be there to listen.

Additional musicians to support the ministry

The third additional theme that emerged from the interviews was the worship leaders request for additional musicians to support the ministry. The codes that were identified were “drained”, “overstretched”, and “worn out”. Participant 11 stated, “The church should have extra musicians. We shouldn’t have to sacrifice our family for your church.” Additionally, Participant 9 felt that worship leaders do not need to have “more responsibility” when he or she is going through a time of mourning. It is easy to become exhausted when it is only one person

assigned to do the task and he or she is given additional duties while mourning. Participant 12 stated, “There should be backup musicians. Give us a break sometimes. If we are out because of the loss of our mom, we shouldn’t be rushed to come back.” Having more musicians on staff allows the ministry to have other options in the event of an emergency or in the case that something goes wrong at the last minute.

Opportunities to vent and listen

The final and additional theme that emerged during the interviews was the need for opportunities to vent. The codes that were identified were “sensitive” and “relational”. The participants wanted to have people in the church that would listen to them, without having the desire to say something encouraging back. Participant 8 and 10 simply stated, “Make yourself available” and “Let me vent.” Participant 8 expressed, “Be real with your worship leaders. Assess where they are mentally, and just provide help.” Additionally, Participant 9 wanted other leaders or pastors to be delicate while giving advice. The participant stated, “Don’t tell me to man up”. Everyone grieves differently and at their own pace. Participant 21 stated, “leaders should be sensitive to their situation as well, while realizing that no two people grieve the same.”

Discussion

Through the study, many strategies for the grieving worship leader were revealed. The five themes that emerged from the interviews were identified as remaining vulnerable, praising through grief, selecting the right songs for congregational and private worship, self-talk, and community. The four additional themes that were identified during the interviews were needing time to grieve, desiring less pastoring and scripture, requesting additional musicians to support the ministry and needing opportunities to vent and listen.

The second hypothesis was partially supported by the findings listed in the chapter and partially aligned with the themes that emerged. The findings were correct in showing the strategies worship leaders could use to maintain authenticity while dealing with personal trauma included practicing transparency, receiving counseling, and continuing to serve in the role of worship leader. The discrepancies were that the participants prayed to God, however the participants did not clearly state it was for “understanding”. Additional strategies that emerged from the data included self-talk, desired opportunities to vent and listen, wishing for additional musicians to support the ministry and support from the community.

Summary

In this chapter, many characteristics of the grieving worship were discussed. The five themes that emerged from the interviews were feeling unappreciated, private and public grief, feelings of unworthiness, feelings of brokenness, and feeling overwhelmed and depleted. These themes supported the first hypothesis of this study. Additionally, the five themes of the strategies that emerged from the interviews were identified as remaining vulnerable, praising through grief, selecting the right songs for congregational and private worship, self-talk, and community. These themes partially supported the second hypothesis of this study. Further, additional strategies, that were not previously hypothesized, included having time to grieve, less pastoring and scripture from the pastors, having additional musicians to support the ministry and needing opportunities to vent and needing someone to just listen. The second hypothesis was partially supported by the findings listed in the chapter and partially aligned with the themes that emerged. The results are discussed within relation to the current literature in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research was to examine characteristics and strategies of the grieving worship leader for maintaining authenticity. This chapter will present a brief summary of the findings, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research. The implications of this research will also be discussed.

Summary of Findings

A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted, utilizing interview responses from 22 ministry leaders who dealt with grief caused by divorce, loss of a loved one, sickness, and marital issues, loss of home due to tornado, and thoughts of suicide. These participants expressed how their mourning affected or did not affect their worship and role while serving.

Research question one sought to examine the characteristics of a worship leader dealing with personal trauma or grief. The following themes emerged from the data: feeling unappreciated, private and public grief, feelings of sensitivity, feelings of brokenness, and feeling overwhelmed and depleted. Additional characteristics that were not previously hypothesized included public grief, the feelings of being unappreciated, unworthy, brokenness, overwhelmed and depleted.

Feeling unappreciated was a theme that emerged from the study. The individuals who spoke on feeling unappreciated revealed that he or she just wanted to feel important and not just a person on the staff. These individuals wanted his or her leaders to first recognize that he or she was dealing with a disturbing experience and offer guidance and comfort. However, the participants felt as though he or she were only being used for the talents and the gifts he or she possessed. These findings stand in contrast to Randall's work, which stated that although the

340-clergy, a part of the Church of Wales and Church of England felt appreciated and were happy to serve in ministry, he or she still felt overworked and exhausted.¹¹⁵

However, the theme of feeling unappreciated aligned with Johnson's article, speaking to how music teachers felt unappreciated for all the work he or she does in and outside of the classroom. The music teacher can be asked to conduct a performance at the last minute, be given too much work, or be overlooked for something that he or she is qualified to do. Johnson expressed that music teachers want to be respected and not ignored, which was upheld in this research related to worship leaders.

In this study, not only did the participants feel unappreciated, he or she felt embarrassed for dealing with the specific situation. The feelings of being judged and criticized came during the times when he or she needed to feel encouraged. The participants felt people looked down on him or her when he or she cried or showed emotions. Pastors and the worship leaders felt as though members should not gossip about him or her or be judgmental, rather help them deal with issue at hand. These findings match with Rosbrow's findings on the feelings of grief. His work noted that participants did not want to feel exposed or embarrassed for showing grief symptoms,¹¹⁶ indicating that the more a person feels shamed for his or her grief, the more he or she wants to hide it.

The theme of feeling embarrassed also aligned with Saim's study on 17 unwed mothers who were pregnant or had children before being married. Although, many were not at fault for

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Rosbrow, Thomas (2019) On Grief, Guilt, Shame, and Nostalgia. Discussion of "Who Has the Right to Mourn?: Relational Deference and the Ranking of Grief", *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 29:4, 501-506, DOI: [10.1080/10481885.2019.1632656](https://doi.org/10.1080/10481885.2019.1632656)

the situation, the young ladies were embarrassed for being pregnant. The mothers felt as though she was being looked at in a negative light, even though she did not want the pregnancy to happen in the first place. These mothers felt she would rather keep it a secret from her parents and the fathers of her children, rather than be shamed for it. While the participants of the present study experienced different types of trauma and grief, the reactions corroborated work.

During the study it was determined that some participants felt comfortable grieving publicly, while others chose to grieve privately. A lot of the participants were so used to hiding their grief and did not know how to show it in front of the congregation, while others put on a strong front and just wanted to focus on doing their job. The feelings of wanting to hide grief aligned with Demi's article. In that study, those who had experienced the loss of a family to suicide felt it was necessary to deny and avoid the pain.¹¹⁷ The ones who grieved publicly in this study felt that the congregation needed to see them worship through their pain. However, those who grieved privately felt that he or she would be judged if others saw him or her hurting.

Additionally, most participants in this study felt as though hiding their grief would be less of a burden to others and wanted to avoid the topic altogether. In this study, most pretended to feel good so their grief would not be obvious to others. The feelings of wanting to hide grief supports Goodrum's research in which he examined 32 people who experienced losing a family member to death. The participants in that study revealed that most people responded to their grief inappropriately, while not understanding the reason of the grief to begin with. Worship leaders in this study expressed he or she did not want to express grief because he or she did not want the

¹¹⁷ Demi, Alice Sterner, and Carol Howell. "Hiding and Healing: Resolving the Suicide of a Parent or Sibling." *Archives of psychiatric nursing*. 5.6 (1991): 350-356.evk

other people in the congregation to see him or her sad. The participants chose to cover up his or her grief rather than display moments of despair.

Feelings of brokenness was another theme that emerged from the study. The worship leaders, pastors, ministry leaders, and musicians revealed that he or she experienced brokenness while mourning. There were feelings of depression, loneliness, and feeling like he or she would not come out of hard times. Even amid his or her brokenness, some people felt as though God could use him or her. However, these findings stand in contrast to Gordon Parker's work which stated that that bereavement did not lead to depression.¹¹⁸

Learning how to identify the reason for brokenness and realizing hardships come to even the best of people, can be a start to the healing journey. In the study, all the participants were able to acknowledge why he or she experienced grief, while others were able to acknowledge why he or she also felt brokenness. The feelings of brokenness aligned with the study by Malloch and Forter-O'Grady on healthcare officials whose medical errors caused them to feel like failures and experience grief. These individuals used his or her errors as an opportunity for growth and recovered from the grief, when he or she had support of the leaders. Although participants felt like he or she had failed God and felt broken in this study, he or she still knew God could use him or her.

Feelings of unworthiness overtook some of the participant's mind in this study. The feelings of unworthiness aligned with Ross' study, as the survivors of severe trauma expressed he or she felt unworthy of God's love due to the negative situations that had happened in his or

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 229-232.

her lives. Just as the survivors felt as though their experiences were unfavorable, the participants in this study felt as though their encounters would cause God not to love them.¹¹⁹

Although the individuals in this study were talented in their fields of music and ministry, there were feelings of unworthiness. Although the worship leaders were human and made mistakes like everyone else, he or she still felt as though his or her mistakes overshadowed the musical abilities. The feelings of being ashamed and unclean sometimes took over their minds. Those who serve in ministry want to feel as though his or her sins should not define how Jesus sees them and how much him or her are loved by Him. The feelings of unworthiness aligned with Saim's article, in which the participants felt unworthy and incapable to make any decisions due to his or her mistakes.

Feelings of being overwhelmed and depleted were another a theme that emerged from the study. It was not a surprise to discover that the ministry leaders had feelings of being overwhelmed and depleted. Even though the worship leaders were grieving, he or she was still required to work and teach in his or her ministries. The theme of being overworked and experiencing burnout aligns with the article by Robbins and Francis. Just as the clergywoman felt bombarded with the tasks of the church, the participants in this study felt the same.¹²⁰ The responsibilities of serving were not minimized just because he or she was dealing with a traumatic service. The duties were still placed upon him or her and he or she was expected to serve despite what was going on in his or her lives.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 432.

¹²⁰ Robbins, M., & Francis, L. J. (2014). Taking Responsibility for Multiple Churches: A Study in Burnout among Anglican Clergywomen in England. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 27(2), 261–280. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1163/1570925G-12341310>

Being overwhelmed and overworked is common for clergy, worship leaders, and those who serve in ministry. In this study, many participants recognized how he or she was made to work even when his or her energy was low. The theme of being overworked and experiencing burnout aligns with the article by Schaefer and Jacobsen; the authors expressed when a leader demonstrates proper balance, he or she can lead the congregation in the right way.¹²¹ The authors continued by stating that the mental, physical, and psychological health is important for a leader in ministry. During this study, it was revealed that participants wanted time off to process his or her grief, instead of being rushed back to work before he or she had properly grieved.

It was also easy for the participants to feel exhausted while serving. Most individuals expressed how he or she needed time to grieve and time to heal. The participants did not want to be rushed back in his or her role when he or she had not recovered from grief. The individuals requested that the leaders give him or her space to deal with his or her issue and not speed up the healing process. The theme of being exhausted aligned with Randall's work, as those clergy found themselves drained and frustrated due to being stressed because of the work demands.¹²²

Additionally, the participants in this study also revealed that being exhausted was a common feeling. Having to work while tired and overcome with responsibilities contributed to this fatigue. The theme of being exhausted aligned with Cameron's research with ministers who felt stressed out from working trying to balance church and family. Having too many responsibilities caused them to also feel guilty for wanting to take a break from serving. During

¹²¹ Ibid, 66.

¹²² Randall, K. J. (2013). Clergy burnout: Two different measures. *Pastoral Psychology*, 62(3), 333-341.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-012-0506-4>

this study, the participants expressed he or she was made to work, even though the individuals were exhausted from serving immediately after his or her loss.

While the research findings showed the characteristics of the grieving worship leader, it also presented the strategies worship leaders could use to remain authentic. The strategies included remaining vulnerable, praising through grief, selecting the right songs for congregational and private worship, self-talk, and community. Additional themes were identified as needing time to grieve, desiring less pastoring and scripture, requesting additional musicians to support the ministry and needing opportunities to vent and listen.

Themes that emerged expressed how being vulnerable allowed the participants to get past their pain and move forward towards healing. Allowing the members in the congregation to witness their struggles showed strength and transparency. Demonstrating vulnerability showed that just because he or she was in a leadership role, it did not exempt him or her from experiencing loss, hardships, and adversity. The theme of remaining vulnerable aligns with the article from Hays and Payne. In that article, clergy expressed how he or she was able to connect with members by showing humility, transparency, and his or her lived experience.

Learning how to praise through grief was not an easy task for the worship leaders and pastors. The theme of praising through grief supported Hamilton's work regarding how grief corresponds with spirituality.¹²³ In that article, a study was done on 19 African Americans who had lost a family member due to cancer. The researchers concluded there was a heavy reliance on God and their spirituality throughout their difficult situation. While conducting this study, the

¹²³ Hamilton, J. B., Best, N. C., Wells, J. S., & Worthy, V. C. (2018). Making sense of loss through spirituality: Perspectives of african american family members who have experienced the death of a close family member to cancer. *Palliative & Supportive Care*, 16(6), 662.
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participants revealed that praise and worship, reading their bibles, and praying to God was vital in their grieving process.

The participants in this study indicated that it took a lot of strength and faith to continue serving while he or she was in pain. For some, it was all he or she knew how to do to make it through his or her time of mourning. The individuals were reminded that God knew what was heavy on the participant's hearts and He would continue to be what he or she lacked. The participants continued to sing, preach, and offer up praise to God no matter if he or she felt defeated on the inside. The individuals knew that although things didn't look good, God was still in control. The article by Schafer and Jacobsen stands in contrast to clergy being overworked. The participants chose to continue to minister in song, rather than feeling required to, as this is what he or she felt God called him or her to do.

Since the worship leader always has music around them, it was important for the participants to surround themselves with uplifting and inspirational songs. The individuals had to be careful not to listen to songs that were depressing. The participants needed playlists at home that would make him or her feel as though him or her were victorious. While the worship leaders were leading the congregation in song, him or her made it a point to sing songs that were inspiring, even for him or her. In this study, the worship leaders knew that even though he or she had to encourage the members, he or she first needed to encourage themselves. The theme of selecting the appropriate songs for public and private worship aligned with Ujlambkar's study, in which the researchers were able to match their participants moods while the participants listened to Indian music. The researchers concluded that when the participant listened to Indian music, the success rate of detecting his or her mood was higher.

The theme of having Self-talk aligns with the article by Heck, *et.al.* as it was important for the participants in his study to engage in self-care activities ¹²⁴. In Heck's study, clergy revealed how having self-care and support from others aided in the grieving process and lessened the stress he or she experienced. Self-talk was important to the worship leaders in this study. Giving themselves a pep talk every now and then allowed them to speak over themselves when the enemy could have spoken defeat in their ears. The participants continued to remind themselves that he or she could get through their difficult time and victory was not far away.

The theme of having self-talk also aligns with the article by R. Hamilton, *et.al.* In that study, breast cancer survivors revealed that self-talk was effective in helping them cope with their grief. Depression and anxiety were two things the survivors dealt with while trying to overcome their difficult times. Being able to manage their negative thoughts and emotions while using self-talk allowed the survivors to get through their process easier.

Having support from leaders and other members in the congregation was articulated many times by the participants of this study. The theme of needing support from the congregation matches Kim's findings regarding breast cancer patients who received social support from others and, in turn, a more positive outlook about themselves and their illness.¹²⁵ The participants in this study desired support and felt it was instrumental in their healing process as well. The participants also felt as though congregations and pastors should provide leadership retreats and counseling sessions for their members. In doing this, people will be able to receive

¹²⁴ Heck, A., Drumm, R., McBride, D., & Sedlacek, D. (2018). Seventh-day adventist clergy: Understanding stressors and coping mechanisms. *Review of Religious Research*, 60(1), 115-132.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s13644-017-0312-7>

¹²⁵ Kim, J., Yeob, J., Shaw, B., McTavish, F., & Gustafson, D. (2010). The Roles of Social Support and Coping Strategies in Predicting Breast Cancer Patients' Emotional Well-being: Testing Mediation and Moderation Models. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 15(4), 543-552. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105309355338>

help and be able to express their emotions to people who are professionally trained to deal with tough topics.

The theme of needing support from others aligned with Paulus' study which revealed that most individuals felt as though the support and advice he or she received online helped him or her process grief without feeling judged. The participants received the social support and acknowledged that being able to explicitly describe their pain online to the support group helped them deal with their bereavement issues. When the worship leader receives support from the congregation and pastoral leadership, he or she is more willing to open up about his or her situation.

Many participants felt as though he or she needed less pastoring and scripture from their leaders. The individuals expressed that he or she just needed their pastors to just take off the pastoral robe and lend a listening ear. In their difficult moments, he or she did not want to hear about what scripture said about his or her situation. The participants merely wanted their leaders to be emotionally present, allow him or her to share his or her feelings, and walk them through the process. The theme of needing less pastoring and scripture aligns with Hess' article, which described a hospice patient whose family was not religious yet desiring the care of a clergy member for support. In this study, the researchers challenged the chaplain to become more involved with the patient on a more personal and emotional level rather than trying to be spiritual in his last hours.

Additionally, it was requested that pastors hire additional musicians to support the ministry. When the church depends on just one musician to serve, it leaves no room for the person to be out due to a loss in the family or other difficult times. It also makes the worship leader or musician feel rushed to come back and cover up what he or she is facing during those

times. Having additional musicians gives the individual relief when necessary and the church other qualified individuals to handle service. The theme of needing additional musicians to support the ministry supports the Choral Journal, in which the participants in the study were able to be a part of a retreat which helped them express their emotions and alleviate the stress from being overworked, underpaid, and burned out.

Ultimately, the participants desired opportunities to vent. The worship leaders wanted to be able to get his or her emotions out without feeling like he or she needed to keep the emotions bottled in. Having an opportunity to release his or her frustration allowed the participants to continue leading and serving in ministry when he or she otherwise would have given up. The theme of needing to vent matched Walker's finding, which indicated that when participants knew he or she would not be judged for expressing his or her emotions, the participants opened up to share their grief, which resulted in reduced levels of depression.

Limitations of the Study

While effort was made to present the most unhindered study as possible, certain limitations could not be avoided. When conclusions are being drawn regarding the research, the following limitations should be considered:

1. All information obtained from the study is based on perceptions. The participants presented information based on their experiences, in hope to provide insight. This information is not a total representation of all church ministry leaders.
2. Many or possibly all the participants knew the researcher which, could have consciously or unconsciously influenced their answers. The participants could have felt more comfortable expressing their grief.

3. Not all the participants in this study were worship leaders. Additionally, there were church teachers, musicians, choir directors, pastors, and ministers. While the participants all serve in a leadership role at their church, this is a limitation to the research questions, which focuses specifically on worship leaders.
4. The interviews were not all conducted on the same day. Thus, various outside events of the days could have affected responses. Interviews were conducted the within the time frame provided by the researcher but at a designated time chosen by the participant.

Recommendations for Future Study

The following recommendations for future study are made based on the findings and limitations of this study:

1. There should be more thematic analysis conducted on the grieving worship leader, pastor, and musician. Perhaps, there should be surveys, questionnaires, or interviews completed by those who serve in any capacity within the church. This research would help identify the areas where all leaders could benefit in recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the ministry.
2. Additional studies could be done to corroborate the results of the study. Gathering more information and research from different ministry leaders from all over the world could bring awareness to various churches. Having more information from grieving worship leaders could potentially strengthen other ministries in the church such as children's church, teen church, and singles ministry.
3. Additionally, studying research questions related to the topic, such as the expectations of worship leaders in grief, the church's expectations of the worship leader in grief,

the congregation's expectations, and the congregation's perceptions, could be done to further gain insight about the grieving worship leader. Although leaders have higher expectations placed on them because he or she is leading others in the way of the Lord, all should be allowed to grieve without being made to feel guilty. When the church and the congregation acknowledge there are always more ways to grow and be better, the entire church progresses.

4. Furthermore, studying and focusing on one type of worship leader grief, such as the loss of a family member, or dealing with an illness can aid those dealing with it and those who observe it. When there is a misdiagnosis, everyone involved in the process can suffer emotionally and physically. When the church, leaders in ministry, and the congregation can recognize the symptoms of the various types of grief, they can properly assess them.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have implications for worship leaders. Worship Leaders should be able to express grief and not have to feel as if he or she is not capable of doing his or her jobs when grieving. Worship leaders should continue to seek advice and find coping strategies to help them deal with difficult times. As worship leaders serve in their role, he or she should not allow praise to be hindered but their stories to be told as he or she praises. Worship leaders can also utilize strategies such as selecting the right songs for congregational and private worship, self-talk, praising through the grief, remaining vulnerable, having a community of supporters, less pastoring and scripture from their pastors, opportunities for them to vent, time to grieve, and additional musicians to help support the ministry.

When a person deals with grief, it may seem as if the weight is heavy and it is too much to bear. A person may feel as if he or she is spiritually immature because of the doubt and shame felt. It is during those times where the individual needs to be reassured that God is made strong in their weakness. God will never leave them to fight their battles alone. When feeling helpless and alone, God will be there to show His love for them.

The results of this study have implications for pastors and church leaders. Pastors and Church Leaders should provide comfort to their ministry leaders during their times of mourning. The pastors should not overwhelm the ministry leaders or give them extra workloads. At the same time, the pastors and church leaders should also provide extra help for the musicians and counseling if necessary.

When the pastors and church leaders demonstrate that the worship leaders are not just staff members, the ministry leaders might feel more comfortable revealing information about their grief. The worship leaders want less pastoring, less scripture, and more comfort. For church leaders, it would be helpful for them to be aware of the characteristics of grieving worship leaders, so he or she can identify the symptoms of grief, and then use strategies to provide support.

This study has implications for the congregation. The implications are likely that the congregation can recognize grief, perhaps lend a hand in serving as additional musicians and counselors or encouragers. Congregations should now have a better understanding of how ministry leaders are affected by grief as well. It should not come as a surprise when congregants see the worship leaders expressing pain and agony while serving. Having support from the congregation can aid the worship leader in moving forward with his or her grief.

Summary

Worship leaders grieve just as the other members in the church. Yet, most worship leaders, pastors, and musicians are still required to go about their daily routine and serve the people. It is important to allow the individual to process their pain in their own way, while pastors help as best as he or she can. Letting the worship leader know he or she has permission to grieve will open many forms of dialogue. It will also give opportunities for the worship leader to demonstrate how healing can come if one allows themselves to grieve properly. Churches can aid the grieving worship leader through providing counseling services, adding extra musicians to the staff, being more of a listening ear than just a pastor, giving the worship leaders time to grieve, and not rushing them back to their specific roles.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Hello! Please state your name.
2. What is your position at your church?
3. How long have you been in the leadership role?
4. Has there been any time in ministry where you felt like it was hard to minister or lead the people in worship?
5. Did your Pastor or other leaders in the church reach out to you to make sure you were ok?
6. Did the congregation make you feel ashamed for having a transparent moment?
7. What do you suggest leaders do when their worship leaders or worship pastors are in mourning?
8. What do you suggest leaders, or the congregation not do when their worship leader, worship pastor, etc. is grieving?
9. What was your plan for praise during your time of grieving?

Appendix B

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 11, 2019

Kchristshan Howard

IRB Exemption 3964.111119: Intentional Worship During Times of Mourning: The Worship Leader's Plan for Praise

Dear Kchristshan Howard,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if...the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,



onal Research

Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix C

Greater Mount Hebron Bible Church

Fred Conwright, Sr. ☩ Senior Pastor

2335 56th Street • Dallas, Texas 75241

(214) 374-4759 • www.gmhbc.org



November 9, 2019

Kelristhan Howard
Life School | Oak Cliff Secondary
4400 South R. L. Thornton Freeway
Dallas, Texas 75224

Dear Ms. Howard,

Permission granted for you to use the facility to conduct your research thesis on the project "Intentional Worship During Times of Mourning," and "The Worship Leader's Plan for Praise" here at Greater Mount Hebron Bible Church. Also, you will be allowed to contact members of the congregation to request their participation in research study.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at 214-374-4759.

Sincerely,

Pastor Fred Conwright, Sr.

Pastor Fred Conwright, Sr.
Senior Pastor

Come Grow With Us!

