

AN EXPERIENCE, A STORY, AND A SONG: AN INVESTIGATION OF HOW
USING BIBLICAL PARABLES CAN AID AS A METHOD IN THE CREATIVE
PROCESS OF SONGWRITING AND SELF-EFFICACY.

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A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Liberty University, Lynchburg, V.A.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the life of Hubert and Eloise Russell. Their lives, love and worship, were a true testament to their dedication to raising a family after God's own heart.

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ABSTRACT

Psalm 96:1 declares, "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord all the earth."¹ In essence, of this scripture, there is a need for the worship leader to return to this unique command. The church can be the creator of not only worship songs but also worship songs that are rich in theology. The interest for worship leaders and their staff to write their songs, operating in the role of a musical artist, is becoming more of a sought-after asset to produce a freshness on the worship platforms. Parables are stories used to capture the imagination of one's audience because they assist individuals in a personal application in producing the desired response appropriate for the Kingdom of God. There is a need for songwriters to study the parables' structure because it provides vivid imagery of sequential events that catapult the individual in the process of personal application. This qualitative descriptive study is to examine how elements found in parables can influence evangelism through songwriting. The examination of parables, and how they influence songwriting, will aid in revealing the success of their strong influence through elements of storytelling, personal application, and event sequencing. It will impact current generations with the Gospel of Christ and fulfill Habakkuk 2:14 that states, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Keywords: Parables, Songwriting, Worship Leader, Story, Self-Efficacy

¹ Psalm 96:1, KJV.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the 21st Century church, the worship platform has fallen prey to consumerism within the worship ministry.² Many churches have become more concerned with their talents and gifts more than engaging the souls that sit in the congregation every week. According to Stephen Miller, today's worship leader has placed too much emphasis on the worship leader operating in the role of an artist.³ Too many worship leaders, in disregard for their ministry, are more concerned with writing a number one hit song.⁴ Worship Leaders with this mindset are not only setting their music department up for failure, but they are exhibiting a lifestyle of worship that produces idolatry.⁵

Another issue that arises from these musicians' self-gratitude is that their music and songs lack substance and theological standards.⁶ A repertoire that lacks substance and keen theology is not healthy for any congregation, nor is it bringing God any glory. The purpose of the worship platform is not to entertain, but to bring awareness to God's creation and show gratitude that is essential for spiritual growth.⁷ Songwriters need to concentrate not only on the melody but also on

² Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When A Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove Illinois: IVP Books, 2013), 9.

³ Stephen Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 22.

⁴ Miller, 26.

⁵ Gregory K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 284.

⁶ Miller, 70-71.

⁷ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called To Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 334.

the content and purpose of the song.⁸ To accomplish this endeavor, one must include the Word of God in such an effort.⁹ The Word of God will never fail.

The main reason that Jesus was so victorious in His ministry is that He understood His audience and culture. He understood that He could not expect His audience to know about the kingdom of God because they could not comprehend a God they had never met, touched, or had ever seen. He also knew that their cultures and false teachers of their time influenced many of their actions. He was confident in His delivery and His message because He intended to aim for the heart.¹⁰ He aimed for their heart because the gospel provided full conviction, which transcended intellectual doubt and emotional experiences.¹¹ It gave them the freedom to go inside of themselves, during silent persecution with an assurance that left a resonance of Jesus being enough.¹² It allowed them to walk through each event that Jesus so graciously had well-crafted with His words. It allowed them to connect with a sense of relevancy to make a personal choice and application to be able to believe that Jesus was Christ. This particular application and belief resulted in many of them coming to Christ and not perishing.¹³

With this idea and intent, a songwriter can achieve much success in their endeavor to build a case to evangelize, encourage, and inspire the congregants. The songwriter should use

⁸ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2008), 92-93.

⁹ Megan Livengood and Connie Ledoux, "Watering Down Christianity? An Examination of the Use of Theological Words in Christian music." *Journal of Media and Religion* 3, no. 2 (2004): 119-129.

¹⁰ Prov. 4:23 (KJV).

¹¹ Jonathan Dodson, *Unbelievable Gospel: Say Something Worth Believing* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 97.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jhn. 3:16 (KJV).

vivid words and sequential events that create a realistic world that includes the audience. The song should invite the congregant subconsciously.¹⁴ Salvation is a personal choice, but it is a gift in destiny and time that only God initiates; Jesus mediates, and the Holy Spirit facilitates.

Problem of Statement

Reflecting on the use of worship songs today, many worship leaders who are inspired and driven to write their songs cannot capture a moment and commit to it. Their songs lack one central thought, sequential events, and theological support. These elements are essential when building a case around a theme. The lack thereof not only results in an unsuccessfully written song, but it also causes the congregants to experience apathy, loss of hope, and an unmotivated endeavor concerning accountability.

Examples that can illustrate such work would be Darrell Evan's (1998), "Trading My Sorrows." The song is very catchy, but the chorus is repetitive and just repeats, "Yes, Lord." This song leaves the audience, asking, "Yes, Lord, What?" Example 2, Matt Redman's (1995) "Better Is One Day." It uses scripture and has a central thought, but it lacks sequence and connection. Example 3, David Crowder's (1995) "Undignified." The song is incredible, but not healthy for a congregation that needs theological truth. The congregation could take the term undignified out of context. Example 4, Hillsong's "All Day." The lyrics suggest that the individual will read their Bible and pray and then follow Jesus all day. One, reading the Bible and praying does not mean that the individual is ready to be a disciple. Psalm 51:10 states, "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." This expression catapults the process of sanctification, which

¹⁴ Wayne H. Johnson, "Practicing Theology on A Sunday Morning: Corporate Worship As Spiritual Formation." *Trinity Journal* 31, no. 1 (2010): 27-44.

enables the believer to follow Christ. Lastly, Israel Houghton's "Friend of God." This song, within the chorus, uses the lyrics "I am a friend of God/ He calls me friend." It is believed that the songwriter had great intentions, but to a congregation that is not strong theologically, it may suggest that God calls everyone a friend. That is not scripture. 1 Samuel 2:12 states that Eli's sons were the sons of Belial because they knew not the Lord. 1 Corinthians 8:3 states God knows them that love Him.

One of the primary operations of parables is to inform one about the kingdom of God using God's Word through detailed imagery and central thought.¹⁵ The songwriter must be able to capture the central thought and convey it so that the congregation can harvest its nutrients and grow. The issue that arrives in the 21st Century church is that too many worship songs are growing emotional congregations but not congregations that are strong in theology. The rise to being emotional, not formational, or transformational is becoming more of an epidemic among Christ's body.¹⁶

Lastly, and more importantly, the mindset of songwriting, in terms of worship leading, needs to shift. Some worship leaders who are songwriters, need to move from the mentality of stardom to the mindset of ministry. Every ministry has a goal. That goal should be to stay in alignment with God's Word and the worship philosophy in that church. Personal thoughts about God are appreciated; however, singing a lyrical line that is rich with theological value is more

¹⁵ Nicholas Cacciatore, *Preaching Jesus Kingdom Parables: Connecting Interest And Provoking a Search for Truth*. PhD diss., St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, 2003, 28-30.

¹⁶ Craig E. Peters, *Recapturing the Transformational Power of the Church: Moving Beyond Consumerism and Individualism to Experiencing Life-Changing Christian Community*. PhD diss., Northeastern Seminary, 2018, 12-11.

sustainable. It includes the process of becoming or refreshes the notion of Christ's importance and will for humanity that sustains the individual's vertical worship.

Purpose of Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to examine how the structure of parables can influence an effective method of writing songs. The structure of parables may enable worship leaders to write songs within a theological framework toward spiritual formation. This study will examine songs that are inspired by parables in terms of theological content and imagery. This study will suggest the addition of content along sharp theological lines that would include the parables of Christ as examples.

Significance of Study

This study is important because the content sung from the worship platform should express the whole counsel of God throughout His Word for this generation.¹⁷ Such a platform should not be for personal gain but to display and direct glory to God. The gifts and talents that God gives to embrace should express grace toward humanity. It should ensure the act of communicating a profound spiritual message that can connect physical and spiritual comparisons through life experiences and truth.¹⁸

¹⁷ Whaley, *Called To Worship*, 234-335.

¹⁸ Cacciatore, 45; 55 and 61.

Further, there is an expectation that worship leaders have to have qualities of a recording artist; however, the message of God's Word and the Gospel should remain the same.¹⁹ The Son of God unapologetically expressed His artistic ability by telling vivid stories that were current events illustrating how the kingdom of God permeates systematic principles in cultures.²⁰ In the same regard, the worship leader could write a song that could include secular elements but stay within the context of a Christian Worldview.²¹

Finally, this study will suggest to songwriters, worship leaders, and theologians that parables can convey God's plan for worship. A thorough review of all the parables will identify how its themes can serve as the basis for writing a worship song. The worship leader's role is to lead the congregation in worshipping God.

Research Questions

The benefits of Jesus' encounters caused others to respond to gratefully and receive salvation. He used parables to illustrate the act of ministry that He later commissioned the disciple to carry out. T. W. Hunts writes, "The constraint of the Great Commission is as binding on the musicians as it is on any Christian"²²

¹⁹ Rory Noland, *The Worshiping Artist: Equipping You and Your Ministry Team to Lead Others in Worship*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 122.

²⁰ Dennis Hamm, *Who Is My Samaritan? America*, July 4, 1998, 30-31.

²¹ April Vega, "Music Sacred and Profane: Exploring The Use of Popular Music in Evangelical Worship Services." *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 24, no. 3 (2012): 365-379.

²² T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling through Music*. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 46.

As songwriters study the role and structure of parables and how they influence the songwriter, specific questions will be addressed:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of parables that could be influential in evangelism and discipleship?

RQ2: In what ways could parables be influential in songwriting?

The benefits of parables cannot be understood to its fullness until the characteristics of parables are identified. Its features may be inferred based upon the response and reactions of the individuals who heard Jesus speak.

Core Concepts

Parables are stories used to capture the imagination of one's audience.²³ As the storyteller proceeds to describe vivid imageries, the individual's senses began to align with the sequential events resulting in an activated imagination. This same element of storytelling, if applied to songwriting, can also become an effective method that can activate the imagination and assist the congregation in the personal application as they explore kingdom principles.²⁴ Parables should translate in the areas of songwriting, evangelism, and inspiration. The vivid imagery within parables illustrates the setting for a problem that needs answering.²⁵ The intent of a parable's

²³ Emanuel P. Magro, "Jesus and the Play of Imagination: The Role of His Stories and Parables in Faith Formation," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 28, no. 1 (2019): 71-83.

²⁴ Theodore Wasserman and Lori Drucker Wasserman, "Parables and Paradigms," In *Neurocognitive Learning Therapy: Theory and Practice*, Springer, Cham, 2017, pp. 135-148.

²⁵ John Milton, "The Inspirational Language of Poets and Artists," *Learning the Language of the Soul: A Spiritual Lexicon* (2016): 22.

arrangement can be used in songwriting. Songs must follow a structure that has an intention, but in corporate worship, it should not leave the congregant unresolved.

Working Hypothesis

The following are the working Hypothesis:

H1: The characteristics of parables are influential in evangelism due to literary comparison, crisis, resolution, and application to the kingdom of God.

Dodson writes, "We too need the gospel. We need to think about what we believe and allow the gospel to work itself into our own life, our ideas, our dreams, and our desires. When we do, our faith will begin to come naturally in our work and our love for people."²⁶ Evangelism is about sharing the benefits of giving one's life to Christ, but it is about displaying a life of worship.²⁷ The working hypothesis for this study holds that the characteristics of theological truths are present in parables and influential in evangelism.

A specific benefit of a parable influencing evangelism would be the emotional metamorphosis within the relationship between an individual and Christ. Hunt writes, "If we are a witness, who we are and what we are and what our relationship is to our information is an important part of the process for two fundamental reasons. One is that we are not alone in our communication; the Holy Spirit is active in our receptors and us. A second reason is that our relationship to the data is itself a kind of information."²⁸

²⁶ Dodson, *Unbelievable Gospel*, 49.

²⁷ Matt. 5:13 (KJV).

²⁸ Hunt, *Music in Missions*, 49.

H2: Parables are influential in songwriting in terms of storytelling, personal application, and event sequence.

Storytelling is known for captivating the imagination and alluring one into a state of self-reflection. Songs, written in this form, that lyrics embody the Word of God, vivid metaphors, or sequences of cause and effect, may conjure up emotions of faith and excitement that may engage the heart of the listener. In Jeremiah 15:16, Jeremiah stated his assertiveness to God's words and how they brought joy and rejoicing to his heart.²⁹ Morgan writes, "When we meditate on that we've read and heard, we're chewing and digesting the material until it is assimilated into our systems, disseminated throughout our personalities, and becomes us." ³⁰

Methods

For this paper, I will be using the Qualitative Descriptive method. The study addresses the influence of parables, their characteristics, and how it may aid the worship leader in the creative process of songwriting. Descriptive research is aimed at casting light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely than was possible without employing this method.³¹

Qualitative research involves intentionally selecting and examining documents for understanding the research problem and research questions.

²⁹ Jer. 15:16 (KJV).

³⁰ Morgan, Robert J. *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation: Find True Peace in Jesus*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017.

³¹ "Descriptive Research - Research-Methodology," Research. Accessed August 01, 2019. <https://research-methodology.net/descriptive-research/>.

Research

For this paper, I will be using the Qualitative Descriptive method because the study addresses how parables' influence on songwriting and requires one to describe the characteristics of parables to identify how it may aid the worship leader in the creative process of songwriting. Descriptive research is "aimed at casting light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely than was possible without employing this method."³²

First, Biblical parables told by Jesus will be gathered and examined. Twenty-one parables are researched and studied thoroughly. Carefully investigated, it will confirm that Jesus used a unique form and style within His parables. I will examine them to identify their structure, content, and their relation to the culture. Once completed, I will research fifteen worship songs and their formation, their content, and their relationship to culture (1990 to 2019, except for one song written in 1983 by the Truthettes) that have characteristics of a parable. I will also give examples of parables that songwriters have taken and formed into hymns. These hymns embody the theme and teach the overall message of its related parable.

I will then take those findings and compare descriptively how biblical parables influenced the writing style of the songwriter. I will also describe how powerful the songs were to the faith community and answer the question of whether the songwriter wrote the song in a strategic way that would make the song timeless and fitting for any occasion.

³² "Descriptive Research - Research-Methodology," Research. Accessed August 01, 2019.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Allegory: The expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence.³³

Disciple: Someone who bases his or her life on the teachings of Christ.³⁴

Metaphor: A Metaphor is a figure of speech that makes an implicit, implied, or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics.³⁵

Narrative: Narrative is a report of related events presented to listeners or readers, in words arranged in a logical sequence.³⁶

Self- Efficacy: People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects.³⁷

Simile: A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a metaphor, a simile draws resemblance with the help of the words "like" or "as." Therefore, it is a direct comparison.³⁸

Similitude: an imaginative comparison.³⁹

³³ "Allegory." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allegory.

³⁴ Sean F. "Discipleship Definition." AllAboutFollowingJesus.org. All About Following Jesus, November 19, 2019. <https://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/discipleship-definition.htm>, para. 5.

³⁵ "Metaphor - Examples and Definition of Metaphor," *Literary Devices*, 27 Feb. 2019, literarydevices.net/metaphor/.

³⁶ "Narrative - Examples and Definition of Narrative," *Literary Devices*, 1 Nov. 2018, literarydevices.net/narrative/

³⁷ *Self-Efficacy Defined*, www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/BanEncy.html.

³⁸ "Simile - Examples and Definition of Simile." *Literary Devices*, 21 Feb. 2019, literarydevices.net/simile/.

³⁹ "Similitude." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/similitude.

Symbolism: Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense.⁴⁰

Parable: Parable is a figure of speech, which presents a short story, typically with a moral lesson at the end.⁴¹

⁴⁰ “Symbolism - Examples and Definition of Symbolism.” *Literary Devices*, 3 Sept. 2017, <https://literarydevices.net/symbolism/>.

⁴¹ “Parable - Examples and Definition of Parable.” *Literary Devices*, 21 Oct. 2017, <https://literarydevices.net/parable/>.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the parables' phenomenon as it intersects with the creative processes of songwriting. First, I will review literature that defines parables and stories; Second, I will review literature that explores the parables' features and structure. Third, I will articulate the function of parables and Jesus' purpose for utilizing such an art form. Finally, I will review literature that explains interpretation and how figurative language can assist in interpreting parables.

Also, in this chapter, I will review the literature that will define songwriting and the essence of songs. I will discuss the literature that defines and model the creative process of a competent songwriter. I will review research that identifies inspiration and how it aids the songwriter's trajectory of knowledge. Finally, I will review literature that states a concern of the Pentecostal Church to connect with reasoning why parables can assist the songwriter in their creative process.

Definition of Parable

According to R.C. Sproul, the word parable comes from two Greek words. *Para-* is the prefix that refers to something that is alongside something else. Such as paralegals who are known to be assistants to lawyers. *Ballō* means "to throw or to hurl." With both definitions combined, the word parable, in this context, means something thrown alongside something else. To illustrate a truth He is teaching, Jesus used parables alongside His preaching.⁴²

⁴² R. C. Sproul, *What Do Jesus Parables Mean?* (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2019), 3.

C. H Dodd states: "a parable is a metaphor (or simile) drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."⁴³ Dodd's definition has proved to be relative to numerous latter twentieth -century interpreters (of parables) who have explored the metaphorical character of the parables with a broader and more literary dynamic approach.⁴⁴ He also captures well a characteristic feature of many parables: they are at once located in the familiar ("drawn from nature or common life") while also having functionality or features which strike the hearer as atypical.⁴⁵ He describes parables as something that arrests the hearer by its vividness or "strangeness." Finally, the capacity of the parable employing its "strangeness" and ambiguity to "tease" and provoke its audience existentially has been the particular feature of parables that has fueled parable scholarship of the second half of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

These characteristics of parables being strange, vivid, and thought-provoking gives definition and shape to the approach the songwriter should explore in the writing process. Evangelism includes dialogue about faith that may be new and uncomfortable, but its presentation is what resonates with those who hear. The objective is for written songs to add lyrics that are relatable, vivid, and applicable to evangelism.

⁴³ Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2013, 652.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Green, 653.

A Story Is

Leland Jacobs describes a story as being many things. He states that it is first fiction, a fabrication, and invented facts.⁴⁷ Authors use personal experiences (or research) as the story's background to assist in developing the characters and their imagined lives. Stories are extended metaphors.⁴⁸ A story does not tell the audience that life is like this or that; instead, it says it is metaphorically using the characters in time and place to make what they can out of particular circumstances they may have encountered.⁴⁹ Jacobs also states that some stories carry the same message, but often change backgrounds to match the conditions of the audience today. Stories can also be the creation of a world that was never in existence. Such examples include Oz, Wonderland, and Narnia.

There are times when a story takes place in an actual country and is accompanied by the physical features that aid the story through the main character's eyes. Stories help the audience to explore and experience a different world. Stories illuminate some aspects of the human experience.⁵⁰ These are views that include valued insight, joy, hope, sorrow, decision –making, loss, reconciliations, etc. The storyteller is not a preacher or a lesson maker.⁵¹ Instead, the author's job is to let the characters develop and speak for themselves. A story is a word fitly spoken. It must include dialogue that gives character to the role of the character.⁵²

⁴⁷ Leland B. Jacobs. "What Is a Story?" *Teaching pre-K-8*. 21, no. 6 (March 1, 1991), 92.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 93.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

J.L. Fischer includes minimal requirements: "...to classify as a folktale, a narrative must be dramatic in the sense that it states some sort of conflict, which is eventually resolved.⁵³ A single conflict and its resolution constitute an episode. Each tale, or in a complicated story, each episode contains two principal opposed parties. There is always at least one defined object of conflict, which may involve the relationship between either the parties or their access to a third party or some material object. At least in the major episode of a tale, the conflict must be developed before being resolved. Without development, a simple statement of a conflict and its resolution does not constitute a tale; at the most, such a statement might be a tale summary or a nucleus, which might eventually elaborate into a story."⁵⁴

A well-developed idea should be the focal point for the songwriter. The lyrics should speak to an experience or a particular episode in the hearer's life. The songwriter should write for the opportunity where the song then becomes a tool of self-reflection and a chance for the listener to recreate their narrative. Songs that aid evangelism should not withhold the element of adversity in its development but express it. There would not be a need to evangelize if life did not present other options as opposed to the kingdom of God.

⁵³ J.L. Fischer, (1963) *The Sociopsychological Analysis of Folktales*. *Current Anthropology* 4(3):235-295.

⁵⁴ J. Rayfield, (1972). *What Is a Story?* *American Anthropologist*, 74(5), 1089.

A Parable Is

A biblical parable is a short, simple story designed to illustrate moral and spiritual lessons.⁵⁵

The qualifications of a parable, a story must have aesthetic balance, some trenchant elements of metaphorical imagination, brevity and economy, limited development of characterization, and a concentrated plot with a powerful 'twist' or verbal insight.⁵⁶ Parables are, as McCollough states, "word pictures," extended metaphors that have immediate efficacy in communication.⁵⁷ They instantly communicate meaning from one person to another, as opposed to abstract, discursive, propositional language, which must reference an external, agreed-upon meaning code.⁵⁸ Moreover, such images are memorable--they "stay in mind."⁵⁹ Unlike other story forms, parables are meant to puzzle, to "challenge one to a different level of being" and self-understanding.⁶⁰

As a form of indirect communication, parables do not flow to an expected conclusion but instead reveal contrary or unexpected aspects of a dilemma that invite comparison and complicate and deepen the experience. Parables quickly bring readers to the edge of their understanding only to drop them as something new is revealed, requiring that a troubling "imaginative choice" be made that explains who and what they are, what they value, and where

⁵⁵ *Narrative and Parable*, SES, March 5, 2018.

⁵⁶ Robert V. Bullough Jr., *Parables, Storytelling, and Teacher Education*. *Journal of Teacher Education* 61, no. 1-2, 2010, 159.

⁵⁷ C. McCollough, *The Art of Parables*. Kelowna, British Columbia: Copper House. 2008,11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

they stand morally.⁶¹ In the illustration to the universally known--*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*, well-known parables speak significantly about their power to stir imagination and places emphasis on how deeply and securely they settle in memory.⁶²

The songwriter should facilitate the song's objective and its moments by literary expressiveness and the use of metaphors and similes. Similar to parables, the song should speak to and stir up the listener's imagination. With evangelism, vivid descriptions may bring value to the listener's view of God's Kingdom.

Four Types of Parables

Parables seem to come in four forms. The first type tends to be relatively short. These are proverbs or maxims, such as the parable about the garment: "*No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise, the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old*" (Luke 5:36). These types of parables have the character of wisdom sayings, general truths that could apply across time and circumstance, such that place into almost any narrative context.⁶³

The second type of parable is a statement of likeness or similitude. This parable typically uses phrases that begin, "the kingdom of God is like ..." (e.g., the mustard seed, Luke 13:19).⁶⁴ A familiar aspect of ordinary life (e.g., a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden") compared to a less familiar point of God's reign in these comparisons. Snodgrass explains that

⁶¹ T.C. Oden (Ed.), *Parables of Kierkegaard* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1978), xiii.

⁶² Bullough, *Parables, Storytelling, and Teacher Education*, 154.

⁶³ Barbara L. Reid, *Parables for Preachers: Year A* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 3.

⁶⁴ Reid, 3.

there is action but no plot, no problem needing resolution, or development of the situation so that one has a story.⁶⁵ Similitudes tend to be rather straightforward, less confronted, and less focused on correspondences than in more advanced forms.

The third type is an allegory, such as we encounter in *The Sower* (Luke 8:4), where Jesus gives an explicit interpretation of each element in the parable (Luke 8:11).

The last and most familiar type of parable has the form of a narrative or short story. It sometimes called the double indirect narrative.⁶⁶ In this parable, something happens in the narrative. It creates a problem or possibility that requires reaction in the story, and these other acts bring, or potentially bring, resolution or closure. The parable of the Banquet (Luke 14:15–24) is an obvious example. Nearly all of the parables that are unique to Luke fall into this last category.⁶⁷

Regarding the writing process, the songwriter should be considerate of their audience and sensitive to the objective of the song. The songwriter should utilize the lyrics to represent evangelism through the use of comparison, allegory, or narrative form—their core reason for writing will be the focal point while implementing metaphors and similes. The plan is not to create a beautiful song without substance, but as Snodgrass proclaims, a beautiful song with the intent to allow the listener to invest in their truths while viewing the need for Christ.

⁶⁵ Snodgrass, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, 58.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁷ Audrey West, "Preparing to preach the parables in Luke." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36, no. 6.

Purpose of the Parable

According to C. H. Dodd, one of the pioneers in modern parable research, the purpose of the parables is to cause one to think. "A parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."⁶⁸ Dodd's classic definition remains in use today by many of the recent publications in parable research. Robert V. Bullough, states as individuals, seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what they have in common with someone else, so must they seek out personal metaphors to highlight and comprehendible their pasts, present activities, and their dreams, hopes, and goals as well.⁶⁹ A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of their lives. Self-understanding requires continual negotiation of the meaning of the individual's experiences to themselves. The process of self-understanding is the constant development of new life stories for themselves.⁷⁰

Klyne Snodgrass proposes that though others have tried to limit the parable's theological significance, the parables are a different kind of theological argument. They are told to teach and convince about another and more important reality.⁷¹ It is believed that scripture embeds and assumes a theology in seeking to move people to right relations and right living with God.

⁶⁸ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of The Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 16.

⁶⁹ Bullough, *Parables, Storytelling, and Teacher Education*, 154.

⁷⁰ G. Lakoff, & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (Original work published 1980/2003), 232-233.

⁷¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: a Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018, 30.

Snodgrass, in further detail, states that without parables, one would be theologically impoverished.⁷² The theology of these stories merits the investment of the people who hear them.⁷³ The goal is not to be overly concerned with a feature in a parable or what it stands for as if it were too allegorized; more importantly, approaching the parable with the intent to seek what elements within the parable signify for the teller.⁷⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16 declares that all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching. Jesus, equipped with power and permission from His Father, crafted His words to initiate a relationship of worship and to make clear the standards of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus' Purpose for Parables: "He That Hath Ears Let Him Hear." (Matthew 13:10)

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" ¹¹ He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. ¹⁴ In them fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly, I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."⁷⁵

During Jesus' travels, He never lost His stance and voice of authority. Authority with His pedagogical style of teaching parables is what helped separate the way He and the Pharisees

⁷² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 30.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Matt. 13:10-17 (NIV).

taught.⁷⁶ The Pharisees aimed to highlight concepts of the Mosaic Law, but Jesus sought to give new revelation, which was unknown.⁷⁷ In Matthew 11:15 and then in Mark 9, it expressed how vital it was for His audience to hear with their heart and embrace the truths concerning the kingdom of God⁷⁸. By taking a stance on this statement, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Knowing the sinful nature of the world, Jesus was able to teach the Word of God that would redeem or judge those who sat among Him.⁷⁹

As Jesus traveled, the details within the parables also changed to fit that particular audience and culture.⁸⁰ For example, Jesus's followers may have taken the Yeast and the Mustard Seed parables as an assurance of eschatological intervention; they may have seen each as a means of understanding the kingdom in the present. Eschatological, from a Christian's view, speaks to judgment or the end of something (death or end of the age). The fact that these parables used negative cultural idioms, such as the leaven and the size of the seed, to produce another viewpoint on the growth of God's kingdom is an eschatological intervention.

Some scholars think about a method when they hear the topic of parables. According to Sandmal, most sources that include the theme of parables start with a technique. This technique includes elements such as genre, authenticity purpose, etc.⁸¹ Klyne Snodgrass, who is not a

⁷⁶ Sproul, R.C., "Introduction," Lecture. Accessed December 19, 2019, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/the-parables-of-jesus/introduction/>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Amy-Jill Levine, *Telling Short Stories by Jesus – with Gratitude for the on-Going Conversation*. *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12, no. 1 (2017), 4.

⁸¹ Ibid., 2.

stranger to the method, finds that the parables have an authentic core that resonates with it. This resonance is that parables are a form of subversive wisdom.⁸² The tradition that Jesus carried was more than stories. It holds a tradition of consistently challenging how one lives.⁸³ These parables addressed the topics of ethical behavior and God's kingdom.

Similar to the prophets and the teachers of wisdom, Jesus placed well-known figures in unconventional roles. These examples include the tiny mustard seeds growing into giant trees;⁸⁴ the pulling of weeds along with the wheat⁸⁵ or virgins seeking a store open at midnight to buy oil rather than having their friends ration their supply⁸⁶—subverts any image of normalcy. In conclusion, it made one think.

In the creative writing process, like parables, lyrics should be vivid and expressive, speaking loudly to the main objective. In this case, the goal is evangelism. The core of the song being authentic in a presentation can accomplish this. As long as the songwriter commits to, and relates the lyrics to real-life situations, authenticity will be present. Authenticity gives the listener the chance to engage, connect, and actively hear the message embedded within the song.

⁸² Levine, *Telling Short Stories by Jesus*, 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁴ Matt.13:31-32 (KJV).

⁸⁵ Matt. 13:24-30 (KJV).

⁸⁶ Matt. 25:1-13 (KJV).

Parables as an Art Form

As stated before, Jesus intended to captivate His audience's imagination. The imagination of the audience is what births the interpretation.⁸⁷ Within the biblical text, and currently, Evangelists are doing their best to contain the parables through allegorical interpretation or their global significance. For example, the vineyard requires tending; pearls remain lovely jewels; virgins stay virgins; however, it remains that some parables are not literal due to the audience.⁸⁸ Levine gives an example of the earthly image of the sheep. Parabolically speaking, the sheep has many meanings. In some parables, the focus is on the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, being the Shepherd watches and protects it. In another, the sheep are vulnerable and stolen. The prophet Nathan speaks of a ewe lamb taken by a rich man from a poor man.⁸⁹

Parables as Miniature Gospels

From the Gospel of Luke, nine of these parables, nearly all of them unique to Luke, occur in the Season after Pentecost (Ordinary Time), when the Gospel readings follow Jesus and the disciples on the journey toward Jerusalem. John R. Donahue suggests viewing parables as miniature gospels. To study the parables of the gospel is to study the gospel in a parable.⁹⁰ Donahue's approach is useful for the songwriter who wants to reflect on the theological implications of the parables within their songs being a source of Gospel texts. The scriptural

⁸⁷ Levine, *Telling Short Stories by Jesus*, 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹ 2 Samuel 12 (KJV).

⁹⁰ Audrey West, 407.

presence that coexists with the lyrics must be articulated confidently in their content as it relates to evangelism, for it may be a tool of God's initiation of salvation.

Parables and Literary Painting

Parables invite others not to be objective and distant but to embody the parable's intent.⁹¹ Parables paint pictures that enable understanding of the relations in question, the relationship of Jesus and His contemporaries to God, and God's purposes.⁹² Snodgrass further explains that the more one tries to infer correspondences, the more likely one will miss the force of the parable.⁹³ When King David did not deduce the point of Nathan's parable, he missed its meaning. David did not gain full comprehension until Nathan forced insight.⁹⁴ The songwriter should keep in mind that clear and concise lyrics facilitates the overall objective of worship. Like King David, congregants that are confused may start to feel uncomfortable, resulting in a distortion of their understanding or reason for a corporate gathering.

Metaphors convey pictures that abstract language cannot rival.⁹⁵ With metaphors, parable interpretations are about understanding the limits and significance of the analogy.⁹⁶ Wendell Berry shares his comment about metaphors by stating, "But the legitimacy of a metaphor depends upon our understanding of its limits... When a metaphor is construed as an

⁹¹ West, *Preparing to Preach*, 407.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 27.

⁹⁴ 2 Sam.12:7 (KJV).

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 28.

equation, it is out of control; when it is construed as an identity, it is preposterous."⁹⁷ Snodgrass informs that the existence of metaphors is not an invitation to think about all the possibilities of meanings applied, but an invitation to understand them within their set of relations.⁹⁸

For the songwriter, the metaphor (or simile) should paint the background. The metaphor indicates the relationship between the experience and the core meaning of the song. If the placement of the metaphor is not clear, there will be an opportunity for misinterpretation of the song's core purpose, which can affect the strength of the influence of evangelism.

Definition of Evangelism

Tony Miano defines evangelism as being the announcement, proclamation, and or preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), the good news of and about Jesus Christ.⁹⁹ Therefore, the gospel is a communicated message—communicated in verbal (Luke 7:22; Romans 10:14-17) and written (Luke 1:1-4) form.¹⁰⁰ The English word "evangelism" comes from the Greek word *euaggelion*.¹⁰¹ Most literally translated in the noun form, *euaggelion* means "gospel" or "good news."¹⁰² In the verb form (*euaggelizesthai*), the meaning of the word changes slightly to "announce" or "bring good news."¹⁰³ The Greek word, in its various forms, appears

⁹⁷ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 28.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁹ Tony Miano. "Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry: What is Evangelism?." CARM.org, June 30, 2017, para.1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* and para. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

fifty-five times in the New Testament. In addition to the before-mentioned translations, the Greek word translated as "preach."¹⁰⁴

Evangelism, the communication of the gospel message, includes a warning, an explanation, and a call. Evangelism includes warning people about sin and the consequences of sin (John 16:8; Acts 24:25; Revelation 20:11-15).¹⁰⁵ It consists of an explanation of God's remedy for sin—the gospel (Acts 8:29-35; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21).¹⁰⁶ It includes the clear call to repent (to turn from sin and to turn toward God) and believes the gospel, by faith (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:29-31; Romans 1:17; Romans 10:9-13).¹⁰⁷

Defining interpretation: "Be careful how you hear."

As mentioned before, "He who has ears, let him hear!" MacArthur proclaims that Jesus, in this particular environment, started with a parable that resonated with the audience.¹⁰⁸ In Luke 8:5-8:

⁵. A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. ⁶. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. ⁸. And other fell on good ground and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Tony Miano, "Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry: What is Evangelism," para. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. and para. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ MacArthur. *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Lk. 5:5-8 (KJV).

These listeners lived in an agricultural society and completed these tasks daily. They were knowledgeable about their craft, the soil, and conditions for a productive harvest.¹¹⁰

MacArthur explains that though this parable seems evident as to explaining how the process of planting works, it is not the core lesson of what Jesus is teaching.¹¹¹ He used this parable to stress the need to pay attention, listen with a believing heart, and look beyond the surface for the true meaning. After speaking the parable, Jesus said, "Take heed how you hear."¹¹² The listener's response separated those who believed from those who did not.¹¹³ Those who believed would seek truth and find it, those who did not, were blinded by their unbelief.¹¹⁴

The parable of The Sower illustrates the occurrence that songwriters should be conscious of when writing. It reminds one that when proclaiming the gospel through song, the results will vary according to the hearts of the audience and their experiences. With salvation being the goal, the developing plot and message within the song must be relatable to culture to contextualize. The songwriter should lead the listener to the truth, not make it problematic for them to follow.

¹¹⁰ MacArthur. *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 19.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Making Connections to Songwriting

Defining Songwriting

By definition, songs are a combination of elements. In skeletal form, they are the words and melodies one sings unaccompanied.¹¹⁵ Suzanne Langer observes that songs are often spontaneous expressions of feelings that leap forth untamed.¹¹⁶ Songwriting is also an avenue for self-expression, assessment, and a way to organize thoughts to influence thinking patterns.¹¹⁷ Bennett defines a song as 'an artifact of musical and literary intellectual property – a unique combination of pitches and words that can be performed or recorded by a singer'¹¹⁸

In a study written by Hahn, he suggested and proved that songs written by the songwriter have more significance than one assumes.¹¹⁹ Songwriting is valued for more than its ending result. These artists value songwriting for their meaning-making properties as they make sense of life experiences relevant to them.¹²⁰ The meaning-making properties of songwriting are significant enough to have made the songwriting process an effective method of music therapy.¹²¹ Using the term "meaning" claims that an individual's original something points to, is attached to, or used to infer other things beyond itself. Some sort of relationship exists between

¹¹⁵ Andrew West, *The Art of Songwriting*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017, 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ K. A. Lindberg, "Songs of Healing: Songwriting with an Abused Adolescent." *Music Therapy* 13, no. 1 (January 1995): 93–108. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mt/13.1.93>.

¹¹⁸ Joe Bennett. (2015). *Creativities in popular songwriting curricula*. In P. Burnard & E. Haddon (Eds.), *Activating Diverse Musical Creativities: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 37–38.

¹¹⁹ David Hahn, *An Investigation of the Creative Process in Songwriting in an Undergraduate Songwriting Survey Class*. PhD diss., Boston University, 2015, 1-378.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹²¹ Ibid.

our original entity or event and something beyond itself."¹²² By dissecting this statement, one can conclude that the relationship that exists between songwriting as the "original something" and some other thing beyond itself, is the meaning that is made of life in the creative process.¹²³

Defining A Song

At the most basic level, a song requires melodic and semantic expression. Levinson defines the song as 'a melodically and rhythmically distinctive arch of full-fledged tones of definite pitch, produced in the form of vocals coalescing into words and sentences.'¹²⁴ In a contemporary context, a song includes singing and lyrics. West writes, "in skeletal form; songs are the words and melodies we sing unaccompanied."¹²⁵ Eckstein further notes the voice of lyrics is, by definition, original external emphasis.¹²⁶ Lyrics, this is to say, cannot be conceived outside of the context of their vocal (and musical) actualization – i.e., their performance.¹²⁷ Another definition, offered by Chew, determines a song to be a piece of music for voice or voices, whether accompanied or unaccompanied or the act or art of singing.¹²⁸ This definition unequivocally emphasizes the popular relevance of the voice in song. It also highlights the possibility for the singing voice to be the sole musical communicator through its ability to

¹²² Hahn, *An Investigation of The Creative Process*, 45.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹²⁴ D. Hughes and S. Keith (2019), *Aspirations, considerations, and processes: Songwriting in and for music education*, 90.

¹²⁵ West, *The Art of Songwriting*, 2.

¹²⁶ Hughes and Keith, 90.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

convey an unaccompanied melody.¹²⁹ The setting of words to a melody (with chords or implied harmony) is seemingly complex. Indeed, song structure, chord progressions, implied harmony, rhythm, and lyrics are traditional components of song creation in popular music.¹³⁰ While Hennion suggests, the music (being the sum of the musical components) is 'the fundamental ingredients in a song, giving it its form,' music or the melodic line do not always precede lyrical content in a song's creation.¹³¹

These studies seem to indicate that neither music nor lyrics need to be discrete creative functions undertaken by different writers.¹³² Songwriting, as a term, does not preclude the inclusion of traditional compositional elements, particularly as it pertains to the use of knowledge and such elements for creativity within the music.¹³³ By keeping this thought at the core that songs have the potential to be the preached Word of God, these elements can help the song accomplish evangelism.

What Does It Mean to Write A Song?

In the fundamental aspect of musicians' creative labor, what does it mean to write a song? While all musicians might expect to be creative in this way, writing songs is not an easy skill. It has its limitation. Writing songs requires the application of knowledge and time to develop such an ability; therefore, analyzing the work of experienced writers may help in such

¹²⁹ Hughes and Keith, *Aspirations, considerations, and processes: Songwriting in and for music education*, 90.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 91.

¹³³ Ibid.

endeavor. Competent songwriters know their reasoning for writing songs; they are confident in the structure and form of the song; they recognize elements that make a song recognizable as a song. Songwriters use songwriting as a means of overcoming the intrinsic uncertainties of the creativity of creative labor. It involves making assessments about the work one produces and, indeed, one's abilities and identity as a songwriter.

Csikszentmihalyi explains that ideas do not exist in a vacuum; they must operate on a set of already existing objects, rules, representations, or notations.¹³⁴ Csikszentmihalyi clarifies creativity as any act, ideas, or product that changes an existing domain or that transforms an existing domain into a new one.¹³⁵ His model explains the following: The Domain of knowledge, a field where the experience is understood, and an individual who creates work to change the Domain and culture.¹³⁶ The process is cyclical.¹³⁷ When the work, accepted into the culture, it then influences further individuals in their creations.¹³⁸

Perhaps a more precise way to comprehend songwriting's creative practices is to view songwriters as complex weavers of 'multiple languages.'¹³⁹ Songwriters resemble craftspeople, selecting, and combining existing materials into new forms. It is in this way the songwriter is an editor and parodist rather than a "transcendental spirit" whose materials are in the Field of the

¹³⁴ Matthew Clyma Gooderson, and Jennie Henley. "Professional Songwriting: Creativity, the Creative Process and Tensions between Higher Education Songwriting and Industry Practice in the U.K." *Academia* 1, no. 1 (2017), 2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ J. Toynebee (2000), *Making Popular Music: Musicians, creativity and institutions*. Arnold, 43.

social rather than divine. The chosen perspective of the songwriter becomes their experience, which leads them to articulate a thought or theory. As a result, the audience is comfortable in accepting a sweet invitation because the song, now, becomes a foundation for developing a relationship. Like Jesus, the songwriter strives to be relational in His intention of saving souls by connecting socially through culture.

Songwriters produce variation in the set of conventions, rules, and ideas that exist in the structured knowledge of songs that the songwriter has access to work well within the system.¹⁴⁰ Individuals must internalize the rules of decisions to make about which ideas are good and bad.¹⁴¹ Therefore, if a person wants to become a good songwriter, they must acquire the ways to think of being and codes of knowledge necessary to make informed decisions. In other words, they must acquire cultural capital.¹⁴²

Cultural capital aids the songwriter in embodying knowledge about a wide range of culture that enables one to converse and participate within the community. Such characterization credits the songwriter's experience and skills to deploy the appropriate knowledge in any given situation. Being conscious of a postmodern world, in this case, the lyrics in a worship song become a conversation with a neighbor about how the love of Jesus is unmerited grace and gives those who believe strength to follow His truths.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Phillip McIntyre, "Creativity and Cultural Production: A Study of Contemporary Western Popular Music Songwriting." *Creativity Research Journal* 20, no. 1 (June 2008): 40–52.

¹⁴¹ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, (1999). 'Implications of a Systems Perspective for the Study of Creativity.' in Sternberg, R.J. & Lubert, T., (Eds.) *The Concept of Creativity: Prospects and paradigms in Handbook of Creativity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 332.

¹⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1993), 7.

The Art of Creativity

David Hesmondhalgh uses the term "symbol creator" to describe individuals at the core of creative production, "those who make up, interpret or rework stories, songs, and images so on"¹⁴⁴ Negus and Pickering state: "Creativity is one of the most essential yet unexplored issues in the study of popular music. Its significance routinely noted, usually in passing, and its value often is taken for granted. Its conceptual status in music studies is that of an unquestioned commonplace."¹⁴⁵

Songwriters should be cautious of the unquestioned commonplace ideology of creativity. Referring to the statement of Negus and Pickering, this idea states that creativity is an expected skill in the arts. The stigma among creatives that being talented automatically equips one with creative abilities can be misleading. It is not a phenomenon for inspiration to be common or unquestioned. An inspired songwriter writes words of intelligence to say to inspire others. In the context of worship, as the Holy Spirit inspires the songwriter, the songwriter becomes creative with the lyrics and stimulates the mind and spirit of the congregation.

¹⁴³ "What Is Cultural Capital?" *Cultural Learning Alliance*, 1 July 2019, culturallearningalliance.org.uk/what-is-cultural-capital/.

¹⁴⁴ Long, Paul, and Simon Barber, "Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy in the Work of Professional Songwriters," *Popular Music and Society* 40, no. 5 (2017): 556-72, doi:10.1080/03007766.2017.1351134.

¹⁴⁵ Negus, Keith, and Michael Pickering, "Creativity, Communication and Musical Experience," (2002): 178-190.

Creative Sociology

Other disciplines such as sociology have, however, tended to see creativity in predominantly artistic terms, generally merge the two and often treating them as identical.¹⁴⁶

Psychologists like Robert Weisberg, Keith Sawyer, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi have sought to explore the contextual and social nature of creativity.¹⁴⁷ Csikszentmihalyi, for instance, has been "forced by facts" to view individual creativity in terms of an operational environment with cultural-symbolic and social aspects – the Domain and Field, respectively.¹⁴⁸ He argues that creativity as a process at the interaction of these aspects, between individuals, domains, and fields can be understood.¹⁴⁹ He writes that the Domain is essential to creativity as "It is impossible to be a genius...in the absence of a symbolic system. Original thought does not exist in a vacuum. It must operate on a set of rules, or representations, of notations."¹⁵⁰

These "forced facts" explain and educates how creativity affects the work of a songwriter within the community and culture. Csikszentmihalyi's framework and design have potential as a brainstorming template for writing worship songs. It could articulate how theology and inspiration of lyrics affect the prior knowledge, environments, and personal information of an individual by the words and message of the gospel. Csikszentmihalyi's framework provides a visual structure to what happens emotionally and spiritually during corporate worship settings.

¹⁴⁶ McIntyre, "Creativity and Cultural Production," 79.

¹⁴⁷ Long & Barber, "Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy, 560.

¹⁴⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. *The Systems Model Of Creativity: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014, 103.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 560.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Introduction to the Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi Model

The systems model of creativity developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1997, 1999, and 2004) also suggests that a confluence of multiple factors generates creative action.¹⁵¹ The model proposes that creativity comes about through the interaction of three primary but complex components. These are the Domain, the Field, and the Individual.

The Domain

The Domain is the knowledge system, the techniques, and conventions that the Field holds, and uses it to manipulate it in its ongoing practice. In this context, Western songwriters, including contemporary worship and gospel songwriters, use songs to manipulate the Domain.¹⁵² The Field (society) often influences the Domain.¹⁵³ A collection of songs can provide a body of knowledge for songwriters. Songwriters need to be familiar with a broadly defined set of information pertinent to songs to produce one.¹⁵⁴ This body of knowledge, the song, includes a working understanding of lyric, melody writing, and song structure. It also includes rhythmic components pertinent to the craft and arrangement characteristics that involve an understanding of simple and intricate harmonies.

¹⁵¹ McIntyre, Phillip, "Rethinking the Creative Process: The Systems Model of Creativity Applied to Popular Songwriting," *Journal of music, technology and education*. 4, no. 1 (August 26, 2011): 81.

¹⁵² Ibid., 84.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Songwriters who have immersed themselves in this Domain or knowledge system may find they become second nature to them and that writing becomes intuitive within this Domain. The Domain can be both literate and oral forms of learning.¹⁵⁵

The Field

The Field often influences the Domain.¹⁵⁶ It is a structured space organized around particular forms of Domain knowledge where the 'production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status' is centered.¹⁵⁷ The Field confirms that audiences influence the creative process. Therefore, a song's existence depends on a complex social structure that created the Field of western popular music, such as contemporary worship and gospel music, for the individuals engaged in songwriting.¹⁵⁸

The Individual

The Individual is an agent who understands and uses the Domain and Field knowledge to produce a new change.¹⁵⁹ For example, contemporary worship musicians are the individuals who comprise the third component of this systems model.¹⁶⁰ Each songwriter has an eccentric background or unconventional perspective, which constitute factors such as class, gender,

¹⁵⁵ McIntyre, *Rethinking the Creative Process*, 85.

¹⁵⁶ McIntyre, 84.

¹⁵⁷ McIntyre. *Creativity and Cultural Production*, 47.

¹⁵⁸ McIntyre, *Rethinking the Creative Process*, 86.

¹⁵⁹J. Fulton, E. Paton (2016) The Systems Model of Creativity. In: McIntyre P., Fulton J., Paton E. (eds) *The Creative System in Action*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

¹⁶⁰ Phillip McIntyre, *Creativity and Cultural Productions*, 48.

ethnicity, and other social and cultural categories. Therefore, each may possess a personal set of predispositions that are unique to them but shared by many others.¹⁶¹

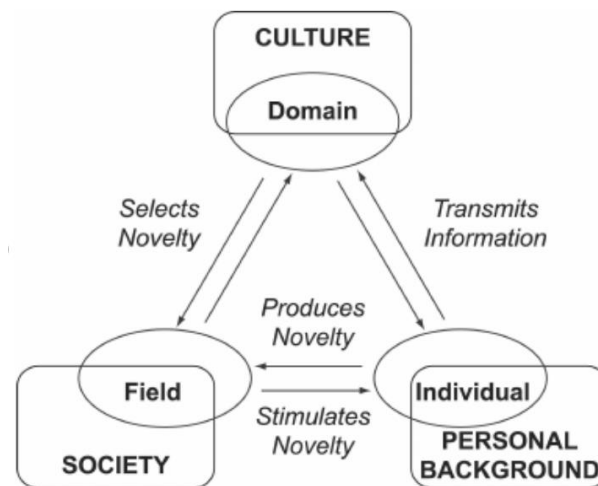


Figure 1. Csikszentmihalyi's Systems View of Creativity.

Source: "Csikszentmihalyi's Systems View of Creativity." ResearchGate. Accessed March 31, 2020.

The Creative Process

Wallas divided creativity into four key strategies:¹⁶²

- 1) **Preparation**- definition of the issue, observation, and study.¹⁶³
- 2) **Incubation** -laying the issue aside for a time.
- 3) **Illumination**- the moment when a new idea finally emerges.
- 4) **Verification**- testing it out.

¹⁶¹ McIntyre, *Creative and Cultural Productions*, 87.

¹⁶² G. Wallas, *The Art of Thought*. (London, UK: Jonathan Cape), 1926.

¹⁶³ Gooderson, and Henley, "Professional Songwriting: Creativity, the Creative Process and Tensions between Higher Education Songwriting and Industry Practice in the U.K.," *Academia* 1, no. 1 (2017), 4.

This model forms the foundations of many models today.¹⁶⁴ While these models favor a view of creativity that moves from inception to completion via sequential stages, educator Petty perceives the creative process to involve a chain of different, interlinked phases.¹⁶⁵ These phases are revisited numbers of times and can occur in a variety of combinations and sequences.¹⁶⁶

- 1) **Inspiration-** uncritical search for new ideas.
- 2) **Clarification-** planning, discussing, and agreeing aims.
- 3) **Evaluation-** critical analysis of the music identity strengths and weaknesses based on aims agreed during the clarification stage.
- 4) **Distillation-** sifting through the ideas generated in the inspiration phase.
- 5) **Incubation-** maturation of ideas.
- 6) **Perspiration-** working on a chosen part or idea.

Due to the inclusion of the inspiration, perspiration, and evaluation stage, Petty's model of the creative process offers an excellent analytical framework for scholars to examine the creative process of songwriting in a more detailed, or phase-by-phase manner.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ T.I. Lubart, (2001) "Models of the creative process: Past, present and future," *Creativity Research Journal*, 13 (3-4), 295-308.

¹⁶⁵ Gareth Dylan Smith, Zack Moir, Matt Brennan, Shara Rambarran, and Phil Kirkman. *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017, 129-130.

¹⁶⁶ Gooderson and Henley, 5.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Inspiration

Each songwriter's creativity expresses awareness of their autonomy and individuality but in the context of the industry's determinants and cultural system of songs themselves.¹⁶⁸ Success in creative work is dependent upon evaluation by peers and audiences, the environment in which it takes place, the quality of labor, and above all, the particular nature of the creative individual.¹⁶⁹ Sawyer articulates this about inspiration, "instead of the mystical view of creativity that places a moment of insight in an extraordinary moment of divine inspiration. Creators experience small insights throughout a day's work; micro evaluations accompany each of these insights in addition to hard work. These mini-insights only gradually accumulate to result in a finished work, as a result of a process of hard work and intellectual labor of the creator."¹⁷⁰

Based on additional research, the professional songwriters studied, described their moment of inspiration. Albert Hammond, for instance, states that "Sometimes I don't feel I write the song, I just feel I'm an object here that energies from out there come through me, so I can put them down and have the world hear it."¹⁷¹ Likewise, Jimmy Webb elegantly reveals that inspiration comes so quickly on the occasion that as if "a wind blew through the room and left a song on the piano." In the same vein, songwriters also claim to have dreamed songs, echoing Paul McCartney's famous account of waking with "Yesterday" fully formed.¹⁷² Dan Wilson says

¹⁶⁸ Long & Barber, *Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy*, 562.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 562.

¹⁷⁰ R.K. Sawyer, (2012) *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation*. Oxford University Press, 139.

¹⁷¹ Long and Barber, 562.

¹⁷² Steve Turner. *A Hard Day's Write: The Stories Behind Every Beatles Song*. New York: Harper, 2005, 92.

something similar about the creation of “Secret Smile” when he awoke with the song in his head and simply wrote it down, “I was convinced that it was a pre-existing song that I had stolen or remembered from somebody else.”¹⁷³

Inspiration for Charles Wesley, an accomplished hymn writer, came through his conversion.¹⁷⁴ Charles Wesley had been ill in bed for some time, and the fear of death had often troubled his mind.¹⁷⁵ On Sunday, May 21, 1738, his brother and some friends came in and sang a hymn. After they went out, he prayed alone for some time. In his journal, Wesley states: “I was composing myself to sleep in quietness and peace when I heard one come in and say, In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities.”¹⁷⁶ The words struck me to the heart. I lay musing and trembling. With a strange palpitation of heart, I said, yet feared to say, I believe, I believe!”¹⁷⁷ This moment is the thought and memory woven into the third verse of the hymn *O For A Thousand Tongues*, “Jesus! The name that charms our fears that bids our sorrows cease; tis music in the sinner’s ears, tis life and health and peace.”¹⁷⁸

A starting point, as Hesmondhalgh and Baker note, is to recognize approaches to creative work as work.¹⁷⁹ Ordinariness is characteristic of not only “a whole way of life,” or the place of symbolic products in our lives, but like where and how culture creates.¹⁸⁰ In looking for material

¹⁷³ Long and Barber, *Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy*, 562.

¹⁷⁴ “Hymn Story: O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.” ReasonableTheology.org, December 13, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Stanza 3.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Long and Barber, *Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy*, 562.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 564.

and inspiration, for instance, Allen Toussaint emphasizes a need to seek inspiration from one's environment: "You might have seen two people on the corner kiss quickly. There you are. They kissed on the corner. You don't want to miss that."¹⁸¹ Similarly, songwriters like Dan Wilson feel a need to connect to inspiration at all times, as "everything is fodder." Ideas and prompts come from experiences in everyday existence, and so one has to be both receptive and dedicated to ideas.¹⁸²

Beth Nielsen Chapman has an elaborated conceptual framework for describing creativity and the specificity of her approach to songwriting. She conceives creativity as a resource, a raw material available to all, yet something that is not equitably apparent or accessed.¹⁸³ She suggests nurturing this resource; songwriting involves organization and labor. It sets out discrete blocks of time in which whimsical attitudes to one's muse and art need to be set aside in the face of practical pressures. She describes her creativity as akin to staying in shape by going to the gym. For her, spending time at work on songwriting aims to nurture inspiration through applied activity so that the next day, apparently unbidden, something might come up in another context. She thus allows for "unknown" qualities - that are innovations – which engage using "the muscle of not knowing what you are doing." Despite setting out rules, she accepts a possibility of "writing from the ether," the intrusion of unconsciousness allowing for surprise and rule-breaking to intrude. However, the routine maintains her "muscle of creativity" to this end.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Long and Barber, *Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy*, 564.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 562.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 565.

¹⁸⁴ Long and Barber, *Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy*, 565.

Songwriters have his or her conceptual framework that allows them to nurture their inspiration, which sparks creativity. Their structure is beneficial to this study because the parables told by Jesus, to some, became their inspiration to seek redemption and salvation.

Trajectory of Knowledge

Long and Barber claim that being equipped to write a song convincingly involves a trajectory of the acquisition of knowledge beyond simply acquainting oneself with existing work and conventions as a listener.¹⁸⁵ The songwriter must have the experience to gain an understanding of content. Life circumstances or a course can aid in such endeavors. This knowledge informs the skills, confidence, and indeed the formation of what Jason Toynbee calls a "space of possibilities" and indeed, the expectation that one might be a songwriter.¹⁸⁶

Overall Goal of the Songwriter in the Pentecostal Church

At the heart of Pentecostalism is its spirituality, and its spirituality in worship, one of its significant expressions.¹⁸⁷ Pentecostals affirm Pentecost's power in worship, where they experience the Spirit's revelation of Christ, teach, and preach about worship. Pentecostalism was born from the ferment of Holiness. It had efforts to work out a stable form of supernatural and experientially robust Christianity, around the notion of the second blessing of the Spirit.¹⁸⁸ Pioneers like Charles Fox Parham, and William Seymour, credit the innovations and teachings

¹⁸⁵ Long and Barber, *Conceptualizing Creativity and Strategy*, 563.

¹⁸⁶ J. Toynbee, *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions* (London: Arnold, 2000), 38.

¹⁸⁷ Prosén, M., 2014, 'Worship: A window into Pentecostal theology,' *Swedish Missiological Themes* 102(1), 87–91.

¹⁸⁸ Joel Robbins. "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 117-143.

on speaking in tongues, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and starting one of the most powerful revivals in Los Angeles known as the Azusa Street Revivals.¹⁸⁹

According to Marius Nel, Pentecostal theologians have not written much about a theology of worship, leading some theologians to the assumption that Pentecostal worship practices are not grounded theologically.¹⁹⁰ Joel Robbins intercepts this thought by stating that aside from its emphasis on tongues, Pentecostal doctrine bears much in common with that of the Holiness tradition from which it developed. Sometimes described as the fourfold, foursquare, or "full gospel" pattern of Pentecostal theology, it stresses that (a) Jesus offers salvation; (b) Jesus heals; (c) Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit; (d) Jesus is coming again.¹⁹¹

Christopher Stephenson explains that the development of Pentecostalism has "three waves." The term 'three waves' is a firmly established designation for describing the historical emergence of global Pentecostalism. However, the succeeding cross-pollination of theological ideas among the three waves, defies the firm boundaries that maintained as each wave emerged.¹⁹²

The first-wave of Pentecostals is 'restorationists.' They believed that the charismata of the apostolic age was lost, during the medieval period, and were now restored.¹⁹³ Chief among first-wave theological emphases was the baptism in the Holy Spirit (or, being filled with the Holy

¹⁸⁹ Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," 120.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 121.

¹⁹² Christopher A. Stephenson. "Pentecostal Theology: Retrospect and Prospect." *Religion Compass* 5, no. 9 (2011): 493. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2011.00300.x>.

¹⁹³ Stephenson, "Pentecostal Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," 491.

Spirit), and experience after conversion that empowered Pentecostals to proclaim the gospel after the pattern of Acts of the Apostles 1:8.¹⁹⁴ The distinctive was that first-wave Pentecostals distinguished baptism in the Holy Spirit from sanctification and posited a significant relationship between baptism in the Holy Spirit and glossolalia.¹⁹⁵

These Pentecostals were not the first Christians to experience glossolalia, or talk of baptism in the Holy Spirit, and stress world missions. Still, they were the first to proclaim that baptism in the Holy Spirit was an experience different from sanctification that empowered them to become witnesses and was necessarily evidenced by glossolalia.¹⁹⁶

The second wave of Pentecostalism is the charismatic movement that emerged in North America in the 1960s and has spread throughout the world. During this time, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant Christians began to experience charismata.¹⁹⁷ However, they remained in their church traditions to seek their renewal from within them rather than joining Pentecostal denominations.¹⁹⁸ Charismatics, though they believed in the gift of glossolalia as necessary, still had different views on it and did not accept it as the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁹

The third wave of Pentecostalism was at first primarily American evangelicals who experienced and promoted charismata and were not affiliated with first- or second-wave

¹⁹⁴ Stephenson, "Pentecostal Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," 491.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 492.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 492.

Pentecostalism.²⁰⁰ They usually rejected initial evidence theology and saw glossolalia as one gift, among others. They have sometimes resisted the label "Pentecostal" altogether.²⁰¹

The third wave has since come to refer to all of the many indigenous and independent churches worldwide that embrace charismata and do not trace their roots to first- or second-wave origins or to the American evangelicals of the beginning of the third wave.²⁰² Third-wave Christians in this broader sense, also called 'neocharismatics,' constitute the largest demographic of Pentecostals worldwide.²⁰³ One distinctive that characterizes many (not all) third-wave Pentecostals is 'word of faith,' or, 'positive confession' theology.²⁰⁴ They typically believe that if one's words are well crafted, God will grant them materialistic prosperity if they have enough faith.²⁰⁵

A result of the Pentecostal emphasis on spiritual or charismatic experiences is that for Pentecostal worshipers, worship is the highest occupation of the church, fulfilling the ultimate purpose for which the people of God are redeemed (Is 43:21; 1 Pt 2:9).²⁰⁶ Such emphasis on worship, if not facilitated around biblical principles and standards, can result in emotionalism, "...undue indulgence in or display of emotion..."²⁰⁷ Though worshipping God causes one to be

²⁰⁰ Stephenson, "Pentecostal Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," 493.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ L.R. Martin, 2016, 'Introduction to Pentecostal Worship,' in L.R. Martin (ed.), *Toward a Pentecostal theology of worship*, 1.

²⁰⁷ Merriam-Webster Deluxe Dictionary, 10th Ed.

emotional, one must remember that the Bible identifies the heart as the center of man's intellect (Matthew 13:15, 22), emotions (Matthew 22:37), conscience (Acts 23:1), and will (Hebrews 4:12).

The hearts of the congregation are to enter into worship of the Almighty God rightly; the lyrics should reflect a conscious decision, combining both intellect and emotions. John Piper states, "Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full of artificial admirers... On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. However, true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine. Strong affections for God rooted in truth are the bone and marrow of biblical worship."²⁰⁸

The essential aim of this study is to connect parables' influence with the creative process of the songwriter to invoke self-reflection, which should always be a mark of spirituality.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ John Piper, "Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist," Multnomah Press, 1996, 81.

²⁰⁹ N. Hudson, 2001, 'Pentecostalism, past, present and future: Interview with Walter Hollenweger', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 21, 41.

Chapter Summary

Matthew 11:15 expressed how vital it was for Jesus' audience to hear with their heart and embrace the truths of the kingdom of God²¹⁰. His stance, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," gave Him the platform to teach the Word of God that judged those who sat among Him.²¹¹ To illustrate the truth, Jesus used parables²¹² A parable is as a metaphor (or simile) drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." Parables hold a tradition of consistently challenging how one lives.²¹³

As parables move from their original origins, the background and characters may change, but never the message. Parables address the topics of moral values to illustrate God's kingdom. In this case, one may choose a narrative in which they can relate and apply the parable.²¹⁴ For example, a story could offer an opportunity for a parable to illustrate messages such as forgiveness, celebration, pride, and entitlement. In the context of worship, the lyrics become the catalyst of the gospel. Lyrics that proclaim the gospel tend to promote salvation and God-centered worship. Songs that promote self-centered lyrics tend to result in horizontal worship that may present a consequence in temporary inspiration but spiritual malnourishment.

As stated before, Jesus intended to equip, train, and show the kingdom of heaven, but His parables were a tool to captivate His audience's imagination. Their imagination, their experience,

²¹⁰Sproul, R.C. "Introduction." Lecture. Accessed December 19, 2019.
<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/the-parables-of-jesus/introduction/>

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Sproul, *What Do Jesus' Parables Mean?* 3.

²¹³ Ibid., 4.

²¹⁴ Levine, Amy-Jill, "Telling Short Stories by Jesus," 2.

and the willing heart allowed them to hear interpretation.²¹⁵ Some parables pointed out sin and disruptive moral behavior while the kingdom parables did not. Jesus' unique artistry and abstract sequences provided a moment for self-reflection whereby the individual was able to apply His words with their experiences in conclusion with an interpretation. John R. Donahue suggests the best way to understand the parables is to view them as "a miniature Gospel."²¹⁶ Each parable is understood when heard in context with the theological emphases of the gospel in which it appears.

Songwriting is an avenue for self-expression, assessment, and a way to organize thoughts to influence thinking patterns.²¹⁷ Similar to the parable, the lyrics in the song mirrors the emotions, circumstance, and culture of the audience. To make beneficial decisions about the words woven into the song, the songwriter must embody knowledge about a wide range of cultures and confidence in discussing its value and merits.²¹⁸ They must communicate words that express symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences. Without this skill, songwriters may not be able to contextualize or communicate how environments influence experiences effectively. Through divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, the songwriter in the role of the theologian, and worship leader, can focus on lyrics that can embody the message of the Great Commission and invite the participating worshipers.

²¹⁵ Levine, Amy-Jill. "Telling Short Stories," 6.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ K. A Lindberg, 93–108.

²¹⁸ "What Is Cultural Capital?" *Cultural Learning Alliance*, 1 July 2019, culturallearningalliance.org.uk/what-is-cultural-capital/.

Success in songwriting is dependent upon the evaluation of peers, by peers, and the nature of the creative individual. In his study, Sawyer articulates that creators experience small insights accompanied by micro evaluations and hard work. These mini-insights only gradually accumulate to result in a finished work, as a result of a process of hard work and intellectual labor of the creator.²¹⁹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's explorations of contextual and social nature of creativity²²⁰ can aid the songwriter in their preparation as it will provide a different point of view on creativity regarding the process of writing and social interaction.²²¹

These elements presented in this research aids the study of songwriting as it attests to how the lyrics, using metaphors, could create a personal opportunity for self-reflection. In the context of worship leading, self-reflection is essential for spiritual growth. As the songwriter writes with these elements at the core of their purpose, one will find that it may transform the perspective of their identity as they align themselves with God's Word and mission.

²¹⁹ R.K. Sawyer, "Explaining Creativity," 139.

²²⁰ Long & Barber, 560.

²²¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Because parables and songs have been such an essential tool within cultures and faith communities, it is vital to understand how the two intersect in their purpose and as a creative art form to convey the truths of God's kingdom. This qualitative descriptive study explores how parables told by Jesus can aid as a method in the creative process of songwriting. Literature is abundant in parables and interpretations, but little research on how the structure of the parables can assist the songwriter in their creative process. Furthermore, the structure of songs and the structure of parables have innovative tools of comprehension and figurative language infused within their fabric. In this research, parables were analyzed for essential qualities and features that can be a strategy during the songwriter's creative process. Hymns were then analyzed to confirm the intersection of their purpose to aid in evangelism.

Research Design

The qualitative historical research design identifies the structure, the purpose, and characteristics of parables to aid the songwriter in their writing process to support and emphasize God's Kingdom during worship services. This research design addresses emerging questions through inductive data analysis while also making interpretations of the meaning of the data.²²² Furthermore, qualitative research involves intentionally selecting and examining documents to understand the research problem and research questions.²²³ Finally, the use of qualitative historical design is useful for examining historical data through a theological theoretical lens.

²²² John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 4.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 185.

This lens supports the idea that Biblical parables can aid the songwriter in the creative writing process and strengthen their self-efficacy in ministry to formulate interpretations that will provide a call for action or change.²²⁴

The process for conducting this qualitative historical study began with identifying a problem and formulation of a hypothesis. Next, research questions were formulated. Data was gathered and reviewed, and sources were analyzed for validity, credibility,²²⁵ and applicability.²²⁶ After the examining process was complete, the remaining data were analyzed and interpreted, which led to conclusions and recommendations regarding the research questions.²²⁷ Limitations of the study were identified.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

RQ1. What are the Characteristics of parables that could be influential in evangelism and discipleship?

RQ2. In what ways could parables be influential in songwriting?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses questions are:

H1: The characteristics of parables are influential in evangelism due to literary comparison, crisis, resolution, and application to the Kingdom of God.

²²⁴ Creswell, *Research Design*, 62.

²²⁵ Ibid, 109-201.

²²⁶ Ibid., 192.

²²⁷ Ibid., 193-199.

H2: Parables are influential in songwriting in terms of storytelling, personal application, and event sequence.

Process of Gathering Data

The process of gathering data began first with identifying, selecting, and a review of relevant sources that addressed parables told by Jesus. Next, various journals, articles, books, and dissertations were examined. They provided a summary of interpretation and analysis, which were reviewed because they assisted in providing clarity of structure, interpretation, and purpose of intent to evangelize. These sources document parables, songs, theories, and arrangements that will aid in the conclusion of defending the notion of parables being an aid to the songwriter within the faith community. Utilizing this information helped with examining how the structure of these parables coexisted with the culture and elements of narratives.

After a thorough study of biblical parables and worship songs, sources were gathered and examined regarding the biblical and theological foundations of content structured to evangelize. The primary source for the findings of the parables aspect of the study was the Bible itself. In addition to scriptural teachings, examples, references, which provided synthesis and commentary regarding these teachings and examples, were also gathered and reviewed. The study of theological foundations focused primarily on sources that addressed biblical ecclesiology, particularly that of the church as a family and as the Body of Christ as worshipers. John Piper writes:

“On the other hand, emotions without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine. Strong affection for God rooted in truth is the bone and marrow of biblical worship.”²²⁸

²²⁸ Matt Boswell, *Doxology & Theology* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2013), 46.

Next, sources were gathered and reviewed regarding worship songs/hymns that exhibited success in a quality similar to the parables told by Jesus. These songs were chosen as examples of the influence that parables can have on songs and songwriting, as shown in its detailed lyrics, application of kingdom principles and communicating the message of redemption that resides within the core of the gospel. Sources examined addressed the timeline, historical and cultural environments, and characteristics of these fifteen songs:

- *The Only Way*
- *Jesus Take the Wheel*
- *What Love Really Means*
- *He Wants It All, Just Like You*
- *Peanut Butter and Jelly*
- *The Little Girl, Don't Cry*
- *Three Wooden Boxes*
- *Alabaster Box*
- *Good Faithful Servant*
- *Lord, Help Us Forgive*
- *Love Like You*
- *Our Good Father*
- *Gracious Invitation.*

Relevant documents that explain and address songwriting principles, compelling storytelling, including the interaction of generations with various backgrounds, were also gathered and studied. After examining sources that describe and explain the characteristics of

parables and songwriting, the researcher addressed the connection between cultural relevancy and how it may influence evangelism in worship and ministry practice of the songwriter.

The final step in the process of gathering data involved gathering and reviewing new sources; it addressed the songwriter's specific characteristics and needs within the current church. Because every church is different, some of the research is recent and is continually evolving. However, multiple studies were researched and reviewed that revealed the core of the Great Commission in lyrics among a post-modernism generation in need of hope, evidence of the kingdom of God, and an opportunity to assess and apply personal experiences. Also, sources examined addressed how this type of engagement would grow a church.

Analysis of Sources

Sources were analyzed appropriately for the validity and accuracy of this study.²²⁹ Various data sources were compared, identified, and built a coherent justification among the common emerging themes throughout the process of collecting and reviewing information.²³⁰ As evidence, multiple sources combined were identified as valid and credible.²³¹ However, when evidence from a single source was not convincing with the data from other sources, the source was immediately considered questionable and unreliable and therefore eliminated from consideration.

²²⁹ Creswell, *Research Design*, 192-201.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

Analysis of Data

As Creswell explains, to make sense of the research, the data must be considered systematically and methodically, much like peeling back an onion, layer by layer.²³² The first step in the peeling process involved organizing the sources of information into general categories.²³³ Next, the sources were read, examined by category, and notes were taken on each source's contents. From the research, a coding system was utilized to identify and organize themes that were evident in the study. The references were reviewed again according to thematic groupings, and common threads were identified within each thematic category.

Synthesis and Interpretation of Data

After sources were identified, gathered, reviewed, coded, and organized, thematically, the findings of each specific area of research were examined in light of their relationship to the other interpretation of the results as a whole, rather than individual data points. For example, research regarding the theme of evangelism within the worship ministry was in conjunction with the intent and motive of Jesus teaching parables. These findings were examined through the lens of biblical teachings regarding parables that expressed creativity and evangelism. Finally, Jesus' intent within teaching parables were combined with songwriting to build a case that both are influential regarding evangelism. The interpretation of this data states that reflection is the core of one's spiritual growth and that it should be the intent of worship songs.

²³² Creswell, *Research Design*, 190.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 192

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of research conducted to examine and connect the intentional motives of parables with the songwriter's creative process of writing within the music ministry. The first research question and hypothesis addressed speaks to the characteristics of parables that are influential in evangelism and discipleship. Also, to address the second research question and hypothesis, findings offer how the structure of parables is instrumental in songwriting in terms of storytelling, personal application, and event sequence.

Characteristics of Parables that Can Be Influential in Evangelism:

Being Intentional

While teaching parables, Jesus was clear on His intent. In Matthew 11:15, He stated, "He that hath ears let him hear." His statement of purpose was clear to those who wanted to know and commit to a life of following kingdom truths and standards. They were the ones, by faith, who forsook everything they knew to follow Christ's teachings. A great example of this is the disciples. In Jesus' role as the mediator and the high priest, knowing the sinful nature of the world enables Him to teach the Word of God. In return, He was redeeming or judging those who sat among Him.²³⁴

Jesus used a biblical parable, a short and simple story to illustrate moral (and or) spiritual lessons.²³⁵ One of the parables' primary operations is to inform one about the kingdom of God using God's Word through imagery and central thought.²³⁶ He was confident in His delivery and

²³⁴ R.C. Sproul, "The Parables of Jesus." Lecture. December 12, 2019.

²³⁵ *Narrative and Parable*. SES, March 5, 2018.

²³⁶ Nicholas Cacciatore, "Preaching Jesus Kingdom Parables: Connecting Interest And Provoking a Search for Truth." PhD diss., St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, 2003. Accessed July 22, 2019.

His message, assuring that He intended to aim for the heart and imagination. His delivery allowed His audience to connect with a sense of relevancy to make a personal choice and application to believe that He was Christ. With the opportunity to apply a personal application of faith and belief, it resulted in some receiving salvation and not perishing.²³⁷

As mentioned in Chapter 2, as a form of indirect communication, parables do not flow to an expected conclusion. The intent is not to share a solution, but instead, reveal contrary or unexpected aspects of a dilemma that invite comparison and complicate and deepen the experience.²³⁸ In John 10:11, Jesus expresses how His adversary, in the role of the thief, came to destroy, but He came to give life more abundantly. In verse 11, He stated that He was the good shepherd who gave life to the sheep. Jesus was intentional about sharing the gospel; therefore, the parables were intentional about introducing the Gospel. It was in Matthew 13:11-13 that Jesus uncovered the mysteries of this parable:

He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12) Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13) This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.”

Within this side discussion, Jesus was informing the disciples that this parable and many more that he would share, centered on the kingdom of God. He also shared that He had to tell these parables to fulfill the prophecy spoken by Isaiah.

²³⁷ Jhn. 3:16 (KJV).

²³⁸ Bullough, 154.

Receiving the Word of God

The Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:1-23)

Jesus uses the relationship between the farmer and the field to represent a relationship. The sower is the individual carrying the Word (the seed) of God, and the plowed field represents the people.²³⁹ However, the places the seeds fell illustrate conditions of the individual's heart. Some fell on a path, rocky area, shallow soil, thorny ground, and good soil, in some scenarios, the circumstances that were not conducive to the growth of the seeds ended in unfortunate events. The fowls of the air ate some seeds, some scorched to death by the sun, and some grew but were not sustainable because it was not deeply rooted in the soil.

To complete the tale of the parable, Jesus continues to explain. In verse 19, a person hears the Word but does not understand it; therefore, Satan snatches what truth they held in their heart. In verse 20-21, He states that the seed and the rocky ground represent the person that hears the Word and receives it with joy; however, there is no perseverance when the person is faced with the persecution and trials from accepting the Word and becomes offended. Verse 22 states that the thorny ground represents a person who receives the Word, but the cares of life and the deceitfulness of the wealthy choke it out of them. In verse 23, the seed that fell in good soil, grew to be fruitful because they heard the Word and understood the Word.

This parable should be classified as a fourfold similitude because it has the potential to be in all four categories of written parables.²⁴⁰ Its presentation of three unsuccessful and one successful sowing may interrupt such analysis. Depending upon the individual and interpretation,

²³⁹ John F. MacArthur, *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 26.

²⁴⁰ Klyne Snodgrass. *Stories with Intent*, 146.

this parable is a similitude with the belief of daily occurrence.²⁴¹ It is a parable with the belief of a specific and unusual instance. For others, it is merely allegorical.²⁴²

“The Kingdom of Heaven”

The Parable of the Wheat and Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30)

Jesus related the Kingdom of heaven to a man that sowed good seed. Then He describes the diabolical plan of the enemy by planting weeds among the wheat while he was asleep. In verse, 27-29, there is a dialogue between the sower and the servant. The servant asked the sower if he planted the weeds, and the sower explained how an enemy did it. In verse 28, the servant provides a solution, but the sower states, in verse 29, to let them grow together, so during the harvest, they can burn the weeds.

To complete the tale of the parable, Jesus explains, in verse 37, the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. In verse 38, the field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds symbolically represent the people of Satan, and in verse 39, the enemy who sows them is Satan. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. In verse 40-43, Jesus says the weeds will be pulled and burnt in the fire, which is symbolic of the end of the age. In verse 41, the Son of Man will send out his angels and weed out of His kingdom, everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into hell, and the righteous will reign in the kingdom of heaven with the Father.

²⁴¹ Snodgrass. *Stories with Intent*, 146.

²⁴² Ibid.

This parable is also a reminder that the Christian should be neither surprised nor unaware that evil is active at the same time that God's reign is.²⁴³ The kingdom comes with limitless grace in an evil world.²⁴⁴ This biblical message always leaves the audience with tension; however, though believers cannot be tolerant of evil, the destruction of all evil is not our task. This parable's type is considered a double indirect narrative. It has a developed plot and is introduced by an explicit statement that the kingdom is like the process narrated in the parable.²⁴⁵

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Luke 13:18-19)

Jesus also uses "The Parable of the Mustard Seed" to illustrate the growth and wide range of God's Kingdom. In verse 31, the Sower plants a mustard seed, which is very small. In verse 32, it grows and becomes great in the garden. It also becomes home to the fowls of the air.

This parable explains that when following Jesus' ministry, all that is required is faith this small to produce and yield tremendous results.²⁴⁶ The Mustard Seed Parable is a challenge to human perception and judgment about smallness and significance.²⁴⁷ Believers should not doubt what God can do or does with small beginnings. Also, the believer recognizes that Jesus' Word and work are what made the kingdom's entrance.²⁴⁸

²⁴³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 214.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 228

This parable's type is a similitude. This parable does not have a developed plot; however, it does present an analogy between the mustard seed and plant between the present and future kingdom.²⁴⁹

The Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)

In verse 31, Jesus spoke another parable relating the yeast to the kingdom of heaven. He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

Confidence and hope are the results of this parable. The presence of the kingdom is an essential aspect of Jesus' message.²⁵⁰ The whole point of this parable is that the kingdom is already underway and cannot be stopped. This parable illuminates the challenge to human perception and judgment about smallness and significance.²⁵¹ As people give over to God's purpose, small beginnings still come into fruition.²⁵² God seems to be about the business of leavening and magnifying what seems insignificant.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 216.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)

In verse 44, Jesus explained, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

In the effort of seeking great value, one’s sense of value may be skewed. A relationship with God is essential because it teaches one to aim higher.²⁵⁴ This parable states that one cannot be focused on possessions and do justice to God’s kingdom.²⁵⁵ This parable urges one to abandon original thoughts of life and focus entirely on their relationship with God and His kingdom.²⁵⁶ The gospel that one proclaims is the treasure, and their lives must express the ultimate value found in Christ.²⁵⁷ This parable is a similitude. It has a sequence, but there is no developed plot.²⁵⁸

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)

In verse 45, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for beautiful pearls. In verse 46, when he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Jesus uses this particular parable to illustrate how one should think about their soul when they find out the worth of God’s kingdom.²⁵⁹ In this parable, the pearl is the prized relationship with Jesus. When one accepts Him, one must give up

²⁵⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 247.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 236.

²⁵⁹ R.C. Sproul, *What Do Jesus Parables Mean?* (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2019), 31.

worldly possessions and habits.²⁶⁰ This parable is a similitude. It has a sequence, but there is no developed plot.²⁶¹

The Parable of the Net (Matthew 13:47-50)

In verse 47, it compares a net to the kingdom of God. Jesus reveals, “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. In verse 48, when it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. In verse 49, Jesus expresses that this is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come, separate the wicked from the righteous, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In this parable, judgment is an essential part of the Christian message. One should never forget that without justice, there is no need for salvation.²⁶² With Jesus and His Kingdom, what one do matters? Sorting and accountability are part of the kingdom and its future.²⁶³ This type of judgment speaks to God’s wisdom, not humans condemning one another.²⁶⁴ The primary concern of this parable is that separation will occur.²⁶⁵ Evil, and those who sinned, are excluded from

²⁶⁰ Sproul, *What Do Jesus Parables Mean?* 31.

²⁶¹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 248.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 492.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 491.

God's kingdom.²⁶⁶ This parable was Jesus' confirmation that darkness, at its appointed time, will be eradicated.²⁶⁷ This parable is a similitude. It has a sequence, but there is no developed plot.²⁶⁸

The Parables of the Tenants

In Matthew 21:33-34, the landowner planted a vineyard, built a wall, and a wine press. He decided to rent his land and move, but he agreed that he was going to receive his product when harvest came. In verse 34-37, He did just that. He sent his servants to the tenants, which they harmed; however, the landowner sent more servants than the first. The tenants repeated their vicious actions. The landowner decided to send his son because he felt as though the tenants respected his son. In verse 38-39, the tenants planned and carried out their actions to kill the son and take his inheritance. In verse 40, Jesus asks them a question, leaving room for them to think. The audience began to tell Jesus that the landowner was going to kill the tenants and continue to rent the land to others. In verse 42-43, Jesus explained to them the scriptures and told them that the kingdom of God would be taken away from them, but given to those that produced fruit. Anyone who falls on the cornerstone will be broken into pieces, but those who it lands on will be crushed.

Jesus told this parable as a foreshadowing of His death and rejection. He explained how the prophets were sent to encourage the people to repent and receive salvation but were killed by religious leaders who were intimidated by the law of grace and love. Jesus, being sent by His

²⁶⁶ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 491.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 482.

Father, represented this law, and because he challenged the religious leaders, He was rejected and murdered also.

This parable type is a double indirect narrative—this parable between image and reality.²⁶⁹ Like other parables, specifically the Two Sons and Isaiah 5, the prophet elicits self-condemnation from the hearers through the aid of an image.²⁷⁰

Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24)

In verses 16-18, Jesus began to tell a parable about guests who received an invitation to a great banquet. The guests invited began to make excuses on why they could not attend. In verse 21, the servant returned and reported to his master what his guests had said. This report made his master angry, so he ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the disabled, the blind and the lame. In verse 22-23, the servant suggests to the owner that he can invite more because there is plenty of room. The owner gives the servant permission to get more guests. In verse 24, he tells the owner none of the guests he initially invited will taste or enjoy the banquet.

The summary or meaning of this parable is in verse 15. An individual at the table, who heard Jesus’ previous statements states, “Bless is the one who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God.” This parable type is a double indirect narrative. This parable stays true to being a narrative, but it holds the reader accountable to see its intent.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ MacArthur, *Parables: The Mysteries of God’s Kingdom*, 276.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 299.

Neighborly Love

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

In verse 30, Jesus tells of a man who was walking down the street of Jerusalem, robbed, and left for dead. He speaks of a priest who saw the man but stepped on the other side of the road, avoiding the situation. In verse 32, the Levite did the same as the priest before him. A Samaritan saw the man and began to nurse and dress the wound. In verse 34-35, the Samaritan places the man on the donkey and asks the Innkeeper to watch him. In verse 36, Jesus asked the law expert, “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” In verse 37, the man answers, “the man who showed him mercy,” and Jesus tells him to go and illustrate the same love.

This particular parable illustrates Matthew 5:44, which states, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” These professionals, men of standards, should have known to love their neighbor (Leviticus 19:18).²⁷² When the priest saw the wounded average person, he switched sides showing no compassion. When the Levite saw the man, he, too, switched sides showing no compassion. However, when the Good Samaritan was walking the road, he also saw the man in his condition and was compelled to take care of him. This scene is epic because Jews and Samaritans resented each other ethnically and religiously.²⁷³ This Samaritan treated the man’s wounds, provided food and comfort, and even gave two denarii to the Innkeeper to take care of him.²⁷⁴ In verse 36, Jesus asked the man the question of who he thought was more of a neighbor

²⁷² MacArthur, *Parables: The Mysteries of God’s Kingdom*, 83.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

to the man who fell among the thieves. The man answered in verse 37, “The man who showed mercy.” The purpose of this parable is to illustrate that mercy shown is one of the best attributes one can show their neighbors. This parable type is a single indirect narrative. It is like a rabbinic parable as it uses an example in story form and a “Go and do” theme.²⁷⁵

Justification by Faith

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

In verses 9-12, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed a prayer that exalted himself while the Tax Collector prayed a prayer asking God to have mercy on him. In verse 14, Jesus explained that those who exalt themselves would be humbled, and those who are humble would be exalted. In this parable, Jesus illuminated the character of the Tax Collector’s prayer, which made the parable more effective. At this moment, his reputation did not matter. The audience saw the Tax collector humbled in the presence of God. His humbleness was the leading cause for God accepting his prayer over the Pharisee’s (Luke 18:14).²⁷⁶

Jesus’ message is simple. All who are determined to establish a righteousness of their own will fail, those who submit to the righteousness of God are graciously justified by him (Rom.10:3-4) God alone is the “justifier” of the one who has faith in Jesus.²⁷⁷ This parable is a single indirect narrative. It is a comparison of opposites by juxtaposition.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 338.

²⁷⁶ MacArthur, *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 106.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁷⁸ Snodgrass, 462.

Ask, Seek, Knock and It Shall Be Given

The Parable of the Friend at Midnight: Jesus Teaching the Disciples How to Pray

(Luke 5:5-13)

In verse 5-6, Jesus gives a scenario that perhaps a friend comes to his friend whose family is in bed and request to borrow food for a houseguest that has arrived to lodge. In verse 7, the friend, who is in bed, tells his friend that he will not get up because his family is sleeping. In verse 8, Jesus explains the friend resisted by the obligation of friendship, but because of the hour and the shameless request, the friend had. In verse 9-10, Jesus tells them that if they ask, they shall have, if they seek, they shall find, and if they knock, the door shall be open. In verses 11-12, he asked the fathers within the audience a question about their loyalty to their children. Then He tells them in verse 13, that it is no different from the Father giving them the Holy Spirit due to request.

This parable type is interrogative. The parable provides a long list of questions, but then verse 8 provides an answer and assurance. Though Jesus provided the interpretation for the listeners, it is up to the individual that hears this parable to interpret it and explain its relevance.²⁷⁹

Judgment, Heaven, and Hell

The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 12:13-31)

In verse 19, Jesus explains the social status and circumstance of both Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man was dressed in fine purple linen, and Lazarus was poor and covered in sores. In verses 22-24, the two died. Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom while the rich man

²⁷⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 437.

was buried and sent to hell for his consequence. When the rich man looked up, he saw Lazarus with Abraham, so he begged Abraham to allow the beggar to dip his finger in the water and touch the tip of his tongue so that it could cool his tongue. In verses 25-26, Abraham informs the rich man that he had gotten what he deserved. Abraham tells the rich man that his request is impossible due to a barrier that exists between the inhabitants of hell and heaven.

The Bible does not paint the rich man as some murderer or monstrous creature; however, it did illustrate how selfish and self-centered he was to ignore Lazarus, the beggar.²⁸⁰ Another point to consider is that the rich man wanted relief and wanted Lazarus to send word to his five siblings to come to such a place of torment.²⁸¹ Both were impossible because of the barrier between the three worlds. The only way that his siblings would be saved was by hearing and receiving the Word of God.²⁸² Also, in verse 31, Abraham responds that if his family members do not listen to Moses or the Prophets, they are not going to listen to someone that rises from the dead.

The Parable of the Fig Tree (Luke 21:29-36)

In this parable, Jesus was telling the disciples to watch the growth of the fig tree and how it buds in the appropriate season. In verse 33, He tells them that when they see the signs of the end, it is near. In verse 34, Jesus says to them that they do not know the time nor the hour that the age will end so that they would always be prepared or preparing, but He was confident that

²⁸⁰ MacArthur. *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 169.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 171.

His Words would last forever. This parable type is a double indirect narrative. It has a developed plot without resolution. The preceding material assists in indicating the parable's intent.²⁸³

The Parable of the Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-69)

Jesus uses the growing seed to relate to the Kingdom of God. In verse 27, Jesus explains after the man has scattered the seeds, it has become baffling to him because, throughout the normality of his day, the seeds are sprouting and growing. In verse 28, Jesus explains the process of how the earth takes care of this seed in its process of development. This verse infers that God supplies every need. Verse 29, As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it because the harvest has come.

This parable type is a similitude. It is an extended simile that depicts recurring events, mostly in the present tense, for the sake of an analogy. There is no developed plot.²⁸⁴

Be Faithful, Be Ready and Be True

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)

In verses 1-5, the audience has the understanding that there are ten virgins. The virgins went to a wedding and preparing for the arrival of the groom. Five of these brides are wise because they were prepared and had oil for their lamps.²⁸⁵ The other five were foolish because

²⁸³ Snodgrass. *Stories with Intent*, 225.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁸⁵ Sproul. "What Do Jesus Parables Mean?" 72.

they were unprepared and had lamps but no fuel to fill it. In this parable, the virgins represent the congregation in church,²⁸⁶ the groom represents Jesus, and the oil represents the Holy Spirit.²⁸⁷

While preparing, the hour grew late, and the bridegroom was slow to come. So they became tired and drowsy. In verses 6-9, there was a great cry at midnight that proclaimed the coming of the groom. The five fully prepared, trimmed their lamps, filled it with oil, and were prepared to meet the groom. The other five begged to use some of their prepared oil; however, the instruction by the wise to the foolish virgins, that they go to buy their oil.

In verse, 9-12, while the five foolish virgins were purchasing their oil, the bridegroom came, and the five foolish were unable to attend the wedding banquet because the doors are now closed. When the five foolish asked to go in, the groom answered them and told them that he did not know them. This scene is significant in interpretation. The five foolish knew the bridegroom; they called his name twice, showing a valued level of intimacy.²⁸⁸

In verse 13, the final thought is to be ready because no one knows when the bridegroom is coming. Jesus will not claim those who do not possess what they profess.²⁸⁹ This parable type is a double indirect narrative. It uses an analogy of readiness to participate in the celebration of a wedding to join in the coming Kingdom.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Sproul. "What Do Jesus Parables Mean?" 72

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 74.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 75.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 77.

²⁹⁰ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 505.

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

In verses 1-18, Jesus compares man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them to the kingdom of heaven. The master gives one servant five bags of gold, to another two bags, and the third one bag, each according to his ability. The man who had received five bags of gold went and worked to gain five bags more. In verse 17, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. The last man who had received one bag went and hid his money. In verse 19-23, the master returned and found that the first two servants had increased their gold bag. He congratulated them and told them that he would put them over more things. In verse 24-26, the master finds out that the servant did not do as the others. He hid his back. The master became furious and said you would have done better if you had put it in the bank and let it gain interest. In verse 28-30, the master tells the servant to give his bag to the one with ten. Then he tells him that those who have a lot will gain more and those who do not, considered worthless and thrown in darkness with the ones who will be gnashing their teeth.

In this parable, the wealthy man that goes on a journey represents Christ.²⁹¹ He expects his servants to take care of his affairs and act as good stewards. Jesus never intended to give them a task outside of their character.²⁹² The first two set out to work and were very fruitful. For the two servants' hard work, Jesus expanded their authority, and their reward was heaven, a place of honor and exaltation (Luke 12:35-37; 44; 19:17-19; John 12:26).²⁹³ The third servant who did nothing claimed to be paralyzed by fear, but in reality, his heart struck with wicked laziness.²⁹⁴ He did not respect his master as the others. His reward resulted in (Matthew 25:30)

²⁹¹ MacArthur, *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 135.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 137.

“darkness” and “gnashing of teeth”²⁹⁵ Just like the five foolish virgins, the third servant was unprepared for his master’s return.²⁹⁶

The Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant (Matthew 24:42-51)

In verse 42, Jesus explains that it is wise for one to be ready because no one knows the hour or the time of day that He will be coming back. In verse 43, Jesus explains that if the owner of the house were ready for the burglar, it would have never gotten invaded. So one should also be prepared for the Son of Man. In verse 45, Jesus asked the question, “Who is the wise servant that the master trust to watch and feed the other servants?” In verse 46, Jesus tells the audience that it would be right that the master finds the servant doing well. Then he will give him all of his possessions. In verse 48-51, Jesus asked another question, “what if the master finds the servant being wicked and drinking? He then moves forward with his point by saying that if the master witnesses such action. He is going to cut him and place him in a place where people are weeping and gnashing their teeth.

Persistence in Prayer

The Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

In verse 1-4, Jesus expresses to the audience that men should always pray. He explains that there was a judge that did not fear God nor man; however, a woman approaches him and needs his help. Her urgency troubles him to avenge her. In verse 5, he agrees to avenge her

²⁹⁴ MacArthur, 137

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 138.

because of her persistence. In verses 7 and 8, Jesus tells the audience that God will avenge His elect who cry day and night.

This parable is proof of the second coming of Jesus. It is to encourage believers to continue to pray faithfully and persistently.²⁹⁷ Luke 18:8 is key to this parable: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” The widow in this parable represents all true Christians- the elect who are at the mercies of the Judge. The heavenly Judge is perfect and righteous and hears those who call his name.

The parables are evidence of the gospel and the kingdom of God. Jesus intended to capture those who were hungry for the truth, even the Pharisees. Still, they were not acceptable to the new covenant nor the idea that the kingdom had already come to redeem humanity. Jesus aimed for those who were low and humbled, such as the fisher folks of Galilee.²⁹⁸ The parables were for those who heard with their heart, wanting to be free from their sins. Matthew 5:3 states, “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God.” Matthew 5:6 states, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” This parable is a double indirect narrative.²⁹⁹ It encourages persistent prayer and for the humble not to give up but to constantly cast their cares on Jesus, who is the ultimate Judge.

Meditation and Reflection of Spirituality and Salvation

As Jesus taught the parables, He intended to provoke self-examination and subsequent repentance to keep others from assuming He was condoning self-glorification and pride, but He

²⁹⁷ MacArthur. *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, 135-186.

²⁹⁸ Smith and Dean. *The Parables of The Synoptic Gospels*, 80.

²⁹⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 449-450.

aimed to teach humility.³⁰⁰ The Holy Spirit was sent after the glorification of Jesus (John 7:39) to empower the church for the ongoing mission of God in the world. Worship focused on the glory of God, can prepare the church to participate in the mission. Ephesians verses 2-4, gives an illustration of how uniquely gifted church and community members offer their gifts as building up and encouraging others in their gospel to transform lives.³⁰¹

The transformation of our lives, like our Salvation, is grounded in our work, effort, and God's grace. Salvation and sanctification are gifts of grace through faith, which are illustrated through songs the songwriter writes.³⁰² God's people learn to center the intention of the church's mission on God's glory when the church enters into worship through Christ and focuses on God's glory through the mediation of the Spirit. This God-centered focus will help sustain a believer's contribution to God's work and mission for a lifetime.³⁰³

Words within songs help the audience with the task of meditations and reflecting, which is key to spiritual growth. This dynamic is only possible because worship, mediated through the eternal priesthood of Jesus. Only in Jesus, the great high priest is worship perfected as an acceptable offering, holy and pleasing. Only in union with Christ by the Spirit is the integrity of the worshipper possible. Only in the righteousness of Christ given by faith through God's grace is one made right with God. Only through the Savior's work, not our experience of that work is salvation accomplished. Only through the mediation of Christ Jesus in His Priestly office is a worship made worthy of God's glory.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Robbie Castleman. *Story-Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 116.

³⁰¹ Boswell, 141.

³⁰² Ibid., 113-114.

³⁰³ Ibid., 115.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 113.

As demonstrated in the parables for teaching standard living through faith, one can conclude that the ethical life is a response to God. First, Peter 2:9-12, discusses the identity of God's people and the need for integrity and ethical behavior to reflect the very identity:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; so that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly, beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:9-12)³⁰⁵

In conclusion, the behaviors of an individual reflect the worshippers' relationship with God.³⁰⁶

Characteristics of Parables that Can Be Influential in Evangelism:

Parables are Relational

Relational evangelism is what Christ modeled for the churches to follow in every generation. He reached out to the lost souls, and through His interactions with the public formed relationships. By Christ's example, believers are to evangelize within their communities by cultivating relationships (Matthew 2:13-17). Lecturer and commentator John Stott state, "We are to go as He went, to penetrate human society, mix with unbelievers and fraternize with sinners. Does not one of the Church's greatest failures lie here? We have disengaged too much. We have become a withdrawn community. We have become aloof instead of alongside. Christ Jesus, the

³⁰⁵ Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship*, 124.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

“Master Evangelist,” was alongside the people wherever He went. He was not disengaged, to the contrary!”³⁰⁷

Jesus traveled in Galilee and interacted with people with the intent to reveal Himself as God incarnated ³⁰⁸. The more Jesus reached out to the public through parables, sermons, and words of wisdom, the more they gained knowledge of Him. Such wisdom became treasures to the people causing the multitudes to grow daily. Therefore, capturing the skill to develop a relationship is an element that one must harness to build communities and neighborhoods enormously in faith and blessings as they hear what Christ does for them.³⁰⁹ By relational evangelism, unsaved neighbors have an opportunity to listen to testimonies that point them to a relationship with God through Christ.

Relational evangelism allows the Church to display the splendor and beauty God has bestowed on it to the non-Christians and unbelievers in our communities and neighborhoods.³¹⁰ Relational evangelism leads to relationships, which in turn create opportunities to share Christ. The scripture, 2 Corinthians 4:16, says, “that though the outer person is decaying, yet the inner person is being renewed daily.” Through relationships, non-Christians and unbelievers have an opportunity to come into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and behold the beautiful work of the Holy Spirit.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Kofi Peter Effa. "Training Members of Family Life Center Church (FLC) in Relational Evangelism," Order No. 13879570, Biola University, 2019. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, 51.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 59.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 71.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

³¹¹ Ibid., 71.

Aldrich eloquently explains,

“Christians need to think through what the gospel can mean to a searching heart. Besides delivering from a literal hell, it may put his marriage back together, it may end his overpowering guilt, it may free him from a burdensome habit, it may bring peace, it may bring financial stability, it may solve many of his interpersonal problems, it may be the key to coping with illness, it may be the solution to a tragedy or some great loss, it may be the key to resources for living. Possibly it will be all of the above. That is good news! Some facet of the gospel matches every basic human need or motive.”³¹²

Relational evangelism is rooted in Scripture. The Bible gives a hint of it in one of the greatest commandments, which is to love God and thy neighbor. The historical moments of Jesus’ teaching parables highlight a characteristic of outreach and love. Jesus provided for us the same commission that the disciples had received. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), Christ promised that He would accompany those in every task.

In this biblical passage, The Parable of the Sower: Matthew 13:3-9, the Lord Jesus teaches His followers that by reaching out to non-Christians and unbelievers and building relationships with them, they (Christians) are sowing seeds in the farmland of lost souls.³¹³

Earley and Wheeler give their input on the parable of the Sower,

“To see many people come to Christ, we need to tell many people about Christ. The more we tell, the more souls saved. While this approach to farming seems wasteful, it exemplifies the importance of the harvesting process. To ensure a bountiful harvest, the ground has to be broken (plowed), and the seed has to be spread (planted).”³¹⁴

This parable is an illustration of effectively accomplishing evangelism through relationships. The land of building relationships with neighbors should be cultivated and plowed—seeds of friendship, kindness, caring, and hospitality, sown for Christ. Christ modeled

³¹² Effa. *Training Members of Family*, 57.

³¹³ Effa, 63.

³¹⁴ Dave Earley and David Wheeler. *Evangelism is . . . How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 97.

the type of evangelism, and people who heard His words with their hearts believed in Him.

When Christians practice relational evangelism in their communities and neighborhoods, the parable of the sower, a theological foundation for relational evangelism, has become a reality.³¹⁵

Jesus uses the parable of “The Lost Coins” (Luke 15:8-10) to urge the Church to reach out to those who are lost. In this parable, Jesus shows the importance of the woman attached to a single silver coin, even though she had ten pieces altogether. It did not matter to her if she had nine pieces left. Lighting a lamp to look for the lost coin helps one to infer that it was in the evening, symbolizing darkness or sin.³¹⁶ She swept the house and carefully, yet tiresomely searched for the coin. She never gave up! Her tenacity anticipates the joy that Jesus talks about in Luke 15:10. Jesus states that God and the angels are filled with great joy over the one sinner that repents. It takes time, effort, and persistence to cultivate and build relationships with people. The woman in the parable exhibited these traits! The Psalmist declares, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). The Apostle Paul also proclaims, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

One of the many attributes of parables is that it carried the same message but often told within a reshaped or different background. As mentioned before, it was important for Jesus to appeal to His audience and culture. Two more parables that are similar to the same message is the “Lost Sheep” and “The Prodigal Son.” From the illustration of the events within these parables, one can sense that Jesus understands the carnal nature and its attraction to sin.

However, there is a resonating revival and spiritual awakening when the sheep returns and when

³¹⁵ Effa, *Training Members of Family*, 63.

³¹⁶ Effa, 65.

the fathers accept the repentant back. The faith community practices relational evangelism that should include sound doctrine and sound theology to be fruitful in the kingdom.³¹⁷ Proverbs 3:1-8 declares that the wisdom and ways of God are sure to bring nourishment to those who believe.

Characteristics of Parables that Can Be Influential In
Being Tools of Evangelism
Missional and Transformational

The purpose of the church, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, is to be a light to the world. Romans 12:2 reminds the believer that they are not to conform to the world but renewed in mind to do God's will. Through evangelism, the church can renew and restore those who seek redemption by illustrating the elements and benefits of Salvation.³¹⁸ Father Emmanuel Clapsis states that God is a "God -in- Mission." Acting through His church, He reveals the plan for the world. Through her (the church), He calls for creation to share freedom from bondage to decay and to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21).³¹⁹ Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer convey, "The Word of God is always the best place to begin because it speaks with clarity and truth than anything we can muster up. The Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit thousands of years ago and still speaks to us today."³²⁰

³¹⁷ Effa, "Training Members of Family." 65.

³¹⁸ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, "Approaching the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities for Evangelism." Greek Orthodox Theological Review 42, no. 3 (Fall, 1997): 445.

³¹⁹ Calivas, "Approaching the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities for Evangelism," 445.

³²⁰ Ed Stetzer, and Thom S. Rainer. *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*. Nashville, TN: B & H Pub., 2010, 12.

The essential activity of the church is Evangelism, and this can be expressed in many ways. One of many is worship. For the worship to be effective in this context, it must also project a theology of truth. As the songwriter, he or she gets the opportunity to be the voice and representative for the “Church in Mission.” Through words and ideas written on paper, they have the chance to heal the members of the world that may be in distress, thus, captivating their imagination about the truths of God. Psalms 107:20 testifies that God sent His Word and that it did heal. The author in Psalms 120:20 paints a vivid picture of the author crying to the Lord in distress only to receive relief of whatever was ailing them spiritually.

One fact about buildings is that over time they need renovation. There is not much need to change, but a little tweak here or there can add value to its purpose and reasoning for being in place. This principle also relates to the musical ministry within today’s church. Historically, hymn and songwriters have written beautiful materials without question, projected biblical and sound truth. To continue this momentum, songwriters should continue to engage in biblical and historical examples to remain an active missional ministry and transformation for the current culture.

When Jesus taught parables, He had every intention of providing an opportunity for His audience to reflect on their spirituality and renovate parts of their life to make them heirs of God’s kingdom. Colossians 1:12 expresses thanks to the Father, who has qualified us as heirs to the kingdom. Just as Jesus utilized the parables to be missional and transformational, the songwriter should aspire to this same idea by reflecting such elements within their writing. The songwriter must harvest the principle of and project that the gospel is the transformation mechanism. It has the power to change, the world, the church, and individuals.

Creative Way of Conveying Biblical Truth and Theology

Jesus conveyed His messages in parables in such a way that His words resembled art upon a canvas. He connected culture, He contextualized culture, and He respected culture and gave illustrations of Himself within the culture. The role of the songwriter accomplishes such tasks of vulnerability also within the church regarding the gospel. The Bible and its text should not stifle the creativity of the songwriter, but it should invoke a beauty of expression about the kingdom of God and biblical truths. Creativity is an echo of God's creative work.³²¹ Life is shaped by the individual's creative impulse, including worship.³²² Whether we are talking about language, architecture, visual culture, or music, it all flows from the original spark God has given us as image-bearers when thinking about creativity.³²³

The songwriter should not assume that those in our churches should be personally pursuing a more fruitful biblical theology by eagerly "examining the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).³²⁴ As worship leaders and servants of Christ Jesus, songwriters have the great responsibility to command and teach content and principles they have studied. For example," the words of faith and the sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6) and to delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it "day and night" (Ps. 1:2).³²⁵ Boswell makes this statement to confirm the essential job of the songwriter (or worship leader), "Teach the Bible in your lyrics. Right

³²¹ Matt Boswell. *Doxology & Theology*, 140.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*, 140.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

theology will spill over into rich doxology.”³²⁶ Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).³²⁷

Worship leaders must inform listeners about the living and active Word of God that is “sharper than any two-edged sword...” (Heb. 4:12). A deficient view of the Word of God results in an inadequate view of God.³²⁸ Songwriters should never neglect to teach it to their congregations, for if they do, they will be missing the opportunity to evangelize. The Word of God:

- Reveals the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 40:5).³²⁹
- It is a lamp to their feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).³³⁰
- Is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrew 4:12).³³¹
- Keeps us from sinning (Ps 119:11).³³²
- It is at work in the believers (1Thess. 2:13).³³³
- Is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).³³⁴

³²⁶ Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*, 49.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

- Makes one wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:16).³³⁵
- Makes the man of God complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).³³⁶
- Will stand forever (Isa.40:8).³³⁷

Story Telling, Personal Application and Event Sequence

When one studies the parables, one may notice the length of the parable in size and content. The significance of length is based on how much of the background information the songwriter or author wants to present. The songwriters must ask themselves, “how much background information is needed to support and capture the attention of the audience?” “What central message needs to be conveyed to inflict upon the individual a decision to make a change or learn a lesson?” By observation, most parables present a problem, an action, and a consequence that gives a principle.

During the discussion in Chapter 2, on the subject of storytelling, one should reflect upon highlighted elements to further the discussion in this chapter. These highlights include stories that carry messages, but often change the background to match the condition of the audience;

³³⁵ Boswell. *Doxology & Theology*, 53.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

stories illuminate some aspects of the human experience³³⁸; stories include dialogue that gives character to the role of the character.³³⁹

To catch the essence of storytelling in songwriting, I'm going to refer back to a quote from J.L. Fischer states,

“ To classify as a folktale, a narrative must be dramatic in the sense that it states some sort of conflict which is eventually resolved. A single conflict and its resolution constitute an episode. Each tale, or in a complex tale, each episode contains two principal opposed parties. There is always at least one defined object of conflict, which may involve the relationship either between the parties or between their access to a third party or some material object. At least, in the major episode of the take, the conflict must be developed before being resolved. Without some development, a simple statement of conflict and its resolution does not constitute a tale; at the most, such a statement might be a tale summary or a nucleus, which might eventually be elaborated into a tale.”

To capture the imagination, the songwriter must create a background that identifies with the audience. Prior knowledge is necessary to be authentic in presentation and intentional in content for the desired result. The desired result in this context is Salvation. For example, Jesus knew that His audience was skilled in the land and knew about how to take care of the earth. They knew the necessary procedures of how to lay down the seeds. Taking that information, Jesus used culture to construct the background of His parables and used it to shape metaphors into a figurative language to illustrate the state of the heart in regards to one receiving the Word of God.

This illustration is where observation, reflection, inspiration, and creativity become beneficial to the songwriter's process. The songwriter must observe and experience conflict as well as joy. In these experiences, they become conscious of the processes and elements of the organization that constitutes an experience. This consciousness gives them an idea of the range

³³⁸ Leland B. Jacobs, "What Is a Story?" *Teaching pre-K-8*. 21, no. 6 (March 1, 1991), 92.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

and climax of feelings that occur in life. For example, it is easy for someone to write from the perspective of the son, who has witnessed his brother's warm welcome back home, knowing the sequence of his mischief while away from home, if one has personally experienced it.

Observation and experience are what sparks inspiration, which in return allows the songwriter to create.

A large part of self-understanding is searching for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of one's life. The process is the continual development of new life stories for yourself.³⁴⁰ Bullough describes parables as having "trenchant elements of metaphorical imagination," meaning that the metaphors used are edgy and grab the individual's attention and imagination.³⁴¹ Within these parables, the metaphors used spoke to the perspective of worldviews, and they supported the truth. This truth, attached to the metaphor within the parable and experience, provides an inescapable tension in which comparisons made, and positions revealed.³⁴² As Lakoff and Johnson observe, "Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will fit the metaphor, which in turn reinforces the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent".³⁴³ By their very nature, parables challenge the metaphors that sustain both truth claims and direct action and thereby invite reconsideration of beliefs and commitments. The result, potentially, is the generation of new ways of seeing and understanding.

³⁴⁰ G. Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, 232-233.

³⁴¹ Bullough, "Parables, Storytelling, 159.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Praise, Pentecostals, and Worship

In current culture, music addresses itself to the listener and therefore elicits subjective participation, expressing sentiments and, at the same time, engendering them.³⁴⁴ In the church, music offers a contextual approach as an alternative to the architectural method. Architectural method, in this context, expresses a set systematic approach to curated music forms of the traditional church such as the Gregorian Chant and traditional Hymn writing structure. For example, the architectural design of the Gregorian chant was monophonic, rhythmically free-flowing,³⁴⁵ and devoid of secular influences.³⁴⁶ As well, the Traditional Hymnal writing consisted of block-chord progressions, four to five stanzas and a repeated chorus, rhyme schemes and metrical patterns.³⁴⁷ Sacred architectural designs notwithstanding, the current contextual approach deals with philosophical axioms or sayings that illustrate and challenge the knowledge that man has built and shaped concerning God. This contextual approach of music provides a framework to express theology and theological expression because of its ability to synthesize God's attributes in worship through experiential lyrics.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ B. Reymond, 2001, 'Music and Practical Theology,' *International Journal of Practical Theology* 5(1), 84.

³⁴⁵ "Gregorian Chant Notation," *Gregorian Chant Notation*, Accessed August 03, 2020, http://traditionalcatholic.net/Tradition/Information/Chant_Notation/index.html.

³⁴⁶ "Library: Gregorian Chant: Back to Basics in the Roman Rite," *Library: Gregorian Chant: Back to Basics in the Roman Rite | Catholic Culture*, Accessed August 03, 2020, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=7366>.

³⁴⁷ Viscount North America, "Hymn History & Structure," *Viscount*, June 05, 2017, Accessed August 06, 2020, <https://www.viscount-organs.com/hymn-history-structure/>.

³⁴⁸ M. Nel, 2016, *Attempting to Develop a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, 4.

Forms of musical expression, including suggestive, symbolic worship, choruses, and verbal praise practices, serve to trigger a close sense of God's presence.³⁴⁹ Gause suggests that Pentecostal worship consists of three defining elements: rapture, rapport, and proleptic, a distinction that proves valuable to describe different aspects of worship.³⁵⁰

Rapture describes the quality of ecstasy that is innate to Pentecostal worship. It consists of overwhelming surges of praises that cannot be suppressed without quenching or grieving the Spirit.³⁵¹ Among these ecstatic expressions are forms of prophetic speech, including prayer, song, and glossolalia encased in the universal language of music.³⁵² During these experiences, worshipers in their perception remain fully aware. Still, they lack full comprehension, accompanied by a heightened sense of the Spirit's presence and the understanding of hearing the voice of God mediated by the Spirit.³⁵³ This perception coincides with what Frith describes, where singing creates temporality that gives participants a sense of self through cultivating their emotional responses in the engagement with the songs that transcend the mundane and take people out of themselves.³⁵⁴

Rapport, in relational terms, is a union of love between the worshiper and God. All those who worship him, resulting in fellowship through the Spirit with God and the people of God.³⁵⁵

³⁴⁹ R. Jaichandran & B.D. Madhav, 2003, 'Pentecostal Spirituality in A Postmodern World,' *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6(1), 58.

³⁵⁰ R.H. Gause. *Living in the Spirit: The way of salvation*, rev. edn., CPT, Cleveland, OH, 2009, 28.

³⁵¹ M. Nel, 4.

³⁵² R.A. Mills, 1998, 'Musical Prayers: Reflections on the African roots of Pentecostal Music,' *Journal of Practical Theology* 12, 125. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/096673699800601207>

³⁵³ Gause, 30.

³⁵⁴ S. Frith, 2007, *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected essays*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 263, 278.

The believer is not passive in this experience; rather, the believer and God experience a profound rapport in such intimacy that the believer becomes fully responsive to the Spirit.³⁵⁶ Writing about music's tremendous ability to shape the local and trans-local community, Ingalls explains that worship can create new worlds and construct new identities.³⁵⁷ Contemporary worship songs foster a community across racial, ethnic, and gendered lines that have an overtly eschatological and often Christological focus,³⁵⁸ reminding of the temporal and limited nature of institutional boundaries, theologies, and cultic expressions.³⁵⁹

Proleptic refers to a spiritual return to the historical events of redemption where worshipers re-experience the biblical events in unity with the church, transcending space and time, combined with anticipation in which the believer is transported via the Spirit in the final glory of the kingdom of God.³⁶⁰ Believers do not only look forward but also participate in the King's consummate glory in His kingdom.³⁶¹ Already they experience in part what they will encounter in full with Christ's eschatological return. In this way, music establishes boundaries, including social norms, leading to an insider or outsider boundary resulting in meaning-making and identity construction among participants.³⁶²

³⁵⁵ Gause, *Living in the Spirit*, 30.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁵⁷ M.M. Ingalls, 2008, 'Awesome In This Place: Sound, Space, and Identity in Contemporary North American Evangelical Worship,' PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 299.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 303.

³⁵⁹ Frank D. Macchia, "Tongues as a Sign: Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience." 1993), 74.

³⁶⁰ M. Nel, 4.

³⁶¹ Gause, 31.

³⁶² Ingalls, "Awesome In This Place," 289.

Song Choice and Lyric Analysis

In essence, worship songs and hymns that mirrored the characteristics of Jesus' parables, were selected for this study. These songs not only could be a template for a songwriter, but they also proved to be influential in evangelism and having the notion of developing disciples. In the modern-day Pentecostal church, one will find a variety of musical tastes and selections that are masked in various genres. Pentecostals are known for a repertoire that includes songs that are characterized by being high spirited and congregational. Nevertheless, some songs contextualize the characteristic of embodying a prophetic message from the Holy Spirit, also known as sermonic selections. The selected songs chosen are sermonic examples for the evangelical songwriter being that it compliments evangelism and charismatic worship culture in modern-day third wave Pentecostal churches. Therefore, some songs (*One Way, Just Like You, The Little Girl*) may not be conducive for congregational singing; however, congregations in the Pentecostal church are known to utilize solos and sing selected choruses as a sermonic tool to illustrate the movement of the Holy Spirit. This point demonstrates the freedom and choice that they exhibit in their services.

These songs were selected to change the course of how traditional Pentecostal churches interpret the move and deepened theology of the Holy Spirit within a traditional set style of worship. In context, these songs proved to be God-centered, proved to exhibit the use of storytelling as a tool of relate-ability, proved to have elements of evangelism, proved to utilize forms of figurative language and metaphors, and proved to have lyrics that preached the gospel message.

Furthermore, these artist-driven worship songs and hymns showed the potential to aid and be influential as a template for the songwriter's creative writing process. These songs express the need for the songwriter to employ cause and effect. It also gives the listener the freedom to

breathe emotionally in space, given by music, the permission to be their guiding light to self-reflection. This space of self-reflection, through lyrics, helps the listener form words that assist them in dialogue with the God who initiates, Jesus; He mediates and the Holy Spirit that facilitates.

The lyric analysis provides the suggestion of such songs as a potential asset to a worship set. Still, also it shapes and defines the consideration in the writing process. The analysis does not suggest songs to be therapeutic or a suppressor of deep emotional issues. Still, it does indicate that the songwriter should be skilled and aware of the creativity along with theology within songs that aid the listener to start the dialogue of salvation and the Gospel.

1. *The Only Way*³⁶³

By: Yolanda Adams

Everywhere that I go
I must tell everyone of the Savior I know
And the things He has done
He's the truth and the life and there's no other way to the Father, but by Him.

Long ago, when He knew you'd be out on a limb. He gave His life for you, can't you live yours for Him? He's the Almighty rock, and you won't have a firm foundation. Unless you're built on Him

You can't live without Him
You can't move without Him
You can't breathe without him; you can't think about doing one thing without Him.

You can't do without Him
'Cause there's no you without Him
Because He's the only way
The only way

³⁶³ Yolanda Adams. "The Only Way," Track 1 on Through The Storm, Diadem Music Group, 1991, Compact Disc.

There's no other name.
Than the name of Jesus
There's no one
Than the one who frees us
There's no other way
No other way

What more can I say?
He's the only way
The only way

Lyric Analysis

I chose to analyze this song as an example and concerning the short parables that are told by Jesus in Matthew.³⁶⁴ The second stanza highlights a unique story that relates to a message that Christ had a believer in mind. The songwriter within this song displays strong elements of evangelism. It shows phrases that are transformational, missional, and relational. This song, in stanza two, has two lines that function as a story, which, from observation from other parables, still constitute a parable or short story.

With the sentences "Long ago when He knew you'd be out on a limb," start a story that causes the audience to reflect upon their own life's story. The second sentence, "He gave His life for you, can't you live yours for Him?" negates the story of the past and provides a blank canvas for the individual to think and mentally see themselves in the future as a recipient of Christ. Figurative language in this composition is plentiful. For example, "All-mighty Rock," "Firm Foundation," "out on a limb." Every stanza mentions Jesus concerning the gospel because of this; the song preaches, witnesses, and evangelizes to a congregation.

³⁶⁴ Matt. 13:33; 44; 45-46; 52.

2. *Jesus Take The Wheel* ³⁶⁵

By: Carrie Underwood

Verse 1

She was driving last Friday on her way to Cincinnati.
On a snow-white Christmas Eve
Going home to see her Mama and her Daddy with the baby in the backseat.
Fifty miles to go and she was running low on faith and gasoline
It's been a long hard year.

Verse 2

She had a lot on her mind, and she didn't pay attention.
She was going way too fast. Before she knew it, she was spinning on a thin black sheet of glass.
She saw both their lives flash before her eyes. She didn't even have time to cry.
She was so scared
She threw her hands up in the air.

Chorus

Jesus take the wheel
Take it from my hands
Cause I can't do this on my own
I'm letting go
So give me one more chance
Save me from this road I'm on
Jesus take the wheel.

Verse 3

It was still getting colder when she made it to the shoulder
And the car came to a stop.
She cried when she saw that baby in the backseat sleeping like a rock.
And for the first time in a long time. She bowed her head to pray. She said I'm sorry for the way.
I've been living my life.
I know I've got to change. So from now on tonight.

Chorus

Jesus take the wheel.
Take it from my hands.
Cause I can't do this on my own.
I'm letting go.
So give me one more chance.
Save me from this road I'm on.

³⁶⁵ Carrie Underwood. "Jesus Take the Wheel," Track 4 on *Some Hearts*, Arista, 2005, Compact Disc.

Oh, Jesus, take the wheel.

Bridge

Oh, I'm letting go.

So give me one more chance. Save me from this road I'm on.

From this road, I'm on.

Jesus take the wheel.

Oh, take it, take it from me.

Oh, wow, ohhhhh.

Lyric Analysis

This song is excellent to observe for an aspiring writer. It displays all of the elements discussed, and it exemplifies what a productive songwriter should keep at the forefront for uses, such as worship. It has a God-centered message. The character in the story realizes that she needs help in navigating through life and its overwhelming sea of troubles. This story immediately takes the audience on an imaginary journey with the characters. It also conjures up feelings and parallel circumstances that are relatable. The songwriter embodies elements of evangelism within the song. Its core objective is not to solely tell someone about Jesus and His redemptive power, but it illustrates it powerfully.

The use of figurative language and metaphors are indeed present. The painted picture of the drive home and the black ice can be dark, cold, and slippery. This literary illustration speaks metaphorically to moments in life that may put one on a path to danger. In the song, the car stopped, and the child sleeping is symbolic of God's Grace. These lyrics can preach as they obtain the Gospel message. The song can conclude that the songwriter took on the personality of someone dealing with life, the experience of death. Still, on that same day, God's grace permeated their heart, allowing the individual to worship and give their life over to Christ.

3. *What Love Really Means*³⁶⁶

By: J.J. Heller

Verse 1

He cries in the corner where nobody sees
He's the kid with the story no one would believe. He prays every night, "Dear God, won't you please. Could you send someone here who will love me?"

Chorus

Who will love me for me
Not for what I have done or what I will become
Who will love me for me
'Cause nobody has shown me what love
What love really means

Verse 2

Her office is shrinking a little each day
She's the woman whose husband has run away
She'll go to the gym after working today
Maybe if she was thinner
Then he would've stayed
And she says:

Chorus

Who will love me for me?
Not for what I have done or what I will become
Who will love me for me?
'Cause nobody has shown me what love, what love really means.

Verse 3

He's waiting to die as he sits all alone
He's a man in a cell who regrets what he's done
He utters a cry from the depths of his soul. "Oh, Lord, forgive me. I want to go home."

Then he heard a voice somewhere deep inside. And it said
"I know you've murdered, and I know you've lied. I have watched you suffer all of your life. And now that you'll listen, I'll tell you that I..."

³⁶⁶ J.J. Heller. "What Love Really Means- Love Me" Track 3 on *When I'm With You*, Stone Table Records, 2010 Compact Disc.

Chorus 2

I will love you for you
Not for what you have done or what you will become
I will love you for you
I will give you the love
The love that you never knew

Lyric Analysis

This song's strength in storytelling, tone of redemption, and love in the chorus, equates to scriptures such as John 3:16. In this song, the songwriter presents three characters with different issues that are all wanting to experience the perfect love of Christ. This theme is in the chorus. Not only does it recapture the overall message of the song, but it also gives the songwriter the chance to be the voice of Jesus. The song is God-centered and can be interpreted in the first stanza when the young man is praying. This prayer sets the tone for the whole song. The mention of God, in the beginning, is essential. If it were not there, the song could be misleading as to who it was referencing.

The songwriter uses the stories of three characters as a tool of relatability. The songwriter gives perspectives from a young man, a woman, and a man that articulates that they are aware of cultural differences that are universal and, at times, interrupt the congregation's lives. It relates to how life's overwhelming circumstances and issues of loneliness, marriage, and the legal system aid in one realizing that they are not equipped to handle such heavy burdens, but can overcome by way of the Savior.

It has elements of evangelism. A part of evangelism is sharing the gospel with people using testimonies as tools to confirm the redemptive power of Jesus. For this song, the songwriter wanted to share the value of God's love. The use of figurative language and metaphors such as "kid in the corner that cries," "the lady whose office is shrinking," and "the

man that is locked up in a cell" are descriptions of emotional isolation and crisis. The songwriter uses this level of anguish to illustrate the reasoning for the character's need to seek a higher love. The lyrics preach and obtain the Gospel message. It teaches about God's unforsaken love and forgiveness.

4. *He Wants It All* ³⁶⁷

By Forever Jones

Verse 1

There's a voice that cries out in the silence.
Searching for a heart that will love Him.
Longing for a child that will give Him their all
Give it all, He wants it all.
And there's a God that walks over the earth.
He's searching for a heart that is desperate.
And longing for a child
That will give Him their all
Give it all, He wants it all.

Chorus

And He says love me, love me with your whole heart
He wants it all today
Serve me, serve me with your life now
He wants it all today
Bow down, let go of your idols
He wants it all today [x3]
He wants it all

Verse

And there's a God that walks over the earth.
He's searching for a heart that is desperate.
Longing for a child that will give Him their all
Give it all, He wants it all.

And he says love me, love me with your whole heart. He wants it all today.
Serve me, serve me with your life now. He wants it all today.
Bow down, let go of your idols
He wants it all today [x3]

³⁶⁷ Forever Jones. "He Wants It All" Track 2 on "Get Ready," EMI Gospel, 2010 Compact Disc.

He wants it all.

All of you, more of you
He wants it all today, oh oh oh oh.
All of you, more of you
He wants it all today, oh oh oh oh
All of you, more of you
He wants it all today, today, today.
He wants it all today [x2]
So give it all

Verse

There's a voice that cries out in the silence
Searching for a heart that will love him
Longing for a child that will give him their all
Give it all
He wants it all.

Lyric Analysis

In this song, the songwriter captures the personality and perspective of God. In doing so, the song becomes very personal and God-centered. It allows the individual to hear and internalize God's perspective with phrases such as "Serve me and Let go of your Idols." It uses a story as a tool of relatability. By observation, the songwriter wrote the song intending to inform the audience about God, who is willing to initiate a relationship with anyone who wants it. I find it harmonious to the very intent that drove Jesus' ministry, which was to tell the world about His Father's plan of redemption and restoring the Kingdom.

The song introduces God walking the earth, searching for someone to love Him so that He can use his or her life of service as a light to the world for the growth of the kingdom. This search carries a foreshadowing tone or a future endeavor in evangelism. Before sharing the Gospel, one must be a recipient of God's love to articulate and share His benefits. The usage of figurative language and metaphors "Longing for a child that will give Him their all"

automatically places the individual in the role of a child. It puts the individual in a place of assurance of adoption into a holy family. It gives the individual confidence in knowing that their soul is going to be watched over and nurtured.

These lyrics can preach as they obtain the Gospel message. The songwriter is expressing that God is accepting those who want to change. Which affirms Jesus' intent for telling the parables which was highlighting He that has an ear let him hear.

5. *Just Like You*³⁶⁸

Lecrae (feat. J. Paul)

J-Paul:

I just wanna be like you,
Walk like, talk like, even think like you
The only one I could look to
You're teaching me to be just like you
Well, I just gotta be like, like,
I just gotta be like you

Verse 1

Dear, Uncle Chris, Uncle Keith, Uncle Ricky,
Before the Lord get me, I gotta say something quickly
I grew up empty since my daddy wasn't with me shoot,
I wasn't picky I'd take any male figure
You
Stepped in at the right time,
It's 'cause of you that I write rhymes
You probably never knew that
I loved the way you used to come through,
Teach me to do the things that men do
True,
You showed me stuff I probably shouldn't have seen,
But you had barely made it out your teens,
And took me under your wings
I wanted hats; I wanted clothes just like you,
Lean-to the side when I rolled just like you

³⁶⁸ Lecrae. "Just Like You" Reach Records, 2010, MP3.

Didn't care if people didn't like you,
You wanna bang, I wanna bang too
Skyline, pyru
You would've died; I would've died too,
You went to prison, got sick, lost your pops,
Yeah, I cried too
You never know who's right behind you,
I got a little son now, and he do whatever I do
But it's something deep inside you,
That tell you it's gotta be more than doing what other guys do,
They had nobody there to guide you
But I followed your footsteps, and this shouldn't surprise you,
You realize you, you realize you, you,
Yeah, I just wanna be like you

Chorus

I just wanna be like you,
Walk like, talk like, even think like you
The only one I could look to,
You're teaching me to be just like you Well, I just gotta be like, like,
I just gotta be like you

Verse 2

Now all I see is money, cars, jewels,
Stars
Womanizers, tough guys, guns, knives, and scars,
Drug pushers, thugs, strippers, fast girls, fast life
Everything I wanted and everything I could ask life
If this ain't living and they lied well,
Guess I married an old wives' tale
Wow, fail
I don't know another way to go,
This is the only way they ever showed
I got this emptiness inside that got me fighting for approval 'cause I missed out on my daddy
saying, way to go,
And get that verbal affirmation on know how to treat a woman,
Know how to fix an engine, That keeps the car running
So now I'm looking at the media, and I'm following what they feed me,
Rap stars, trap stars,
Whoever wants to lead me
Even though they lie, they still tell me that they love me,
They say I'm good at bad things at least they proud of me

Chorus

I just wanna be like you,

Walk like, talk like, even think like you
The only one I could look to
You're teaching me to be just like you
Well, I just gotta be like, like,
I just gotta be like you
(Like you)

Verse 3

I was created by God but I ain't wanna be like Him,
I wanna be Him
The Jack Sparrow of my Caribbean
I remember the first created being,
And how he shifted the blame on his dame
For fruit, he shouldn't have eaten
And now look at us all out of Eden,
Wearing designer fig leaves by Louis Vuitton
Make believing
But God sees through my foolish pride,
And how I'm weak like Adam, another victim of Lucifer's lies
But then in steps Jesus,
All men were created to lead, but we needed somebody to lead us
More than a teacher,
But somebody to buy us back from the darkness,
You can say He redeemed us,
Taught us that real leaders follow God,
Finish the work 'cause we on our job
Taught us not to rob
But give life love a wife like He loved the Church,
Without seeing how many hearts we can break first
I wanna be like you in every way,
So if I gotta die every day
Unworthy sacrifice
But the least I can do is give the most of me
'Cause being just like you is what I'm supposed to be
They say you came for the lame,
I'm the lamest
I made a mess, but you say you'll erase it,
I'll take it
They say you came for the lame,
I'm the lamest
I broke my life, but you say you'll replace it,
I'll take it.

(I just gotta be like, be like, be like
Be like, be like, I just gotta be like, be like
I just gotta be like you...).

Lyric Analysis

This song relates to the parable of The Wheat and Tares. It displays a young male in a world of good and evil. The songwriter starts the song with his testimony to find himself in society by observing the men in his life who were products of unstable environments that introduced them to uncertain circumstances. This articulation of reality is powerful and can provide connection instantly in its vividness of description. Toward the end of the song, it becomes personal and God-centered. The use of the testimony serves as a story that some young men could use as a tool of relatability as it discusses the thirst for finding purpose in a world of chaos. Toward the conclusion of the song, there is a tone of evangelism. The songwriter begins to share how accepting Jesus made him a better person. The use of figurative language and metaphors help paint the picture of the songwriter's environment and emotional state. These lyrics obtain a powerful testimony and share the Gospel message.

6. *Peanut Butter and Jelly*³⁶⁹

By: The Truthettes

Verse 1

You know God is still working miracles
Because He blessed the soul of a little boy at church
A short while ago
As the preacher read the scriptures
Of how God can save and heal
He begins to feel the spirit
And the presence of God in his little soul
He couldn't explain what was happening to him
And all he knew that it was something warm and
something wonderful
And after service, he walked up and gave the preacher

³⁶⁹ The Truthettes. "Peanut Butter and Jelly" Track 2 on Take It To The Lord In Prayer, Malaco Records, 1983 Compact Disc

his hand
And told him, through your message
My soul was really blessed today
Now later when he got home still feeling good from the
service
He told his mother
He said mother; I'm so hungry
I'm so hungry right now
She said son, come into the kitchen
And I'll fix you a sandwich
She reached in the cabinet
And took out the peanut butter and jelly
He said mother; you really don't understand
She looked at him and said
What is it son, what is it that I don't understand?
He said mother, what you don't understand is this
right here.
He told her.

Chorus

I don't want no peanut butter and jelly
(He said) I don't want no peanut butter and jelly
I want my soul to be saved
I want my soul to be saved

Verse 2

He said mother I heard the preacher say
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteous
for they shall be filled.
He also said suffer little children to come unto me and
forbid them not.
For such is the kingdom of Heaven
He looked at her with tears in his eyes
Now, momma, you see, that you fixed the wrong food
for me
He told her.

Chorus

I don't want no peanut butter and jelly
(He kept on saying) I don't want no peanut butter and
jelly
I want my soul to be saved
I want my soul to be saved.

Lyric Analysis

This song holds a unique experience about a child's process of salvation. The theme is relevant to Luke 18:15-17, and it discusses the humbleness of a child's heart. The songwriter chose to write from a child's point of view concerning salvation and conviction. The song states biblical references in the form of the character's reflection to illustrate how the scripture pricked the young boy's heart. From the intro of the song until its end, the song is God-centered. This child's innocence and eagerness to be next to God's heart is an emotion that those converted will recognize and remember upon reflection of their own story. It has the power to influence someone who is not entirely convinced about the redemption power of Christ. The Word of God permeating a child's heart shares that the kingdom of God is not only for adults. Using the peanut butter and jelly sandwich, created a child-like tone simply because most children will not forsake a PB&J sandwich. For the child to refuse the sandwich for Jesus and salvation, he showed how hungry he was for the saving of his soul. This whole song has the potential to preach the gospel. It illustrates a child ready to give his life over to Christ.

*7. The Little Girl*³⁷⁰

(feat. Alison Krauss and Dan Tyminski)

Verse 1

Her parents never took the young girl to church
Never spoke of His Name
Never read her His Word
Two non-believers walkin' lost in this world
Took their baby with them, what a sad little girl

³⁷⁰ John Michael Montgomery. "The Little Girl," Track on The Best of John Micheal Montgomery, Rhino/Warner Records, 2000, Compact Disc.

Verse 2

Her daddy drank all day, and Mommy did drugs
Never wanted to play, or give kisses and hugs
She'd watch the TV, and sit there on the couch
While her Mom fell asleep, and her Daddy went out
And the drinking and the fighting just got worse every night
Behind their couch, she'd be hiding, oh what a sad little life

Verse 3

And like it always does, the bad just got worse
With every slap and every curse
Until her Daddy, in a drunk rage one night
Used a gun on her Mom, and then took his life
And some people from the city took the girl far away
To a new Mom and a new Dad
Kisses and hugs every day

Verse 4

Her first day of Sunday school, the teacher walked in
And a small little girl stared at a picture of Him
She said, I know that man up there on that cross
I don't know His name, but I know He got off
Cause He was there in my old house
And held me close to His side
As I hid there behind our couch
The night that my parents died.

Lyric Analysis

This song gives a perspective of what salvation means to a child and its practical explanation of Christ's initiation of relationship in verse 4. From observation, the songwriter was not ashamed of explaining the child's stressful life. This explanation and series of unfortunate events left an unsuspected end of a Christ-centered tone. The songwriter needed to paint a picture and then, in the end, reveal that Jesus was taking care of the little girl the whole time during these unstable circumstances. This song is effective because the background embellishments

leave the audience unaware of the girl's state of mind. Just like in parables, this story leaves room for several assumptions and interpretations.

During the song, some would consider it is not God-centered because of the vivid description of the girl's home life. What makes this song effective is the fact that Jesus was introducing himself to the little girl the whole time by taking care of her. This song is another story that conveys that salvation is not just for the old but for the young. The songwriter seems to want to connect with anyone who may be experiencing this type of abuse. Through this song, the songwriter illuminates a conversation that adults want to avoid. This song indeed uses a story of relatability. This songwriter captures and shares the experience as if they were evangelizing face to face to a younger group that God can strengthen one amid a situation. There is not much figurative language, but the vividness in the description is compelling. The lyrics alone are powerful in sequence and content and hold a tear-jerking surprise at the end that releases tension.

8. *Don't Cry*.³⁷¹

By: Kirk Franklin

Why do you cry?
He has risen
Why are you weeping?
He's not dead

Why do you cry?
He has risen
Why are you weeping?
He's not dead

He paid it all on that lonely highway (hey)
And his anointing I can feel.
He shed his blood (oh oh oh)
For my transgressions (oh oh oh)
And by his stripes

³⁷¹ Kirk Franklin. "Don't Cry," Track 11 on *Rebirth*, GospelCentric Records, 2002, Compact Disc.

We are healed

Why do you cry?

He has risen

Why are you weeping?

He's not dead

So as you go through life's journey (journey)

Don't you worry, lift up your head

Don't you cry

(oh oh oh)

Stop your weeping

(oh oh oh)

He has risen

He's not dead

Don't cry

Wipe your eyes

He's not dead

(oh oh oh oh)

Don't weep

He's not asleep

Jehovah

He's not dead

(oh oh oh oh)

Don't cry

Wipe your eyes

He's not dead

(oh oh oh oh)

Don't cry

Wipe your eyes

He's not dead

(oh oh oh oh)

Don't cry

Wipe your eyes

He's not dead

(oh oh oh oh)

Don't cry
Wipe your eyes
He's not dead

(oh oh oh oh)
Don't cry
Wipe your eyes
He's not dead

Lyric Analysis

In this particular song, the songwriter chose to tell the story from another perspective that is a biblical reference to the resurrection of Jesus. The songwriter seems to have compassion for the overwhelming circumstances that can affect how one feels about Jesus and His abilities to handle the very burdens that encompasses one. The constant repetition of the phrase "He's not dead" states the song's core meaning, which confirms the resurrection and gospel message. The songwriter built this song around the biblical text John 20:11-28. These lyrics cause the audience to reflect upon a moment where two angels were asking Mary why she was crying and then flashing forward to Jesus revealing Himself to her (v.15-16) and the disciples (v.19-28). Though the incident happened centuries ago, by faith, the believer will anticipate and one day relate to this supernatural change from flesh to Spirit.

As one reflects upon parables mentioned in this study, there were those that Jesus told that discussed the resurrection and rapture (eschatology). The songwriter captured the aftermath of Jesus' resurrection in a way that could evangelize. Evangelizing includes the introduction of hope and comfort. This song does both. There is a presence of figurative language such as "lonely highway" and "by His stripes," which references phrases and biblical scriptures (Isaiah 35:8 and Isaiah 53:5) that many may learn or can identify with based upon their personal

experience. These phrases make the song stand-alone and more effective for intimate parts of worship. The fact that the songwriter shares the gospel story and conveys Jesus' death on Calvary allows this song to minister by lyrics alone.

9. *Three Wooden Crosses*³⁷²

By Randy Travis

Verse 1

A farmer and a teacher, a hooker and a preacher,
Ridin' on a midnight bus bound for Mexico.
One's headed for vacation, one for higher education,
An' two of them were searchin' for lost souls. That driver never saw the stop sign.
An' eighteen-wheelers cannot stop on a dime.

Chorus

There are three wooden crosses on the right side of the highway,
Why there's not four of them, Heaven only knows.
I guess it's not what you take when you leave this world behind you,
It's what you leave behind you when you go.

Verse 2

That farmer left a harvest, a home, and eighty acres,
The faith an' love for growin' things in his young son's heart.
An' that teacher left her wisdom in the minds of lots of children:
Did her best to give 'em all a better start.
An' that preacher whispered: "Can't you see the Promised Land?" As he laid his blood-stained
Bible in that hooker's hand.

Chorus

There are three wooden crosses on the right side of the highway,
Why there's not four of them, Heaven only knows.
I guess it's not what you take when you leave this world behind you,
It's what you leave behind you when you go.

³⁷² Randy Travis. "Three Wooden Crosses," Track 1 on *Three Wooden Crosses*, World Label Entertainment, 2009, Compact Disc.

Verse 3

That's the story that our preacher told last Sunday. As he held that blood-stained Bible up,
For all of us to see.

He said: "Bless the farmer, and the teacher, an' the preacher;
"Who gave this Bible to my mamma,
"Who read it to me."

Chorus

There are three wooden crosses on the right side of the highway,
Why there's not four of them, now I guess we know.
It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you,
It's what you leave behind you when you go.

There are three wooden crosses on the right side of the highway.

Lyric Analysis

This song's strategic planning in sequence and the interplay between the characters' lives showcase the redemption of Christ's love through people. The songwriter took on the role of a historian. As a historian, he introduced the characters, the situation, and the thoughts in the chorus. "It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you; it's what you leave behind you when you go." This thought is essential to the song because it introduces one item's influence, beginning the spiritual journey for one of the characters. This bit of information clues the audience in on unique relationships developed. This song symbolizes that a relationship with Christ will direct and form relationships with others.

Several phrases within this song foreshadow it being God-centered. The phrases include "three wooden crosses," "heaven only knows," "blood-stained Bible" and "the preacher told last Sunday." These phrases serve as context clues to describe the character of the song. This song contains a unique story and can be relatable in the sense of others receiving Christ during a tragedy. The writer did not hide the intent of evangelism. The beginning states that two of the characters were searching for lost souls. Toward the end of the preacher's sermon, one can

conclude that the hooker received Christ, and the preacher was eager to share this testimony of his mother. The latter had experienced Christ's power of redemption. The figurative language involved in this song gave the audience insight that three crosses represented the three people who died and that there was an individual item left behind for a particular task. This song showcases evangelism and can handle the task of preaching the gospel.

10. "*Alabaster Box*"³⁷³

By: CeCe Winans

Verse 1

The room grew still
As she made her way to Jesus
She stumbled through the tears
That make her blind
She felt such pain
Some spoke in anger
Heard folks whisper
There's no place here for her kind
Still on she came
Through the shame that flushed her face
Until at last, she knelt before his feet
And though she spoke no words
Everything she said was heard
As she poured her love for the master
From her box of Alabaster

Chorus

And I've come to pour
My praise on Him like oil
From Mary's Alabaster Box
Don't be angry if I wash His feet with my tears
And I dry them with my hair
You weren't there the night He found me
You did not feel what I felt
When He wrapped His loving arms around me

³⁷³ Cece Winans. "Alabaster Box," Track 4 on *Alabaster Box*, Sparrow Label Third Party/Wellspring Gospel, 1999, Compact Disc.

And you don't know the cost
Of the oil in my Alabaster box

Verse

I can't forget the way life used to be
I was a prisoner to the sin that had me bound
And I spent my days
Poured my life without measure
Into a little treasure box
I thought I found
Until the day when Jesus came to me
And healed my soul with the wonder of His touch
So now I'm giving back to Him
All the praise He's worthy of
I've been forgiven, and that's why
I love Him so much

Chorus

And I've come to pour
My praise on Him like oil
From Mary's Alabaster Box
Don't be angry if I wash His feet with my tears
And I dry them with my hair
You weren't there the night He found me
You did not feel what I felt
When He wrapped His loving arms around me
And you don't know the cost
Of the oil in my Alabaster box

Lyric Analysis

This song's vividness and mental imagery evoke an emotion for self-reflection. The songwriter took the intimate scene in Luke 7:37-50 to create a song about the spirit of forgiveness done with humbleness and gratitude. It described a sinful woman that washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped His feet with her hair, and took the expensive oil in her alabaster box to be poured upon His head. This song looks like that of a parable, for it is using metaphors to arrest the listener and gives shape to sound theology that forgiveness corresponds with the

kingdom of God. Because the song is centered on this moment between the woman and Jesus, the song becomes, automatically, God-centered. The description of how the Pharisee perceived this woman (v. 39), made this song relatable to anyone who has witnessed this type of persecution. Much like a parable, this song has an interpretation. This moment was designed for forgiveness, gratitude and worship. The gospel is at the core of this song. Jesus came to redeem and to set the captive free. This song has lyrics that can stand-alone and preach the gospel.

Praise and Worship Songs for Children and Teens

One of the church's biggest concerns is connecting to the next generation. The church wants to connect with the next generation, but it wants it to be a generation that has spiritual strength, and that is theologically sound. Therefore, their songs may look slightly different and may sound a little different, but the lyrics still teach about the Gospel and are based on the scriptures. This type of implementation takes planning.³⁷⁴ It also requires all those involved to study the culture, the ages, and trends. Intergenerational worship is yet still a task for the church. A more accessible place to start is with music. The songs presented next are songs that writers of Sovereign Grace Music wrote for the upbuilding of the congregation as a whole. Their overall mission is to continue the steps of Charles Wesley and write songs of spiritual value.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Jamie R. Coates. *Join the Band: Benefits of Engaging International Volunteers in the Local Church Worship Ministry*. Doctoral Dissertation. Liberty University, 2019, 105.

³⁷⁵ "About." Sovereign Grace Music. Accessed May 3, 2020. <https://sovereigngracemusic.org/about/>.

11. *Good and Faithful Shepherd* ³⁷⁶

By Sovereign Grace

Verse 1

See the sheep with their shepherd
How he's guiding their way
Through the hills and the valleys
How he's keeping them safe
When the day turns to evening
He will make them lie down
Then he waits, and he watches
They can sleep safe and sound

Chorus

We have a good and faithful Shepherd too
Jesus, the One who calls to me and you
If we listen to His voice and follow where He leads
We'll come to know He's all we'll ever need

Verse 2

At dawn, the shepherd will call them
He knows the names of each one
They trust his voice when they hear it
And they eagerly come
If they happen to wander
Slip away all alone
He will look till he finds them
He will bring them back home

Verse 3

We've all strayed like the lost sheep
In the valley of sin
Disobeyed God's commandments
Runaway from our King
But Jesus gave up His glory
To seek and rescue the lost
To bring us back to His Father, He gave His life on the cross.

³⁷⁶ Sovereign Grace. "Good and Faithful Shepherd," Track 4 on Listen Up, Integrity Music, 2017, Compact Disc.

Lyric Analysis

This song is chosen for analysis because the songwriter writes from the parable in Luke 15: 4-7 about the faithful shepherd who searches for one sheep that left his flock of 100. In this song, it compares the relationship of the shepherd to the relationship of Jesus with the believer. It illuminates that though we are under His care, life has a way of distracting us and causing us to wander away from the flock. However, it also holds the power of projecting that Jesus loves us and will call us by our name to come back into the fold.

This song is God-centered. It demonstrates God's plan of His Son joining humanity only to die so that all of humanity can be redeemed. The song shares a story that compares the relationship between a system that all can see and know works well. With this comparison, it is easy to grasp the concept of how Jesus takes care of us as if we are wandering sheep. The figurative language paints the picture of the illustration given. It also helps the audience make a connection to relate to the story for understanding.

This song is rich with elements of evangelism. It explains how Jesus is willing to call each sinner by his or her name. His objective is to give us a chance to decide to reign with Him in the kingdom. It also articulates the gospel message. The song can stand- alone and preach the Gospel.

12. *Lord, Help Us Forgive*³⁷⁷

By: Sovereign Grace

Verse 1

A king once had a servant
Who owed him a huge debt

³⁷⁷ Sovereign Grace. "Lord Help Us to Forgive," Track 5 on Listen Up, Integrity Music, 2017, Compact Disc.

But the king forgave the servant
Sent him home, and yet

When a friend who owed the servant
A debt that was so small
He begged the servant for mercy
But he got none at all.

The king heard all about it. And was he ever mad!
He sent the servant to prison. And took away all he had

Said he had to stay there
Till he could pay it all back
'Cause the servant was forgiven
But forgiveness was what he lacked

Chorus
Our debt was satisfied
On the cross when Jesus died
And if we've been forgiven
It's gotta change the way we're livin'
How can we hold a grudge
How can we fail to love
Once we have known what mercy is?
Lord, help us forgive

Verse 2
Now, Peter came to Jesus
Because he was so confused
"If my brother keeps on sinning against me, what should I do?
I'm trying to be patient
I'm trying to be kind
Do I have to forgive him
The same thing seven times?"
Our sins were countless.

Like the sand on the shore
We should be grateful that the Lord
He's not keeping a score.

No—His love erased them
They washed away when
He hung and died on the cross
And paid the payment

Bridge

It can be hard to forgive
There's no pretending
But we've been changed by a grace
That's never-ending

Lyric Analysis

This song is chosen for analysis because it is an example of theological sound content set to music. The songwriter decided to write on the theme of forgiveness. This theme is in Matthew 18:21-35. Using the Word of God to write this song makes it more useful for a service as it reaffirms and influences spiritual growth theologically. The core of this song is God-centered. God, through His Son, Jesus has forgiven us, and as a result, we are to forgive others without penalty.

It utilizes the parable of the King and the Unmerciful Servant to help the audience connect and relate regarding like circumstances within one's life. The theme of forgiveness displays one of the many elements that should be shared while evangelizing. This parable holds true to Ephesians 4:32, which states, "to be kind, tenderhearted and forgive one another even as God forgave us for Christ's sake." The figurative language within the song helps to illustrate how deep in sin one was before Jesus forgave them, washed them, and redeemed them. The songwriters wrote this song to be able to teach and grow the spiritual being of an individual. This song can stand-alone and preach the Gospel.

13. *Love Like You*³⁷⁸

By: Sovereign Grace

Verse 1

A man travelin' down the road
Was robbed and left for dead
Some neighbors might have helped
But they walked on instead
And then a stranger came along
And bandaged up his wounds
And showed us what it means
To love like You

Chorus

Lord, we wanna love like You
With open arms and an open heart
We wanna love like You
And show the world how good You are
Anyone can be our neighbor in need
Help us to do what You would do
We wanna love like You

Verse 2

We were made for loving You
'Cause You're the very best
And to love our neighbors too
Treat them with kindness
And it's not okay to look away
And think we've done enough
'Cause that is not the way
That You love us

Bridge

When we were in desperate need
You loved us, loved us
While we were still Your enemies
You loved us, loved us
When there was nothing we could do
You loved us, loved us so we could be like You, You loved us.

³⁷⁸ Sovereign Grace. "Love Like You," Track 6 on Listen Up, Integrity Music, 2017, Compact Disc.

Lyric Analysis

This song is chosen for analysis because it uses a parable to convey a message of salvation and to adopt a kingdom principle such as love—the songwriter touches on many evangelistic and Gospel themes from Luke 10:25-37 in this work. The lyrics boldly inferred the importance of God's grace, love, and sanctification, which is the believer putting away worldly things. The songwriter purposefully wrote this song with the intent of evangelism in mind. The lyrics bleed spiritual formation and sound theology. The inclusion of figurative language is not present, but metaphorically, the song is comparing the relationship that God has with the believer and the acceptance He shows when one who has strayed away repents. The lyrics in this song can stand-alone and declare the Gospel.

14. Our Good Father ³⁷⁹

By: Sovereign Grace

Verse 1

Lil' Johnny came home from school
Hungry, tired, needin' some fuel
Went to find some fish sticks in the fridge
Johnny's dad was standing there, said
"Sit on down, son, and I'll prepare"
You'll never guess what that dad did!
Whoa, whoa, what's the deal?
He served up the weirdest meal—
Sliding on his dinner plate
Johnny saw a rattlesnake!

Chorus

No good father's gonna give us something like that
Uh-uh, no way
Our good Father always does us good
When we ask, but you gotta pray.

³⁷⁹ Sovereign Grace. "Our Good Father," Track 7 on Listen Up, Integrity Music, 2017, Compact Disc.

Verse 2

Lil' Suzy woke up one day
Hungerin', hankerin' for some eggs
When in the room her dad appeared
Then he gave her something strange
It didn't help her hunger pangs
In fact, her brown eyes filled with tears
Hey, hey, my oh my, what'd she see? Why'd she cry?
Breakfast made her want to run—It was a scorpion!

Outro

Keep askin', keep hopin'
Keep knockin'; it'll open
Keep prayin', keep seekin'
God knows just what we're needin'

Lyric Analysis

This song is chosen for analysis because it uses a theme from Luke 11:1-13 concerning the characteristic of God and conveys it in a manner of understanding to a child. The songwriter wrote this song specifically for a child, but it holds theological truth that also informs an adult. This song speaks on God's character and that He is always faithful to us as we seek Him. This theme makes the song God-centered. The circumstances in the song, versus real life, maybe a little extreme, but such extremity is how one may think when terrible situations arrive in their personal lives. The songwriter uses such vivid descriptions to paint and illustrate the meaning of this song, which is in the chorus, "No good father is going to give you something like that" and that God is a good Father. This song can illustrate alongside the gospel message that articulates who God is and how He provides for His children.

15. *Gracious Invitation* ³⁸⁰

By: Sovereign Grace

Verse 1

There's a party for us, and it's free, free, free
The Host said He's paying for everything
The doors are open wide for everyone!
It's a banquet with all of our favorite foods. Friendship and music and all things good
The countdown to our gladness has begun
Has begun

Chorus

It's a gracious invitation
To the Savior's celebration
Love and joy are waiting
And He says, "Come!"
So, we will come!

Verse 2

There is joy to be had, and it's now, now, now
A feast to be shared with the God of Wow!
And there's no telling what He has prepared!
Imagine it all and then think again
His Son gave His life to invite us in
And best of all the invite can be shared
Can be shared

Verse 3

But some are invited and just won't go They make their excuses and answer, "No!"
They think that they can find a better feast. They waited too long, and they lost their chance. But
the Host of the party has awesome plans. To invite the hungry, weary, and the least. And the
least

Chorus

It's a gracious invitation
To the Savior's celebration
Love and joy are waiting
And He says, "Come!"
There's no hesitation
No need for debating

³⁸⁰ Sovereign Grace. "Gracious Invitation," Track 9 on Listen Up, Integrity Music, 2017, Compact Disc.

Love and joy are waiting
And He says, "Come!"
So, we will come!

Lyric Analysis

The songwriter takes the parable about the banquet to describe how people hear, yet dismisses the opportunity to accept Jesus' plan for salvation.³⁸¹ The songwriter's God-centered message reveals that God has a plan for humanity. This plan is free and includes a seat at the table of redemption for everyone. The song compares a delightful dining experience at a banquet that is free and plentiful to those who want salvation, but those who are invited must choose to go. This is a salvation that is being presented and it is important for each individual to choose to follow Christ. This metaphor helps to describe how Jesus has everything that one will need in Him. This song shares the gospel message and can preach alongside any message with the theme of salvation.

Hymns for Observation

As songwriters search for a writing style that will aid their congregation, typically within the Pentecostal church, praise and worship songs of spontaneity should not be their only resource. The songwriter should be willing to explore and embrace their preferred writing style and other avenues for the upbuilding of God's kingdom. Hymns have a history of being a great platform of showcasing theology as well as teaching it through congregational singing. It has the ability to utilize scripture, sound doctrine, and metaphors to capture a unified meaning and correspondence to a more profound theology within a corporate gathering. These examples are

³⁸¹ Luke 14:16-24, KJV.

taken from the themes of parables that teach the essence of the parables that Jesus taught. As the songwriter observes these hymns, they should be mindful of the opportunities within a worship service where teaching theology in this form can be viewed as most appropriate and valuable to the spiritual growth of the church.

“Removed to comply with copyright”

- “What Did You Find.”³⁸²
- “When Angels Sweep Their Net.”³⁸³
- “Who Is Coming Down The Road.”³⁸⁴
- “The Knowledge Of God’s Kingdom.”³⁸⁵
- “Where Is The Kingdom.”³⁸⁶

³⁸² Leach, Richard, “What Did You Find,” Hymn #26. 2002, *And Jesus Said: Parables in Song*, Selah Publishing Co., Inc., Pittsburg, P.A., 2008, 26.

³⁸³ Leach, “When Angels Sweep Their Net,” Hymn #31. 2002, *And Jesus Said: Parables in Song*, Selah Publishing Co., Inc., Pittsburg, P.A., 2008, 31.

³⁸⁴ Leach, “Who Is Coming Down The Road,” Hymn #15. 2002, *And Jesus Said: Parables in Song*, Selah Publishing Co., Inc., Pittsburg, P.A., 2008, 15.

³⁸⁵ Joy F. Patterson. “The Knowledge Of God’s Kingdom,” Hymn #30. 2002. *And Jesus Said: Parables in Song*, Selah Publishing Co., Inc., Pittsburg, P.A., 2008, 30.

³⁸⁶ Whitney, Rae E, “Where Is The Kingdom,” Hymn #1. 1978. *And Jesus Said: Parables in Song*, Selah Publishing Co., Inc., Pittsburg, P.A., 1.

Chapter Summary

Parables can influence the songwriter's process by including elements of evangelism to produce disciples. An essential distinction of discipleship is that one absorbs the teachings of Jesus Christ and live by His principles through God's Word, which equips one to listen to the Holy Spirit, who lives within their conscience. The Holy Spirit invokes one to share faith with others by communicating to unbelievers the changes Jesus has made in their lives (1 Peter 3:15). Evangelism is the announcement, proclamation, and or preaching of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), the good news of and about Jesus Christ. The Gospel is a communicated message in verbal and or written (Luke 1:1-4) form.³⁸⁷

Just as Jesus was intentional about using biblical parables as tools to illustrate moral-spiritual lessons, so must the songwriter. One of the focal operations of parables is to inform one about the kingdom of God using God's Word through imagery and central thought.³⁸⁸ The parables are evidence of the Gospel and the kingdom of God. Jesus intended to capture those who were ambitious for the truth. Though parables may overlap in meaning, they are organized within themes to emphasize the gospel message Jesus was trying to convey. These themes include receiving God's Word, the kingdom of heaven, neighborly love, grace, rejection, justice, faith, and eschatology.

Parables can be influential to the songwriters' process by being relational. Relational evangelism is what Christ modeled for the churches to follow in every generation. Jesus, with the aid of parables, reached out to the lost souls, and through His interactions with the public, relationships formed. When writing songs, the literary painting within parables can aid the

³⁸⁷ Gause, *Living in the Spirit*, 28.

songwriter in being relational by never disengaging the people from their culture, but embracing it also.

Parables can be influential to the songwriters' process by being missional. In the role of a theologian and worship leader, the songwriter should express God's role by calling for the congregation to share in freedom from bondage to decay and to obtain the glorious liberty as children of God. Parables can be influential to the songwriters' process by being transformational. Through words and ideas written on paper, they have the opportunity to heal the world's members that may be in distress and promoting change as one learns about God's truths.

In the Pentecostal church, there seems to be a lack of clarity of theology for their worship. The embodiment of the Holy Spirit and His manifestation can often be misconstrued as a lack of biblical education; however, the songwriter can refute such assumptions by constructing a theological framework that educates the platform on how music can address itself to the listener. By eliciting subjective and promoting emotional sentiments, music can synthesize a worship experience that triggers a close sense of God's presence.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter will present a summary of the study, including an overview of its purpose and procedure. A brief discussion of research findings is included, with a review of the relationship between the findings and prior research. Limitations of this study acknowledged and described. This chapter offers implications for practice for the worship ministry within the local Pentecostal church. The chapter concludes with possible directions for future research.

Summary of the Study

In many of today's evangelical churches, members of the worship platform explore an awakened passion for writing their songs for their worship sets. The motive for such an awakening could be for various reasons. Those reasons may include enhancing the church's view on theology, to unite generations of worshipers within the congregation, to educate the group about salvation, or to reflect upon the church's overall mission within the faith community. The reason behind such an endeavor is limitless.

In summary, the bulk of such a notion is to submit to a higher divine call of ministry through music. The worship songs within the church walls are a reflection of the preached gospel, for its effectiveness in conveying spiritual truth and salvation, the lyrics must-have characteristics of evangelism with the intent to minister salvation and not emotionalism.³⁸⁹ Therefore, to assist the songwriter in their process, a qualitative historical study did occur to examine parables, told by Jesus, in efforts to connect similar elements to songwriting to accomplish vertical worship that is theologically sound and God-centered. Sources were

³⁸⁹ Merriam-Webster Deluxe Dictionary, 10th Ed.

gathered, examined, and analyzed to determine common characteristics of compelling storytelling, songwriting, and evangelism. Also, recent sources were studied to illustrate valid worship songs for engaging the congregation's imagination during worship to encourage greater involvement in spiritual self-reflection.

Summary of Findings

The study's findings indicate that parables told by Jesus are intentional for teaching one about salvation. It also suggests that these elements can help develop a model for the worshiper interested in songwriting. Songwriting allows one to filter their inspirations and be creative in thought to convey a message; however, in a worship setting, it should not be an act of emotional propaganda. In reflection, it should make one aware of their heart and spiritual being. Using parables that Jesus taught, the songwriter can glean from evangelism techniques, making the songwriter aware of what characteristics will allow their song to be that of a ministry resulting in vertical worship.

An examination of the teachings of parables regarding salvation and evangelism affirms that lyrics within a song, if relational and relatable, can influence spiritual formation. In the New Testament, when Jesus told parables, He exemplified through figurative language and experienced the standards and principles for kingdom living. Following this example, the songwriter can employ these elements within their process of songwriting, helping to cultivate a congregation that is strong in theology, reflecting the message of redemption and salvation.

Research findings reveal characteristics of parables that will be beneficial for the songwriter. The songwriter, like Jesus through His parables, must be intentional about evangelism and gaining disciples. The intent for evangelism and discipleship holds the Word of

God at its core. The intention of Jesus was for those who heard the Word to receive it with their heart and to continue to follow the truth.³⁹⁰ Another characteristic of parables that will aid the songwriter is being relational. Jesus illustrated the model of relational evangelism as He engaged with His audience.³⁹¹ Relational evangelism leads to developing other relationships, which can create opportunities to share Christ. Through relationships, non-Christians and unbelievers have a chance to witness the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁹² The parables hold a characteristic of being missional and transformational. Just as Jesus presented Himself as the light of the world, so must the songwriter. It is when the songwriter harvests the gospel's elements through their lyrics; it has the chance to be transformational.

The study's findings indicate that the songwriter within the worship ministry can indeed observe the element of parables in Jesus' teachings to assist them in their creative writing process. The songwriter achieves this by capturing elements of effective evangelism and storytelling while maintaining the Gospel message at the core of their lyrics. Therefore, they must teach rich theology filled with biblical truths. They must remain confident in knowing that God's Word is revealed and profitable for teaching. The songwriter, in the role of the worship leader, conveys biblical theology as a reflection of the preached Word.

³⁹⁰ R.C. Sproul, "The Parables of Jesus." Lecture. December 12, 2019.

³⁹¹ Effa. "Training Members of Family," 51.

³⁹² Bertram Smith and Thomas Dean. *The parables of the synoptic Gospels: A critical study*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, 60.

Limitations of the Study

This researcher acknowledges certain limitations of this study. When conclusions are drawn, regarding the research, the following limitations, taken under consideration:

1. Very little research exists regarding how Jesus' delivery with parables can influence the process of the songwriter. Much research exists regarding parables in biblical teachings, interpretations, and usage of figurative language. Research also exists regarding songwriting in the context of its importance in emotional well-being and expression of Art. However, the connection between the two, for the sake of evangelism and spiritual formation of the congregation in worship ministry, is still under investigation.
2. Research regarding parables and songwriting are forever evolving. This researcher acknowledges that not all musicians feel obligated to write and that songwriting is relevant to the inexperienced musician. Therefore, the data regarding this subject will change as more worshipers began to explore writing songs. However, because of the agreement found among the research regarding parables, combined with the need for more theologically grounded songs, this researcher believes that current studies regarding songwriting, as a tool for evangelism, will become more informative for decisions regarding the spiritual formation and congregation engagement within worship ministry.

Implications for Practice

Worship leaders and their teams are continuously searching for fresh ideas and music to speak to the hearts of the congregation, making God and His overall plan for redemption the center of worship. While investigating artists and their work, some worship leaders have realized

that the lyrics of the song do not challenge the congregation to learn the scriptures. Instead, the words are self-centered, which can result in emotionalism and carnal worship.

Due to this observation, individuals who share a love for God's Word, an experienced musician or not, are beginning to explore with writing their songs. They are willing to implement their testimonies and experiences to rejuvenate the reflection of truth and evangelism among the faith community. This research study's findings have implications, which considers the songwriter explores this endeavor to influence worship and the faith community. Likewise, these same implications consider when leaders decide whether to introduce a song to the congregation during corporate worship. Decisions regarding music will affect church growth, church health, and spiritual formation, and will have a long-lasting impact on the songwriter.

The research indicates that parables can serve as a model for the songwriter to observe delivery, creativity, and characteristics of evangelism. The long-term health of the church links to the spiritual health of its members.³⁹³ That speaks volumes that the parables, in which Jesus taught, gives valuable insight on how protective and intentional one should be with the souls of the people. Such a model will enable the songwriter to be informed about the usage of metaphors, which can aid the songwriter in unlocking the imagination of their audience.³⁹⁴ Such models will inspire them to educate themselves about experiences and culture to be relatable to the community. Such models will help them express their creativity in a non-conventional method that assists them in carrying the gospel, transforming individuals into disciples who will carry on the mission of the church.

³⁹³ Coates, "Join The Band," 99.

³⁹⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 82.

The decision to implement parables is beneficial for the songwriter's endeavor in observing the effect of being relatable and engaged in their audience.³⁹⁵ It is the implementation of scripture, and narrative within the lyrics, that will support the listener in the self-reflection for spiritual growth. Research shows that the elements that give the parables evangelism undertone were its ability to be intentional, relational, missional, and transformational. All four categories awaken when the congregation, rather corporately or alone, is engaged in the song. The songwriter that implements these elements participates in command of carrying out the Great Commission. Through the lyrics, the songwriter releases motivation and revival for others to receive and follow Christ. Therefore, one of the most effective ways to encourage others to acknowledge Christ and to follow Him is through song.

The songwriter that chooses to implement this model must be conscious of form and the songwriting process. Though knowledge of how to play an instrument is not required, skill and expertise develop to convey thoughts on paper. These skills include knowledge of the parables, scriptures, elements of storytelling, and creative writing. Focusing on the following form that is sensible can cause frustration due to the freedom of expression. The expression of ideas must align with the intention, and it must stay God-centered to avoid emotionalism. The goal is to write songs that are conducive to vertical worship. Another frustration for the songwriter is picturing the evolution of the song. The songwriter should always embrace those who are skilled in writing and give great insight to address these possible forms of frustration. The songwriter should also inquire about help from clergy on biblical passages that may have multiple interpretations.

³⁹⁵ Effa, "Training Members of Family," 51.

Constant observation, research of writing styles, storytelling, in terms of sequence and delivery, along with being knowledgeable of the scriptures, will aid the songwriter in careful planning. This endeavor requires one to center on those who are experienced writers as well as embrace personal time for worship. Reflecting on God and personal testimonies can affirm and drive one's purpose for writing. A roundtable of writers increases knowledge, inspiration, and motivation, elements one needs to be successful in creativity in moments of frustration.

In addition to writing, the songwriter should listen to the work of others. They should consider how the lyrics support and aid the story while experiencing personal emotions. While writing, the songwriter should contemplate how their song could assist any part of the service from call to worship to the benediction. Sometimes placing oneself and their work at the moment in their imaginative thinking can support planning. The songwriter should remain persistent in reminding their audience about salvation. In the context of worship, the core of the song should be about spiritual formation, done by implementing the gospel. If not, the possibility of emotionalism can occur, leaving vertical worship as a distant memory.

For songwriters, exploring the craft and stepping out of tradition can be uncomfortable and frightening to others, not accepting one's work. For example, evangelical churches speak of the importance of biblical references in songs and growing congregations; however, the music used seems to continue with an unbalance diet between emotionalism and true worship. It is beneficial that the songwriter research and shares examples with clergy as it relates to the conceptual framework. Doing so will develop a music ministry that becomes intuitive when selecting written songs for worship service.

The implementation of the previous resources in Chapter 4 can be considered for the songwriter to glean from in terms of writing, are hymns, worship songs, the Bible, spirituals, and

even parables, which for this study are in hymn form. Hymns express faith in ways that some praise and worship songs do not capture.³⁹⁶ The Bible holds significant passages that highlight beautiful metaphors and imagery used to describe God's sovereign power. An example of this is the Book of Psalm and Proverbs.

Spirituals have an element of storytelling within them that make them captivating. Their form of introducing a piece of the story and following it with the title as the core phrase is unique. An example of this is the spiritual "Let My People Go." Parables, in which Jesus taught, embody the Gospel message and evangelism. Worship songs should take all of these elements and places them within relatable music of today.

Songwriters within the evangelical setting understand that there is an important endeavor, weekly, to keep the generation connected in worship. This concern and struggle seem to be a barrier for congregation members and clergy that are used to and want to experience the strength of hymns and theology within praise and worship songs without sacrificing the numbers of the congregation. However, the awakened thirst for birthing songs out of the experience while including the gospel message, in a postmodern generation, has been illustrated between Christian and gospel artists of today who managed to embody attractive characteristics seen in the parables that Jesus told. The implementations of such songs as resources will provide better examples for the songwriter and their consideration for creativity with the gospel and evangelism process. As the songwriter studies and observe previous work for such an evangelical setting, they must keep these elements at the core as they relate to their writing goals. These elements include:

- God-Centered.

³⁹⁶ Greg Scheer, "Retune My Heart to Sing Thy Grace: How Old Hymn Texts found a New Home among Evangelicals." *The Hymn - A Journal of Congregational Song* 65, no. 4 (Autumn, 2014): 19-27.

- Use of Story as a tool of Relatability.
- Elements of Evangelism.
- Use of figurative language and metaphors.
- Lyrics that preach and obtain the Gospel message.

Through observation, the songwriter should also think critically about how the message of today's lyrics could be that of the time and existence of Jesus.

Recommendations for Future Study

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

1. A study on the process of hymn writing and how theological principles influenced the writer's delivery. Perhaps research can give insightful information about what prompt the birth of lyrics and how the songwriter felt that the presence of theology would deliver an evangelistic tone.
2. A study on the correlation between music and methods of evangelism. Perhaps research can determine if music inspires and support the opportunity for the songwriter's decision to evangelize.
3. A study on the correlation between creativity and the Holy Spirit. Perhaps research can determine if most songwriters believe their lyrics were of a divine notion or were they an internal conversation that the writer felt the need to start among worshippers.
4. A study on the correlation between personal creativity and that of a roundtable of experienced writers. Perhaps a research study can show a writer's growth from their first work alone versus their work after consulting experienced writers.

5. A study on the correlation between parables and the congregation's response to them in song. Perhaps a study can give insight on which method is more beneficial in obtaining the congregation's attention.

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