

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**Old Testament Principles for Worship: Worship Practices Applied
to Modern-Day Worship in the Evangelical Church from the Life of Abraham**

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Music
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Worship Studies

by

Cameron S. Gaddy

April 23, 2021

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THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

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Vernon M. Whaley, Ph.D., D.W.S., Mentor

Paul Rumrill, D.M.A., D.W.S., Reader

Abstract

Title: Old Testament Principles for Worship: Worship Practices Applied to Modern-Day Worship in the Evangelical Church from the Life of Abraham

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Worship in the evangelical church faces challenges regarding its purpose, design, and method of expression. In order to cultivate an authentic community of worshippers, Christians must first strive to understand the biblical basis of worship. Worship is initiated by God and requires a response from man. Many studies have shown the importance of understanding the biblical foundations of worship; however, few studies have focused on understanding biblical worship through observing the historical development of God's identity through the biblical character of Abraham.

The purpose of this study is to identify key worship principles from the life of Abraham that may be applied to the 21st Century evangelical community. Principles discussed are primarily drawn from Abraham's life experiences as recorded in the Old Testament. Of primary importance to this project is the application of practices prevalently seen through Abraham's worship. This study is based on three initial pre-suppositions: 1) Abraham's Worship; The Calling, 2) Abraham's Worship: The Covenant, and 3) Abraham Worship: Faithful Sacrifice.

Keywords: baptism, call, circumcision, contemporary, covenant, doctrine, ecclesiology, faith, hope, judgement, the Lord's Supper, narrative, Pentateuch, righteousness, sin, sovereignty, theology, truth, worship.

Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to my wife, Sarah, who is the prime example of a Proverbs 31 woman.

Acknowledgements

First, I have to give all glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ for leading and guiding me through this study of Abraham.

Second, I want to acknowledge my family. First my wife, Sarah, who has shown me nothing but love, patience, and support through the many hours and late nights spent researching and writing for this study. Thank you for encouraging me, for supporting me, and for being my best friend. Also, I am grateful for my parents who have both constantly been there for me through all of my studies. Thank you both for always loving me and supporting me in all of my dreams and aspirations.

Special acknowledgement is extended to my Thesis Mentor, Dr. Vernon M. Whaley and Thesis Reader, Dr. Paul Rumrill. I cannot extend enough gratitude to Dr. Whaley for the guidance, encouragement, patience, and kindness in the process of writing and reviewing this thesis project. Words do not begin to express my appreciation for the time and energy you have invested along this journey. I also would like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Rumrill for agreeing to serve as the Reader for this thesis project and has offered nothing but support, advice, and kindness toward me in this study.

Additional acknowledgement goes to Dr. Johnny Blevins; Senior Pastor and Dr. Stephen Robbins; Associate Pastor, who have provided Godly leadership, friendship, and encouragement throughout my doctorate studies. Thank you both for being listening ears and helping me process through my studies throughout this study. I also would like to extend my gratitude to Professor Matthew McCall who has acted as a close friend and colleague that has always had faith in me and encouraged me in all of my studies.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Worship is what man was designed for,” A.W. Tozer wrote, “God’s supreme purpose in making man was to have somebody capable to properly and sufficiently worship Him and satisfy His own heart.”¹ However, man failed to live up to God’s expectation and sin was born into the world, and with it, death.

Robert E. Webber notes, “For years, the church has emphasized evangelism, teaching, fellowship, missions, and service to society to the neglect of the very source of its power – worship.”² While nothing is wrong with evangelism, teaching, fellowship, missions, and service to society, the reality is that all result in aimless action if one simply goes through the routine without any purpose. Worship gives purpose to all forms of service. In order to rediscover God’s intent for humanity, one must start in the beginning with God’s call to establish a people for worship. The story of Abraham is the inaugural call from God to establish a chosen people for worship.

Perhaps the story of Abraham provides understandable and relatable principles of worship that may be identified by worshippers throughout all of time. God’s identity is abundantly clear through His self-disclosure to Abraham, including both His 1) relatability or trustworthiness and 2) His sovereign hand. The Abrahamic narrative provides clear principles of worship that may aid the modern-day church in understanding biblical worship.

Tim Ralston draws attention to a consensus growing among evangelical scholars concerning the basic paradigm for worship that Jesus gave his disciples concerning their formal

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 49.

² Robert E. Webber, *Learning to Worship with All of Your Heart: A Study in the Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 63.

or public gatherings. This paradigm assumes a basic understanding of Old Testament theology and worship as practiced by “the Early Church.”³ Perhaps the historical understanding of Old Testament worship, understood by the early church, needs to be clarified and rearticulated for 21st Century worshippers of Christ. The Abrahamic narrative provides an in-depth example into fundamental principles of Old Testament worship with apt application for 21st Century worshippers.

Statement of the Problem

The Need to Study Abraham

Abraham’s story provides the biblical foundations of worship for all worshippers. This foundation can provide Christians today with an understanding of teachable principles of worship that are characteristic of true worship. The covenantal relationship between God and Abraham establishes the biblical rationale for worship in the evangelical church. The grounds of worship for churches today can be traced throughout history dating back to the methods, forms, and patterns highlighted in the Old Testament -- specifically within the Abrahamic narrative. Andrew Hill writes, “The Old Testament accounts depicting the life of the Israelite nation provide the pattern for public worship in both Judaism and Christianity.”⁴ The principles of worship taught through Abraham point toward a deeper meaning of God’s intent for worship and may then be applied to worship in the 21st century evangelical church.

Perhaps there is a need within the modern-day church to rediscover these principles in order to revitalize worship in the church. Don Tuttle wrote in his Doctor of Ministry thesis at Liberty University: “The sad fact is that many churches are not really accomplishing their goal of

³ Tim Ralston, “Remembrance and Worship: The Mandate and the Means,” 77-78.

⁴ Andrew Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise: Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), xxxi.

bringing people into the presence of God. In fact, in far too many churches this hardly seems to be a goal at all.”⁵ There seems to be a growing need for churches to rediscover the importance of leading people to genuinely worship God. Understanding the manner in which worship is offered is crucial for worshippers today because it leads one to a deeper relationship with the Creator of the universe. Abraham’s narrative provides the story of a genuine worshipper and in the process answers the “why” question so often overlooked.

It is simple to read the Abrahamic narrative and understand that Abraham became a worshipper of Jehovah. And while this is indeed true, it seems that many may read this portion of Scripture simply as a story to be told to each generation. Viewing the account of Abraham through the lens of biblical inerrancy – a hallmark of the evangelical tradition – allows worshippers to understand that Abraham was a real man who experienced worries, dangers, loss, and strife. Abraham had habits, comforts, and relationships that God directly called him to forfeit in order to enter into a binding relationship with the creator of the universe.

Reading Abraham’s narrative with an open mind and with application to one’s personal and public worship provides for the reader a sense of comfort that God’s purpose (although not always known by Abraham) always results in a “better Abraham,” despite obvious shortcomings and character flaws in the life of the prophet. God ultimately chooses to use average men and women, whose life in the grand scheme of the world seem small and insignificant, to accomplish mighty and divinely inspired tasks for “the Kingdom.”

⁵ Don W. Tuttle. “A Strategy for Identifying the Necessary Elements of a Worship Studies Program” (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 1999), 123.

The Abrahamic narrative begins in Genesis 11:27 and concludes with his death in Genesis 25. Prior to Abraham, the storyline of humanity seems hopeless, constantly resulting in death, resulting from the fall of Adam and Eve.⁶

However, this tension between good and evil remains a constant reminder throughout the beginning chapters of Genesis. Allen Ross notes, “This struggle between good and evil would always be there in the human race, but ultimately the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent’s seed.”⁷

When Eve has Cain, there seems to be a glimpse of hope for mankind, in spite of Adam and Eve’s departure from the Garden. But, that hope is quickly shattered when Cain kills his brother Abel. Sin and death had a spiraling effect against humanity to the point that God regretted creating man.⁸ God then judges all of humanity through a flood only for humanity to continue its downward trend of sin.

Then, in Genesis 11 Abraham appears. Within the fourteen chapters of the Abrahamic narrative, God provides hope through a promised relationship with Abraham, establishing a line for his seed and the promise of a new nation. Abraham’s story is unique because of God’s covenant to establish a people that are recognized as “his people.”

Through Abraham, there seems to be an intentional focus on remembering God’s faithfulness to “this covenant.” This remembrance focuses a worshipper’s attention to a new sense of freedom in the presence of God. Dr. Chuck Fromm draws attention to the importance of remembering God’s promise, “We need others and their words and actions to help us remember

⁶ “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15.

⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 145.

⁸ “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” Genesis 6:5-6

God's faithfulness, his deliverance[, his] HOSANNA!"⁹ For Abraham, this meant remembering God's faithfulness toward him in the past and God's promise to be with him in the future.

Abraham's worship accentuates the importance of remembering Yahweh.

Abraham's Worship and the 21st Century Evangelical Church

Studying Abraham's worship practices can teach the 21st century evangelical church principles for personal and public worship. There seems to be a growing need for biblical teachings on worship. Wiersbe writes,

Over the past half century, a subtle change has taken place in local churches: the sanctuary has become a theater, ministry has become performance, worship has turned into entertainment, and applause, not the glory of God, has become the measure of success. In short, the 'worship of God' is no longer taken seriously by many of God's people, and so subtly has the change occurred that, like a frog in a kettle, we haven't even noticed what's happened. Churches still use the word *worship* but its meaning has changed. Too often 'worship' is only a word people use to give religious respectability to whatever they've planned for the congregation to do on Sunday morning, whether God is the focus of the meeting or not.¹⁰

Perhaps the modern-day church exists in a culture that has little understanding of Old Testament theology, resulting in misunderstandings about private and public worship. The Abrahamic narrative serves as the cornerstone to all Old Testament worship, making it a critical point of study already much needed in the revitalization of worship in the church.

The reality of worship in the 21st century church is that people often shape their expressions of love and adoration of God as a representation of their own personal musical, cultural and ecclesiastical preference. A.W. Tozer seems to confirm this notion:

"So lofty is our opinion of ourselves that we find it quite easy, not to say enjoyable, to believe that we are necessary to God. But the truth is that God is not greater for our being, nor would He be less if we did not exist."¹¹

⁹ Chuck Fromm, "Back to the Basics: The Mission of Remembering in Worship." *Worship Leader*, Vol 29, No 2. May 15, 2020.

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship: Playground, Battleground, or Holy Ground*, 170.

¹¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1961), 34.

Abraham's worship demonstrates an understanding that God does not need humanity but, all of life needs God. Christians must begin to think of God more and of oneself less in order to strive to rediscover man's biblical purpose to worship the creator of the universe. For too long worshippers have neglected biblical principles of worship and instead focus on the method of worship. Churches must rediscover key biblical principles relating to true worship of God. A key foundational element to understanding the biblical meaning of worship is rooted within the interaction between God and Abraham.

It is through God's revelation in the Old Testament, revealed initially to Abraham, that God ultimately reveals his identity and chooses to use the prophet as an avenue through which all nations are blessed. God's revelation to Abraham is progressive. The prophet constantly learns more about being a true worshipper of Jehovah. These "Abraham experiences" ultimately provide teachable principles of worship that still apply to "the church" today. Abraham's covenant relationship with God reveals a picture of worship, further developed through the whole of the Old Testament and into the New Testament, that ultimately leads to Jesus as our final and perfect worshipper, mediator and High Priest.

Perhaps by studying Abraham's understanding of worship, Christians today gain a better understanding of principles set forth in the Old Testament and carried over for the local evangelical church today. These principles are recognized through studying the biblical foundations of God, setting apart a people to worship Him and Him alone. Abraham marks the inauguration of the call to worship and sets in place an example of a Biblical standard for true worshippers today.

Statement of The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify key worship principles from the life of Abraham that may be applied to the 21st Century evangelical community. Principles discussed are primarily drawn from Abraham's life experiences as recorded in the Old Testament. Of primary importance to this project is the application of practices prevalently seen through Abraham's worship. This study is based on three initial pre-suppositions: 1) Abraham's Worship; The Calling, 2) Abraham's Worship: The Covenant, and 3) Abraham Worship: Faithful Sacrifice.

Research Questions:

- 1) What worship principles from Abraham are articulated or examined in the Pentateuch?
- 2) Why is it important to study Abraham's worship practices?
- 3) How is Abraham's worship expressed in the Bible?
- 4) What circumstances contributed Abraham's responses to God?
- 5) How does God use his covenant promises to reassure Abraham of His own faithfulness to the prophet?

Hypothesis Statements:

- 1) Abraham understood the value of worship through sacrifice.
- 2) Abraham's call to worship is both a personal and public calling.
- 3) Abraham's worship is expressed through obedience to God's call.
- 4) God uses Abraham's obedience through worship as a means for establishing a people for worship.
- 5) God's covenant relationship with Abraham serves as an example of his sovereign guidance and care for those obedient to His call.

The Methodology

Biblical and historical research were the primary methodologies for this study. This included investigations into various biblical translations, commentaries, dissertations, thesis, academic journals and scholarly books.

The Limitations

The primary emphasis of biblical research methodology was to discover principles of Abraham's worship from God's Word and drawn from Abraham's life experiences. This biblical study did not develop worship practica, curricula, or otherwise organized methodologies that might have any strategic pedagogical purposes. This study limited investigation to the biblical patriarch, Abraham, and did not examine the presence or application of these principles to any other biblical characters. Qualitative or quantitative research methodology are not used in this study.

Organization

This thesis is organized in to six chapters, as follows:

Chapter One – Introduction: Chapter one serves as an introductory chapter by establishing the rationale through a historical background of the study. In this introductory phase, specific attention will be exposed concerning the problem to be solved, the intended purpose to be achieved, the limitations of this study, and the methodology used in order to come to the conclusion.

Chapter Two – Literature Review: Chapter two is a literature review of existing historical, descriptive, and investigative research concerning worship methods and practices. These works consists of information most relevant in order to discover principles of worship in

the Old Testament by observing the practices of Abraham and what they specifically teach the modern-day evangelical church about worship.

Chapter Three – Abraham’s Calling: Chapter three identifies principles of worship which are discovered through observing Abraham’s first appearance and calling in Genesis 11-12. Here, the foundations of worship are laid with God’s inaugural call of Abraham to worship. God prepares Abraham, calls Abraham, and Abraham obediently responds to God’s call. This interaction reveals the biblical foundations of all worship within Scripture and shows the importance and desire of God to be in relationship with mankind.

Chapter Four – Abraham and the Covenant: The emphasis of chapter four is to identify principles of worship which are recognized through the formation of the Abrahamic covenant. In Genesis 18, God establishes a binding covenant with Abraham inaugurating a holy nation.

Chapter Five – Abraham: The Faithful Worshipper: Chapter five focuses on Abraham’s relationship with God after the birth of Isaac. Abraham’s response to God’s direction concerning Isaac reveals several key principles of worship that are foundational in application.

Chapter Six – Summary/Conclusion: Chapter six serves as the final chapter of this biblical study and summarizes the findings. This includes an overview of the thesis project, a summary of the discoveries and findings, suggestions of further research which may aid in this area of study and concluding remarks.

Definition of Terms

Baptism - The practice of sprinkling with, pouring on or immersing in water as an act of Christian initiation and obedience to Christ’s own command.¹²

¹² Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 18.

Call - The act by which God extends to humans an invitation to enter into a saving relationship.¹³

Circumcision - The practice of cutting off the foreskin of the male sexual organ. Originally, the practice was instituted by God (toward Abraham), and it became the external act signifying entrance into the Old Testament community of faith.¹⁴

Contemporary - happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same time period.¹⁵

Covenant - *Covenant* refers to the act of God in freely establishing a mutually binding relationship with humankind.¹⁶

Doctrine - A theological formulation that attempts to provide a summary statement of the teaching of Scripture on a particular theological topic.¹⁷

Ecclesiology - Ecclesiology seeks to set forth the nature and function of the church.¹⁸

Faith - A biblical word that refers both to intellectual belief and to relational trust or commitment.¹⁹

Hope - A biblical term (Greek *elpis*) referring to the expectation of the believer that God will fulfill promises made in the past. Biblical hope is more than a simple wish; it entails certainty based on God's demonstration of faithfulness to people in the history of salvation as recorded in the Scriptures and as experienced by the church.²⁰

¹³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵ Webster's Dictionary. s.v. "Contemporary," accessed July 16, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contemporary>.

¹⁶ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., 40.

¹⁸ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹ Ibid., 50.

²⁰ Ibid., 61.

Judgement - God's evaluation as to the rightness or wrongness of an act of a creature, whether human or angelic, using the standard of God's own righteous and holy character.²¹

The Lord's Supper - A designation for the sacrament or ordinance of the church otherwise known as Communion or the Eucharist.²²

Narrative - a theological approach that utilizes the concept of story and the human person as storyteller to provide the central motif for theological reflection.²³

Pentateuch - A name (Heb. "instruction, guidance, law") ascribed to the first division of the Hebrew canon, the five books of Moses.²⁴

Righteousness - An attribute of God's being; God's right and just character, actions and judgements. God's righteousness as understood in a covenantal context includes God's right judgement of both God's own people and those who oppress them, as well as God's salvation and mercy extended to those to whom the covenanting God has promised to be faithful.²⁵

Sin - The fundamental unbelief, distrust and rejection of God and human displacement of God as the center of reality.²⁶

Sovereignty - The biblical concept of God's kingly, supreme rule and legal authority over the entire universe.²⁷

Theology - A religious belief system about God or ultimate reality.²⁸

Truth - That which reflects factual and/or spiritual reality.²⁹

²¹ Ibid., 69.

²² Ibid., 73.

²³ Ibid., 82.

²⁴ David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, "Torah," ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1321.

²⁵ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 103.

²⁶ Ibid., 107.

²⁷ Ibid., 109.

²⁸ Ibid., 113.

²⁹ Ibid., 116.

Worship - The act of adoring and praising God, that is, ascribing worth to God as the one who deserves homage and service.³⁰

Summary

By studying Abraham's understanding of worship, one can begin to discover how these teachings are applicable to the New Covenant. Worshippers must have a proper understanding of the principles that define true worship. One can then develop a rationale for how to equip the modern-day evangelical worshipper through this study and to strive for a more holistic view of worship. Wiersbe states, "It cost Jesus Christ His life to grant us the privilege of coming into the presence of God with our worship and praise, so to trivialize worship is to trivialize the cross."³¹

³⁰ Ibid., 122.

³¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 175.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

John MacArthur defines worship as, “any essential expression of service rendered unto God by a soul who loves and extols Him for who He is.”³² Abraham’s sole desire was to elevate the name of Yahweh above any other. This is evident through the different expressions of service present throughout his life. In order to understand his motivation to worship and teachable principles for the modern-day evangelical worshipper, it is important to examine two areas of literature: Biblical-Theological Foundations Literature Review, and Biblical-Ecclesiological Literature Review.

Biblical-Theological Foundations

Research for this rationale is focused on the biblical precedent of worship for the modern-day evangelical worshipper that is understood through the patriarch of Abraham within the book of Genesis.

Dr. Allen Ross, Beeson Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, provides an inductive study of worship by tracing the progressive nature of worship in Scripture. His writing, “Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation,” offers an in-depth study of worship by outlining biblical principles initially revealed to the Hebrew people and then continued and applied to worship under the New Covenant.³³ This includes the worship of Abraham as well as other biblical characters and serves as a useful guide in understanding the development of worship in the Old Testament. The patterns and principles of worship noted by Dr. Ross provide worshippers today with the tools necessary in order to first understand the

³² John MacArthur. *Worship the Ultimate Priority*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012) 10.

³³ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006).

biblical methods of worship and then apply these principles to worship in the modern-day church.

Dr. Ross also offers an exceptional study of Genesis in his writing, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*.³⁴ He is adamant that it is not a commentary but rather a guide to the study and exposition of Genesis.³⁵ Ross' purpose in the writing is to examine the major themes and motifs present within the book of Genesis. He does this by: dividing the book into over sixty units and discussing the book's major theological ideas; highlighting the structure of the book of Genesis, evaluating its message; and providing an exegetical and expository outline. Part three, entitled "The Patriarchal Narratives About Abraham," discusses the life of Abraham from his call through his death. Studying God's continual pursuit of Abraham and Abraham's response to God reveals how his replies ultimately reveal principles of worship.

Dr. Vernon M. Whaley serves as the Associate Vice President of Program Development for the School of Music and Worship Arts at Trevecca Nazarene University. He provides an in-depth study on the story of worship throughout the Bible from Genesis through Revelation in his writing, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Responses to God's Call*.³⁶ This writing provides the biblical mandate to worship and then traces the development of worship through biblical narrative while comparing Old Testament principles of worship to New Testament worship. The biblical principles, processes, and practices discussed help to develop values of worship which are essential for worshippers in the modern church culture.

³⁴ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 13-14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁶ Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Responses to God's Call* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009).

Specific in the study of Abraham, Dr. Whaley includes a scholarly understanding into principles of worship within the life of Abraham that are still applicable for worshippers in the evangelical church today. Chapter four highlights several key worship principles through studying Abraham's call and response and what they exclusively teach worshippers about the fundamentals of worship today. Whaley also provides an excellent lecture concerning worship through the life of Abraham titled, "Lesson On Worship from Abraham-God Responds to Worship with a Promise."³⁷ Whaley notes the progression of Abraham from a foreigner to a called and faithful worshipper of Yahweh.

Keith Essex also provides an excellent article titled, "*The Abrahamic Covenant*,"³⁸ that discusses the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant for the entirety of Scripture. God's covenant with Abraham is discussed from Exodus through Revelation and portrays important patterns that are traceable in order to worship God from a scriptural basis. Essex serves as Associate Professor of Biblical Exposition at the Master's Seminary. In the article, Essex examines defining aspects of God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 17, 18, and 22. He also examines how the Abrahamic covenant influences the rest of Scripture including its effect from Exodus through Deuteronomy, the rest of the Old Testament, and its impact within the New Testament. Abraham's faithful obedience leads to God's promises.³⁹ Essex's article serves as an excellent article in order to better understand principles of worship recognized through God's covenant with Abraham.

³⁷ Vernon M. Whaley, "Lesson On Worship from Abraham-God Responds to Worship with a Promise," (Lecture) Trevecca University, November, 11 2020.

³⁸ Keith Essex, "The Abrahamic Covenant," *Master's Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (1999): 191-212.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

One source useful to discovering biblical principles of worship for the modern-day church is *Worship Old & New*.⁴⁰ The late Robert E. Webber founded the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies in 1998; he is known for his work on worship and the early church. His writing is organized into four unique categories; Biblical Foundations of Worship, A Biblical Theology of Worship, A Brief History of Worship, and The Practice of Worship. All of these sections give varied insights into biblical worship ranging from Hebrew worship through early church worship and even worship within the twentieth century. The information from Webber's writing most useful for this study can be found in chapters 12-23. These chapters emphasize how Old Testament principles of worship are understood in the early church and the importance of these practices for worship in the modern 21st century church.

Jonathan Grossman has an excellent biographical study of Abraham titled *Abram to Abraham: A Literary Analysis of the Abrahamic Narrative*.⁴¹ Grossman pays careful attention to the structure of the Abrahamic narrative in order to argue for a unified purpose in the authoring of Abraham's story. This in-depth study provides critical information prevalent for the study of Abraham's worship practices.

John Butler provides a biographical study on Abraham in, *Abraham: The Father of the Jews*.⁴² Butler has been a Baptist minister for over 50 years and has authored a 27-volume Bible biography series including this study on Abraham. This expository study offers practical application of principles for the life of everyday worshippers. Butler explains that the author of Genesis' timeline spans across 2000 years in the first 11 chapters and that Abraham marks a new

⁴⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

⁴¹ Jonathan Grossman, *Abram to Abraham: A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative*. (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016).

⁴² John G. Butler, *Abraham: The Father of the Jews*, vol. Number Nine, Bible Biography Series (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 1993).

section within the book. He notes that Abraham's faith in both success and failures provides critical lessons for all worshippers.

Andrew Hill has an excellent writing titled *Enter His Courts with Praise: Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church*.⁴³ Hill discusses the importance of Old Testament worship for the New Testament church by providing biblical stories and how they teach different lessons of worship. This material is then applied to worship in the New Testament Church. He discusses the different forms and functions, place and piety, and arts and actions of worship within the Old Testament.

Another writing by Robert Webber, titled *The Sacred Actions of Christian Worship*,⁴⁴ discusses the origins and historical development of the sacred actions of the church. This includes how these actions apply to the church today. The articles and writings included are authored by scholars from different denominational backgrounds; they offer objective information applicable for the modern-day church including insight into sacred actions of worship founded and practiced by the patriarch Abraham.

Ed Noort provides an excellent article that discusses Abraham's faith and the nations. In "Abraham and the Nations," Noort observes Abraham's faith from the Hebrew Bible and discusses Abraham's relationship to the nations. This article clarifies God's call to Abraham and how it relates to the call to worship.

Iain Duguid is professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary and has an excellent writing titled, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality: The Gospel*

⁴³ Andrew Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise: Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993).

⁴⁴ Robert Webber, *The Sacred Actions of Christian Worship, vol. 6, The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994).

According to Abraham.⁴⁵ Duguid shows how Abraham's faith grew throughout the Genesis narrative pointing toward Jesus and the gospels. Despite Abraham's shortcomings, God still used Abraham. Duguid's writing shows how God ultimately used an average man to accomplish his divine purpose.

Joyce Baldwin provides excellent insights into the Abrahamic narrative in his commentary, The Message of Genesis 12-50: Abraham to Joseph.⁴⁶ Baldwin's reflections highlight worship principles within the Abrahamic narrative and their application to worship practice within the Abrahamic narrative and the modern-day evangelical context.

Terence Fretheim is Professor Emeritus Elva B. Lovell Prof. of Old Testament at Luther Seminary and is an accomplished theologian and writer. Fretheim has an excellent study of Abraham titled Abraham: Trails of Family and Faith. Fretheim's study guides the reader through the intricacies of the plot within the Abrahamic narrative. Fretheim's study observes the Abrahamic narrative from the perspective of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, viewing Abraham's family from each perspective.

The late Dr. John H. Sailhamer served as a professor of Old Testament studies at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. His biblical theological Commentary titled, The Pentateuch as Narrative,⁴⁷ provides a unique view into how the narrative found within the Pentateuch is seamlessly intertwined to form a complete and uniform story. This unique writing shows how the Jewish community as well as the patriarchs viewed God's covenant relationship and how ultimately man could not live up to God's holy standard - paving the way for the hope of the

⁴⁵ Iain Duguid, Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality: The Gospel According to Abraham. Phillipsburg, (NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015).

⁴⁶ Joyce G. Baldwin, The Message of Genesis 12-50: From Abraham to Joseph, ed. J. A. Motyer and Derek Tidball, The Bible Speaks Today (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986)

⁴⁷ John H. Sailhamer. The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

New Covenant. Dr. Sailhamer emphasizes the narrative and literary aspects of the Pentateuch, giving insight into how the text would be interpreted by the originally intended Jewish audience. In doing so, he observes how this understanding impacts the modern-day reading of the Torah. In chapter 1, Sailhamer discusses the book of Genesis giving insight into how the Abrahamic narrative impacts the rest of the Pentateuch and Scripture.

Dr. Sailhamer also authored a commentary in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* on the book of *Genesis*.⁴⁸ This commentary provides biblical scholarship in a manner that is understandable for the reader but still scholarly. All Greek and Hebrew texts are transliterated into English. Sections that provide commentary concerning the narrative of Abraham are observed in order to develop an exegetical approach to what Abraham reveals about worship.

Dr. David Allen is professor of preaching, director of the Southwestern Center for Expository Preaching, George W. Truett Chair of Ministry, and dean of the school of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an accomplished writer and pastor for over 21 years. In his commentary, *Hebrews: The New American Commentary*,⁴⁹ Allen provides useful commentary concerning Hebrews 11 as it pertains to the study of Abraham's faith. Allen's study provides great insight into the Abrahamic narrative and the faith that was ultimately present within Abraham's life.

Worship in Ancient Israel: An Essential Guide, by Walter Brueggemann provides excellent insight into the worship traditions of ancient Israel in the Old Testament.⁵⁰

Brueggemann is a leading Old Testament theologian and former professor at Columbia

⁴⁸ John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 167.

⁴⁹ David L. Allen, *Hebrews, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010)

⁵⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Worship In Ancient Israel: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005).

Theological Seminary located in Decatur Georgia. Brueggemann provides useful insight regarding biblical themes, prayers, festivals, and practices present in ancient Israel's worship. The author begins by separating Abraham's worship of Yahweh from other heathen gods and proceeds to discuss how formation of Israel's worship is initiated by God and responded by form man.

Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning, by H.H. Rowley, discusses the foundations of worship from the patriarchs until the New Testament period.⁵¹ The late H.H. Rowley was a leading Old Testament scholar and Professor of Semitic Languages at the University of Manchester. This study includes an inductive look into the faith of the patriarchs concerning their worship of Yahweh and how this forms the foundations understood about ancient Hebrew worship. Rowley's history-of-religion approach is distinctive in this progressive historical methodology used to discuss Hebrew worship. Chapters one and two provide useful information into understanding Hebrew worship for the means of this study.

Dr. John Lawlor is Emeritus Professor of Old Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and has contributed to several Old Testament commentaries. He also has authored several journal articles including one titled "*The Test of Abraham Genesis 22:1-19*,"⁵² that discusses Abraham's offering of Isaac and the unique literary features present during Abraham's test. This article offers critical information relevant for the discussion of true sacrifice and its relationship to worship for chapter 5. Lawlor discusses the importance of understanding the "test" that Abraham experienced. He also offers possibilities for why Abraham may have been

⁵¹ H.H. Rowley. *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010).

⁵² John I. Lawlor, "The Test of Abraham Genesis 22:1-19," *Grace Theological Journal* 1, no. 1 (1980): 19-35.

tested by God in regard to other uses of the word *nasah* (translated to ‘test’ within the English context) within the Old Testament.

David Peterson presents a biblical theology of worship through the progressive nature of God’s identity in his writing titled *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*.⁵³ Peterson discusses the importance of relying on the Bible as the foundational point of worship rather than the opinions of individuals which creates division within the church. He challenges individuals to rethink the meaning of worship based off a biblical understanding of how God is to be worship that is rooted within the Old and New Testaments. Chapters one, two, and four will aid in discussing worship through the lens of Abraham and Moses.

Another source that aids in understanding the Hebrew foundations of worship is written by Rodney D. Whaley and is titled *Developing a Strategy of Worship for Evangelical Believers Born from 1945 to 1955*.⁵⁴ In chapter three of his discussion, Whaley points out Old Testament Principles of Worship realized through the biblical character of Abraham. According to this writing, worship under the patristic period antedates worship found in the Mosaic Law.⁵⁵ This is critical because it shows the continuity of worship between the two biblical figures of Abraham and Moses and their importance to the worship scene of the church today.

*Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*⁵⁶ by Victor Hamilton looks at the continuity of the Old Testament books of the Law with the rest of Scripture. Hamilton is professor emeritus of Old Testament at Asbury University. His writing provides information concerning the content, structure, and theology that the Pentateuch teaches

⁵³ David Peterson. *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

⁵⁴ Rodney D. Whaley. “Developing a Strategy of Worship for Evangelical Believers Born from 1945 to 1955” (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 2010).

⁵⁵ Ibid, 31.

⁵⁶ Victor P. Hamilton. *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 2nd Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

by observing the five books of the Torah and identifying overarching themes present within Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The themes highlighted in his writing on Genesis proves useful in understanding worship elements presented in the life of Abraham.

Hamilton also authored two commentary books on *Genesis* in the *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* series, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*,⁵⁷ and *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*.⁵⁸ Both of these commentaries include sections that aid in understanding the Abrahamic narrative. These commentaries aid in bringing understanding of the patriarchs cultural to the modern-day church. Hamilton's writing clearly portrays God's word in a manner that is relatable and understandable for modern-day worshippers while maintaining the integrity of the original text.

From Paradise to Promise Land: An Introduction of the Pentateuch,⁵⁹ by T. Desmond Alexander provides paramount information regarding God's purpose found within the Pentateuch. Alexander's writing is divided into two primary parts. Part two emphasizes main themes recognized throughout the Pentateuch including worship themes present within the lives of Abraham. This includes the blessing of the nations, faith of Abraham, covenant at Sinai, and the Tabernacle. This writing serves as a key source for the objective of this thesis study.

Byron Wheaton is an adjunct professor at Ryle Theological Seminary and at Heritage Theological Seminary in Ontario Canada and has authored several articles including, "*Focus and Structure in the Abrahamic Narrative*."⁶⁰ His analysis provides information regarding the

⁵⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 5.

⁵⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 97.

⁵⁹ T. Desmond Alexander. *From Paradise to Promise Land: An Introduction of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

⁶⁰ Byron Wheaton, "Focus and Structure in the Abraham Narrative," *Trinity Journal* 27, no. 1 (2006): 143-162.

Abrahamic narrative by tracing God's two promises of land and seed throughout the storyline. He writes, "In Abraham, God has created a person who, in the moment of trial, trusts God's Word for his future as it relates both to land and seed. This distinguishes him from his ancestor Adam who through unbelief forfeited the land and corrupted the seed."⁶¹ Wheaton's contributions to the study of the patriarch Abraham proves useful in discovering biblical patterns of worship recognized through God's disclosure to Abraham as the father of the nation of Israel.

God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible,⁶² by Vaughan Roberts observes what Scripture has to say concerning God's design for worship throughout the Bible. The overarching purpose of Scripture is seen as pointing man towards Jesus Christ as the supreme subject of the Bible and the salvation which is offered through Jesus' atoning sacrifice. While Roberts' text studies the complete storyline of the Bible, chapter four traces the development of the Hebrew nation from Genesis 12 through Exodus 18. This is important in understanding God's promise to Abraham and how this promise is traced through Scripture which reveals principles of worship for the modern-day evangelical worshipper.

Timothy Ralston provides an excellent article that discusses the importance of remembrance in worship. In "Remember and Worship: The Mandate and the Means," Ralston looks at the biblical foundations of remembrance as an act of worship. This article is useful in observing how Abraham's altars act as places of remembrance and a method of worship within the Old Testament narrative.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid., 162.

⁶² Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

⁶³ Ralston, Tim Ralston. "Remember and Worship: The Mandate and the Means." *Reformation Revival* 9, no. 3 (2000): 77-87.

Illnam Kim submitted a dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary entitled *The Question of Conditional Features in the Abrahamic Covenant*.⁶⁴ Kim discusses features of ancient near eastern covenants followed by the distinct features recognized within the Abrahamic covenant. He also provides information into qualities of the Abrahamic covenant that provide understanding of biblical principles of worship realized through God's promise to Abraham.

The Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 2 Genesis 16-50, by Gordon Wenham is one commentary resource referenced throughout the study of Abraham in order to develop a proper theological understanding of the biblical text.⁶⁵ Wenham is a British Old Testament scholar and considered a Pentateuch expert and lecturer in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol. His writing aids in developing the overarching picture of Abraham's worship practice by observing the original Hebrew meaning of words and the context in which they were originally written. Wenham's expertise in the Pentateuch and specifically Genesis is fundamental acknowledging the original intended purpose of the Abrahamic narrative.

James Brashler published a journal article in 2017 entitled, "*Abraham and the covenant people*."⁶⁶ In the article, Brashler discusses three unique features found in God's covenant with Abraham seen in Genesis 15:1-6 and 17 through 21. The article points out man's chief purpose is to glorify God and to serve the Lord alone. The features of the covenant discussed in Brashler's writing help with the development of biblical principles of worship recognized through Abraham's calling.

⁶⁴ Illnam Kim, "The Question of Conditional Features in the Abrahamic Covenant," (Ph.D. Diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Cordova, TN: 2011).

⁶⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1994).

⁶⁶ James Brashler, "Abraham and the Covenant People," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, Uniform Lesson, (Oct 2017).

Another critical text to understanding the concept of worship through the view of Abraham is Samuel E. Balentine's book, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*.⁶⁷ This study is founded on the Old Testament principles of worship recognized through the Pentateuch. This study does not provide a history of Israel's worship but rather provides a vision of worship recognized in the Torah through observing the priesthood, creation, liturgy, and covenant. Balentine's discussion is broken down into three sections with the first part emphasizing the importance of the worship environment known in "the Persian area." Part two discusses principles of worship recognized through "the Pentateuch." Part three notes of "how the Torah shapes worship for the world."

An additional source for recognizing principles of worship through Abraham's life is seen through Richard Briggs and Joel Lohr's writing entitled *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah as Christian Scripture*.⁶⁸ This writing focuses on themes present within the Torah and shows how the Pentateuch is interpreted and read by modern-day readers. The topics stressed in this writing relate to ideas present within the account of the life of Abraham.

Kenneth Mathews is the author of *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, in the *New American Commentary* series.⁶⁹ He is the Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama and teaches Old Testament as well as Hebrew exegesis. This commentary is based on the *New International Version* and provides sound scholarly methodology by referencing the original Hebrew content. This commentary proves useful in its application as an expository tool to understanding worship principles present through the Abrahamic narrative.

⁶⁷ Samuel E. Balentine. *The Torah's Vision of Worship*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999).

⁶⁸ Richard S. Briggs and Joel N. Lohr. *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah as Christian Scripture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

⁶⁹ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005).

Tim Hegg provides an excellent article that discusses circumcision within the Abrahamic narrative. In “Circumcision as a Sign: The Theological Significance,” Hegg explains the theological implications of circumcision. This study proves useful in understanding circumcision as a sign of the covenant verses as the actual covenant. Abraham’s faith is recognized before the seal of circumcision. Thus, circumcision is simply a sign of the covenant and an act of obedience resulting in worship.

Biblical Ecclesiological Foundations

Harold Best is the emeritus professor of music and dean emeritus of Wheaton College Conservatory of Music. His writing, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*, identifies misconceptions of worship within the modern-day church and seeks to redefine worship for the modern-day church through shifting one’s focus of worship back to its biblical foundations.⁷⁰ He discusses that humans are created worshipping and that Christians have misconceived worship to simply thoughts concerning music styles and liturgical forms. According to Best, “It is vital that these misconceptions are recognized and corrected.” This source identifies the need to rediscover biblical principles of worship.

In *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, Bob Kauflin discusses the biblical foundations of God-honoring worship while pointing toward practical applications in order to teach others to worship.⁷¹ He serves as the Director of Sovereign Grace Ministries and previously traveled with the music group GLAD as a songwriter, speaker, and arranger. Kauflin discusses a variety of topics including how to base our worship on God’s self-

⁷⁰ Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003).

⁷¹ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matter: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

revelation rather than our assumptions, the fuel of worship, the community of worship, and the ways that eternity's worship should affect our earthly worship.

Dr. Gary Mathena submitted the Doctor of Worship Studies thesis project to Liberty University entitled *The Romanian Church Musician: Biblical Foundations for Training Musicians to Serve the Romanian Evangelical Church*.⁷² Mathena discusses different schools of thought concerning the foundations of worship throughout Scripture. The project is aimed at training musicians to serve within the Romanian evangelical church. However, this thesis project also aids in understanding the continuity of worship throughout Scripture in order to: 1) develop a strong understanding of worship; and 2) identify key principles about worship through Abraham's journey, faith, inter-action with God and life-story.

Another useful resource is *Real Worship: Playground, Battle Ground, or Holy Ground*, by Warren Wiersbe.⁷³ The late Wiersbe was an American pastor, teacher, and author. His contributions in *Real Worship* includes four elements, including: 1) wonder, 2) witness, 3) warfare, and 4) wisdom – all as related and applied to worship. He also discusses key issues present within the modern-day churches understanding of worship including concerns surrounding art, liturgy, worship styles, and music. Wiersbe's writing aids in identifying weaknesses in the modern-day evangelical church's understanding of worship while also working toward developing a proper definition of worship. His main objective is to aid pastors, teachers, and worship leaders in teaching and equipping congregations to worship.

⁷² Gary Mathena, "The Romanian Church Musician: Biblical Foundations for Training Musicians to Serve the Romanian Evangelical Church" (D.W.S. Thesis, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA: 2017), accessed August 25, 2020.

⁷³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship: Playground, Battle Ground, or Holy Ground*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

Story Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History,⁷⁴ by Robbie Castleman, discusses worship practice through the shape of worship as highlighted throughout Scripture. Castleman is a Biblical Studies professor at John Brown University. In this writing, She strives to help students, teachers, worship leaders, and congregations strive for biblical centered worship. This is accomplished through tracing biblical patterns of worship throughout Scripture. She does this by splitting her discussion into two primary parts: Biblical Patterns and Historical Patterns. Chapters one, two, and three are most beneficial in giving insight into biblical patterns recognized within the Pentateuch and biblical characters of Abraham and Moses.

Martin Timoney submitted a Doctor of Education dissertation to Liberty University identifying core components of Christian humility. In his dissertation, *Identifying the Core Components of Christian Humility*,⁷⁵ Timoney discusses the importance of humility as a key component of relationships, religion, spirituality, and attachment style. It specifically examines humility as defined in Philippians 2:3-8 in relation to contemporary literature concerning the discipline of humility. Timoney's writing provides the foundations for outlining the importance of humility within the Christian walk as it relates to worship within the modern-day evangelical church.

One thesis project submitted to Lincoln Christian Seminary by Kent A. Sanders titled *Worship Leadership in the Bible*, surveys and highlights the Bible's defining characteristics of worship through "godly character, and humble competence."⁷⁶ This is accomplished by

⁷⁴ Robbie F. Castleman. *Story Shaped Worship: Following Patterns From the Bible and History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

⁷⁵ Martin B. Timoney, "Identifying the Core Components of Christian Humility," (D.Ed. Diss., Liberty University, Lynchberg, VA: 2020).

⁷⁶ Kent A. Sanders. "Worship Leadership in the Bible" (Lincoln Christian Seminary, Lincoln, IL, 2006) accessed September 20, 2020.

stressing characteristics recognized through biblical characters and personalities. Principles gleaned from these individuals are then applied to worship leadership within the modern-day evangelical church. Chapter one through three examine worship leadership within the Old Testament and are of most importance for the means of this particular study.

In Richard Oliver's Doctor of Ministry thesis titled *The Development and Evaluation of a Seminary Course in Worship Theology*,⁷⁷ he discusses the importance of worship and serving. Within the study, Oliver offers insight into how service of God is related to remembering God's faithfulness through genuine, heartfelt response. This shows how remembrance of God's faithfulness as a component of true worship. He also discusses the biblical-theological basis of worship which proves to be useful in discussing principles of worship recognized through the life of Abraham.

In a thesis paper presented to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary titled *The Worship of the New Testament Church: Grammatical and Contextual Analysis of First-Century Christian Devotion*, James Holmes discusses the early church's understanding of worship in relationship to the Old Testament.⁷⁸ Specific attention is given toward the first century church's understanding of the word "worship" and the common misunderstanding of worship by the present-day church. Holmes strives to rediscover the biblical meaning of worship through a grammatical study of worship by the early church and the meaning of worship in the Old Testament. This source gives useful information regarding the Old Testament's understanding of worship.

⁷⁷ Richard S. Oliver. *The Development and Evaluation of a Seminary Course in Worship Theology* (Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX, 2007).

⁷⁸ James Holmes, *The Worship of the New Testament Church: Grammatical and Contextual Analysis of First-Century Christian Devotion* (D.Min. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 2003) accessed August 27, 2020.

Marks Woods published an article with *Christianity Today* on the importance of humility within the Christian life entitled, “*Why Humility is at the Heart of Christianity.*”⁷⁹ Woods is a Baptist minister and serves as the managing editor of *Christianity Today*. In the publication, he describes how humility is ultimately the foundation of all relationships and serves as a fundamental part of the life of the church. The link between worship and humility is evident through Abraham’s life and the application of humility is accentuated through Wood’s writing.

A.W. Tozer was an American pastor and author during the early twentieth century. Several of his writings give insight into man’s purpose and design to worship God. Two of his writings which provide principles of worship needed within the modern-day church include: *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*⁸⁰ and *Worship: The Reason We Were Created*.⁸¹ Both sources aid in developing why worship revitalization is needed within the modern-day evangelical church and revealing man’s purpose to worship a perfect, holy, and all-powerful Creator.

Another resource that provides excellent insight into worship from A.W. Tozer includes *Tozer on Worship and Entertainment: Selected Excerpts*. This writing from the theologian gives excellent insight into worship versus entertainment and helps identify key characteristics of true worship. Other writings from Tozer used in this project include, *The Pursuit of God*, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, *The Knowledge of the Holy*; *The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* and *Whatever Happened to Worship?: A Call to True Worship*.

⁷⁹ Mark Woods, “Why Humility is at the Heart of Christianity,” Last modified March 31, 2016. <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/why.humility.is.at.the.heart.of.christianity/83042.htm>.

⁸⁰ A.W. Tozer. *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009).

⁸¹ A.W. Tozer. *Worship: The Reason We Were Created-Collected Insights from A.W. Tozer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017).

Each writing gives insight into the worship scene present within the modern-day church and helps identify key values of worship.

Don Tuttle wrote the Doctor of Ministry thesis for Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary entitled, *A Strategy for Identifying the Necessary Elements of a Worship Studies Program*.⁸² Tuttle's research is centered on identifying principles of worship for the modern-day contemporary church through studying biblical research, field studies, and surveys. Sections of this writing found within chapter two, *The Biblical Foundations of Worship*, prove useful in identifying elements of worship from the Old Testament applicable for evangelical worship today.

The Worship Reformation: Examining Trends in Worship, Worship Music, and Possible Revival Implications, is the Doctor of Ministry thesis project submitted by Dr. Russell Whitener to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.⁸³ Whitener's project addresses contemporary worship from a biblical lens by tackling the origins of worship, history of Christian worship, and assessing trends emerging in Christian worship. He makes specific application of biblical principles of worship through the historical progression of the church and demonstrates how those principles can be applied within church worship practices today.

Dallas Willard discusses in his book titled *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*,⁸⁴ the process of Christian transformation. He explains why, among other things, a Christian's life must be in a state of continual renewal to be more and more "like Christ." Principles drawn from chapter thirteen apply to worship principles within the modern-

⁸² Don W. Tuttle. *A Strategy for Identifying the Necessary Elements of a Worship Studies Program* (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 1999).

⁸³ Russell E. Whitener, *The Worship Reformation: Examining Trends in Worship, Worship Music, and Possible Revival Implications* (D.Min. Thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, 2004), accessed August 26, 2020.

⁸⁴ Dallas Willard. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. (Colorado Springs, CO: 2002).

day evangelical church. This aids in identifying elements of spiritual formation in regard to worship within the modern-day evangelical church.

John MacArthur is a radio preacher and writer; he has served as the pastor at Grace Community Church in Sun Valley California since February of 1969. MacArthur is a theologian who has authored books that discuss worship, including *Worship: The Ultimate Priority*.⁸⁵ MacArthur discusses worship as the primary theme of the Scriptures. Worship is a continual way of living in God's plan according to MacArthur. This work is useful in discussing the importance of living a life of worship as seen through Abraham; it evaluates the worship principles apparent within the life of Abraham as actual worship.

Noel Due is an accomplished author and pastor. In his writing, *Created for Worship: From Genesis to Revelation*, he traces the storyline of worship throughout Scripture. Due brings clarity to our understanding of worship throughout the book of Genesis and the Abrahamic narrative, providing useful examples for worshippers in the modern-day church. Due highlights biblical themes and principles that are readily seen throughout the entire Scriptures.

Os Guinness is a renowned author and social critic. In his writing, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose in Your Life*,⁸⁶ he discusses man's purpose and sheds unique insight into man's design to worship God. This writing proves useful for the means of this study in understanding how worship principles first established through Abraham still apply to worship in the modern-day evangelical church. Guinness examines questions concerning why we are here, what God's calling in our life is, and how our lives ultimately fit into God's divine plan. He

⁸⁵ John MacArthur. *Worship the Ultimate Priority*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012).

⁸⁶ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose in Your Life*, (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2003).

concludes that man's deepest desires are only satisfied by accepting the call of God. It is only through the obedient response to God's call that man find purpose and fulfillment in life.

Chapter 3 - Abraham's Calling

This chapter addresses the question, “What biblical principles of worship are observed through God’s calling of Abraham?” The divine relationship between Abraham and God reveals critical information necessary for understanding God’s plan for the redemption of mankind and His desire for every man, woman, boy and girl to be a worshipper of the Most High God. It is through Abraham’s calling that the precedent of worship as a holy nation is established. T. Desmond Alexander writes in his book, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*:

“It marks the beginning of a new stage in God’s relationship with humanity, sets the agenda for the entire Abraham story and beyond, and introduces themes that will be developed in the following narrative.”⁸⁷

In Genesis 17, God changes Abram’s name. This change is significant because it serves as a testimony of God’s covenant with the prophet. The name “Abram” means “exalted father,” giving reference to Abram’s father, Terah. Abram’s new name, “Abraham,” means “father of a multitude.”⁸⁸ The name “Abraham” is used exclusively for the purposes of this research narrative and study.

The Preparation to Worship

Preparation is critical. Whether you are an athlete, musician, doctor, or some other profession, preparation remains a central element of the job in which you fulfill. In the same manner that preparation is important in order to fulfill a job or task, God uses a time of preparation in order to prepare his saints for the ministry calling He designs for them. Throughout Scripture there are moments and times of teaching where God prepares the vessel He chooses to use in order to fulfill His divine plan. The first “vessel” that God appears and chooses

⁸⁷ T. Desmond Alexander. *From Paradise to Promise Land: An Introduction of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 175.

⁸⁸ Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 120.

to bless humanity through is Abraham. However, in order for Abraham to receive and respond to the call of God, he first had to be prepared for worship.

Abraham's Preparation

The first record of Abraham is found in Genesis 11:27-32:

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Here, the author of Genesis reveals that Abraham is the son of Terah and is from the land of Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur of the Chaldeans was known for religious prostitution, huge buildings devoted to false worship, and obedience to gods of fertility, cosmic ritual, and elements of vulgarity.⁸⁹ Abraham's father, brothers, and wife's names all are named after false gods associated with the moon. Apparently, Abraham's father Terah and his family worshiped many gods.⁹⁰ Abraham, likewise, would be familiar with the pagan worship practices of his native land. However, even in the middle of a people that worshipped false gods, Yahweh was preparing Abraham to fulfill his calling to be the father of a nation.

The "story of Abraham" actually begins with Terah in Genesis 11:27-32.⁹¹ Terah, not Abraham, is first to begin the journey to Canaan. Terah's motives to relocate are unknown but it

⁸⁹ Vernon Whaley, "Lesson on Worship from Abraham – God Responds to Worship with a Promise," (Trevecca University: Lecture on Worship, Accessed November 19, 2020).

⁹⁰ See Joshua 24:2

⁹¹ Most often, studies of Abram begin with Genesis 12:1 and neglect the Genesis 11:27-32 record.

is clear that his objective is to relocate to Canaan. However, Terah does not make it to Canaan. Instead, they take up residence in Haran.⁹²

It is clear that the idea of settling in Canaan was planted in Abraham's mind long before God ever formerly issued "the call." Abraham's preparation for worship occurs *before* he is called, identified, and established as a worshipper of the one true God.

Knowing Abraham's upbringing demonstrates that Abraham was no stranger to worship. Certainly, he was exceedingly familiar with the pagan worship practices of many gods, which often included altars of sacrifice; nonetheless, Abraham experienced a relationship with the one true God. God used this time to prepare the prophet to be the "father of a nation." Abraham reveals that worship requires a time of *preparation*. Preparation is a clear principle of worship. God has a purpose that He prepares all worshippers for even before He calls them.

Abraham could not have guessed the manner in which God would use his life from his initial call in Genesis 12, but when Abraham glanced back over his life, he most certainly would be able to discern God's faithfulness. God prepared Abraham for the ministry calling that He planned for the good of Abraham and his family.

Preparation and Worship

God prepares believers for worship. David Peterson writes in his landmark book, *Engaging with God* that "Acceptable worship does not start with human intuition or inventiveness, but with the action of God."⁹³ It is important to understand that the action of God is His time of preparing His people for worship. The manner in which God prepares worshippers for the gospel ministry may not always be immediately apparent but the situations and

⁹² See Genesis 11:31

⁹³ David Peterson, *Engaging With God. Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 26.

circumstances they often find themselves in frequently serve as a means for equipping for God's future call on their lives. So it is with Abraham's time of preparation to worship. The Lord is present and moving while preparing Abraham for a lifetime of worship and service – all as a means to ultimately fulfill His divine purpose.

However, preparation does not always result in immediate success. Abraham was promised that he would be made into a mighty nation. While Abraham never witnessed this promise come to fruition, he still believed that God would faithfully follow through.

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she^[d] bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. . . These all died in faith [including Abraham and Sarah], not **having** received the promises, but **having** seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (Hebrews 11:8-13 NKJV)

The Call to Worship

Abraham's Call

In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham to worship. The call of Abraham parallels God's previous covenant made with Noah. Noah was a righteous man who lived in the midst of a wicked world. God called Noah to build an ark in preparation of a great flood that would judge and destroy every living creature. Noah obeyed and built the ark taking with him one pair of every living animal. After the flood, Noah built an altar and offered burnt sacrifices which

pleased the Lord. God then made a covenant with Noah promising to never bring judgement to every living creature and sealed the covenant with a rainbow as a sign of His promise.⁹⁴

In the Noahic narrative man's disobedience and corruption provoked God to destroy the earth with water. Noah's personal promise from God, His covenant, comes after the flood waters recede and a rainbow appears across the sky. God makes a covenant with Noah that the earth will never be destroyed again by water. God's covenant with Abraham is in direct response to the prophet's answer to "the call" and faithful obedience to the Lord. Whaley writes, "The record of Abraham's commitment to family follows the story of Noah, The Flood, confusion of languages, and the genealogy of Shem. The account of his faithfulness to YAHWEH⁹⁵ is seen in sharp contrast to the stories and consequences for disobedience, self-consumption, and wickedness in Genesis 6-11."⁹⁶ God's plan for Abraham is unique because it establishes a pattern for worship as it relates to faithfulness and obedience.

It is through God's contract (covenant) with Abraham that He clearly establishes and reveals a divine plan for redemption. Dr. Allen Ross notes, "What is recorded here (Genesis 12:1-9) is not the Abrahamic covenant, although the blessings offered here will be ensured by the covenant. At this point the promises are conditioned upon Abraham's obedient faith."⁹⁷ This initial interaction between God and Abraham lays the groundwork for the Abrahamic covenant.

In the first eleven chapters of Genesis sin takes root and is connected to the curse of death at least five times.⁹⁸ However, through the Abrahamic account, as recorded in Genesis 12, God begins a process of restoration with a promise to bless and redeem man. In his book, *Living in*

⁹⁴ See Genesis 6:1-11:32.

⁹⁵ The name used by the Hebrews to describe Jehovah, God. The Hebrews would not speak His name so they used this word to describe "the Lord." (Ross, 142-144)

⁹⁶ Vernon M. Whaley, "Lesson on Worship from Abraham," Accessed November 19, 2020.

⁹⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 262.

⁹⁸ Gen.2:17; 4:11; 6:5; 9:25; 11:4.

the Gap Between Promise and Reality, Iain Duguid explains how... “God begins the process of re-creating for himself a people by pronouncing a fivefold blessing upon Abraham.”⁹⁹ This blessing is totally dependent on Abraham’s obedience. While it is unclear how God would have responded had Abraham disobeyed, it is evident that the prophet’s call resulted in his faithful obedience. Alexander writes,

“The fulfillment of the divine promises is conditional on Abraham’s obedience. By commanding him to leave his homeland and be a blessing, God places the onus on Abraham to obey in order that the promises concerning land, descendants, and the blessing of others may be fulfilled.”¹⁰⁰

The conditional nature of this interaction between God and Abraham indicates Abraham’s specific call to worship. Abraham can then choose to obey God’s divine call.

Abraham’s call is the inauguration of God’s plan of salvation for all humanity and with it, the call to worship. His call serves as an important break in the storyline of Genesis according to Ed Noort. He observes that Genesis 12:1-3 serves as a “linchpin” of two different sections—Genesis 1-11, “the history of human sin,” and Genesis 12-50, “the history of salvation.”¹⁰¹ Abram’s calling, then functions as the foundation of God’s plan of redemption for mankind.

Illam Kim, author of *The Question of Conditional Features in the Abrahamic Covenant*, writes,

“As the starting point of Genesis 12-50, Genesis 12:1-3 served as God's divine response to the miserable human destiny under the curse of sin by giving human beings a hope for salvation.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality: The Gospel According to Abraham*. Phillipsburg, (NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 14.

¹⁰⁰ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 175.

¹⁰¹ Ed Noort, "Abraham and the Nations," in *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, ed. Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten, and Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3.

¹⁰² Illnam Kim, “The Question of Conditional Features in the Abrahamic Covenant,” (Ph.D. Diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Cordova, TN: 2011), 42.

It is God's divine intervention in the midst of the tragic fall of humanity that initiates the Divine call of man to worship, clearly evident in the command for Abraham to "go" (Genesis 12).

Genesis 12:1-3 establishes Abraham as a worshipper and the Hebrew people as a nation.

It is in Genesis 12:1-3 that God first interacts with Abraham:

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"¹⁰³

Three primary elements outline the promise God made with Abraham: 1) People.

Abraham is promised that he and his descendants will become a great nation and become "God's own people." 2) Land. He is also told to leave his homeland and go to the land of Canaan in which God promises to show him. 3) A Nation. God also promises that Abraham and his descendants will be a blessing to the entire earth and that the world will ultimately be blessed through Abraham.

Roberts notes that these three elements reverse the effects of sin mentioned in Genesis 1-11. He writes, "The covenant with Abraham is a promise of the kingdom of God: God's people (Abraham's descendants) in God's place (the promised land) under God's rule and therefore enjoying His blessing. It is a promise to reverse the effects of the fall."¹⁰⁴

God's calling of Abraham results in a promise through which all humanity will ultimately be blessed revealing His plan for redemption. Where false worship, or worship of self is witnessed within the first eleven chapters of Genesis, God begins a new beginning (so to speak) that is dependent of Abraham's obedience to God's calling.

¹⁰⁴ Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, 55.

Genesis 12:1-3 initiates an inaugural call for Abraham to worship the one true God. Whereas previously in the book of Genesis disobedience resulted in curses and death, here Abraham's obedience sets the stage for a new dynamic, personal relationship with God. The interaction between God and Abraham reveals God's covenantal nature with humanity and a *call to worship*.

Abraham was inaugurated as the beginning of a chosen people through which the rest of the world would ultimately receive God's blessings. God has a unique call for each and every worshipper. Duguid writes, "We have grown used to comfortable mediocrity and find it hard to hope for real change... Yet Abraham embarked on the way of greatness by following the path of self-sacrifice."¹⁰⁵

Faithful Obedience

Abraham's Obedience

Worship requires *obedience*. Whaley notes this principle, "Obedience is central to worship."¹⁰⁶ God's call for Abraham to "go" required a response. According to Genesis 12:4, Abraham did obey God and left Ur in pursuit of the land that God promised. God's promise was sufficient motivation for Abraham to faithfully obey.

Abraham's obedience forges the beginning of a new relational connection between God and man. Terence Fretheim in his study *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith* states, "God's new commitment to the relationship with Abraham that promising entails, makes for a new identity for the one who now responds in trust and obedience."¹⁰⁷ Abraham's identity is forever changed by his obedience to God's call. This identity is one that now separates Abraham from others.

¹⁰⁵ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality*, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 42.

¹⁰⁷ Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2007), 9.

Abraham's response is rooted in his own dynamic faith in God. Fretheim writes, "Abraham's obedience is not 'naked' obedience, dependent only upon his internal resources. The promises from God are the decisive reality in engendering the trust needed to obey the command."¹⁰⁸

There is indeed a fundamental difference between simple obedience and faithful obedience. Abraham did not simply obey God. He faithfully obeyed God's calling. Abraham's response reveals the importance of *faithful* obedience. Allen Ross observes in his *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, "If he had not believed he would not have obeyed, and the promises of God would not have been fulfilled."¹⁰⁹

The writer of Hebrews reinforces this idea by stating, "*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.*"¹¹⁰ Abraham does not question God. He responds to God's invitation with faithful obedience and pursues the promised land without clarity over where exactly it is that God has promised; this results in true worship. Ross suggests that

"Because he [Abraham] believed the word of the Lord, he left Ur for Canaan; and because he became a faithful believer in the sovereign God Yahweh, his worship was pleasing to God. It was true worship."¹¹¹

The commitment from Abraham to respond to God in obedience, by denying his prior pagan identity and identifying as a believer in Yahweh, demonstrates the importance of faithful obedience to God's call.¹¹² Abraham establishes himself as a true worshipper the moment he decides to trust God, faithfully obey His call, leave his family and the land of Ur.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁹ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 263.

¹¹⁰ See Hebrews 11:8

¹¹¹ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 136.

¹¹² Noel Due, *Created for Worship*. (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd.,2005),

It is unclear what actions God would have taken if Abraham had disobeyed, but what is certain is that the prophet responded in faithful obedience and his response resulted in true worship. Essex writes, “Abraham’s obedience would demonstrate his faith in God’s promise to give the land to him and his innumerable ‘seed.’”¹¹³

Faithful obedience is the essence of worship, requiring surrender to the will of God and fleeing desires of the flesh. Abraham demonstrates his willingness to surrender to the call of God by turning away from his previous identity rooted in his nationality and family.¹¹⁴ Abraham did not solely verbally proclaim Yahweh; he demonstrated his faith through obedience. The evidence of Abraham’s faith was his obedience to the Word of the Lord.¹¹⁵ Abraham’s faith and obedience are fixed in his assurance and certainty that Yahweh could and would follow through on his promises.

Abraham’s faith is apparently evidenced by his work of leaving. God desires worshippers to submit their self to His divine will through obedience and trust Him. Allen Ross supports this notion by saying, “Faith is demonstrated by obedience, but the circumstances in the story make this message especially powerful. Abraham’s obedience was not a simple act of faith; his was the conversion of a pagan.”¹¹⁶

Reverence and Worship

Abraham’s Reverential Worship

Abraham’s obedient response reveals that reverence is also a principle of authentic worship. It is demonstrated most clearly by the building of altars.¹¹⁷ The building of altars

¹¹³ Keith H. Essex, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” 199.

¹¹⁴ Noel Due, *Created for Worship*, 63.

¹¹⁵ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 263.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹¹⁷ Genesis 12:7; 12:8; 13:18; 22:9.

confirms that reverence is a key precept of worship, admiration and love for Yahweh.¹¹⁸

Abraham builds an altar after every encounter he has with God. Whaley writes,

“Every time God reveals Himself to man comes a human expression of worship... God appears to Abraham and says, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.’ In response, Abraham builds an altar ‘to the Lord, who had appeared.’¹¹⁹ Abram worships when returning to Canaan after living in Egypt during famine and drought.”¹²⁰ Abram’s response of worship is characterized by his reverence for Yahweh through the only manner he knew appropriate, the erecting of an altar.

It is important to note that Abraham is not prompted by God to build an altar, rather he genuinely responds to God’s revelation by disclosing his reverence and respect for Yahweh.

Ross observes,

“When Abraham built his altar to Yahweh (Gen. 12:7), it was not a perfunctory religious act. Not only was it the spontaneous response of a heart of faith to an amazing revelation from God, but it was also a sincere act of worship, proclaiming gratitude to the one who had called him, devotion to the one who was now his God, and submission to the plan of the one who would bring blessing to the world.”¹²¹

Abraham’s response to God’s confirmation is reverence. He understands Yahweh’s goodness, grace, protection, mercy, provision and promise and responds sincerely. After Abraham leaves Haran, God appears to the prophet to indicate what land his descendants will inherit.¹²² This confirmation of Yahweh’s promise reassures him of God’s faithfulness, resulting again in a spirit of *reverence*. Fretheim states,

“Having made promises, God can be counted on to be faithful to promises made. And so this means that God will be committed to a future with the one who has faithfully

¹¹⁸ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 42.

¹¹⁹ See Genesis 12:7

¹²⁰ Vernon M. Whaley, “Lessons on Worship From Abraham,” 6

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹²² Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.” Genesis 12:6-8

responded... By divine word, God has created a new family for both Abraham and God.”¹²³

Abraham is amazed when God reveals the land which his descendants will inherit. Again, he builds an altar and worships. Whaley writes,

“Abram did not wait until his calling to start worshipping Yahweh. He had been practicing public and private worship for some time. This is clear from the fact that his reverence for God led him to build altars. He already knew how to honor God. He had established a routine for his times with God. In other words, he was already a worshipper.”¹²⁴

Summary of the Worship Principles in this Chapter: Abraham’s Calling

Worship in the modern-day church is often equated to music and personal preferences.

Robbie F. Castleman writes in her *Story Shaped Worship*:

“Services of worship can become storefront windows advertising the attractions of a community instead of an offering of the congregation’s gifts intended for God’s acceptance and pleasure, centered on God’s glory.”¹²⁵

The study of Abraham confirms the fact that the purposes for worship are much richer and deeper than artificial attractional settings to display some sort of superficial appreciation for the God of the universe.

Abraham’s mind was set to obey God’s command and usher in the glory of the true living God. He clearly recognized that it was God, a living and breathing deity, who was true to His promises. And he sought to live his life before God in such a way that no person could ever question his allegiance, calling and commitment to God. Abraham’s commitment to “the call” compels him to give his whole heart to God. In the words of Os Guinness,

“A life lived listening to the decisive call of God is a life lived before one audience that trumps all othersTo follow the call of God is therefore to live

¹²³ Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith*, 35.

¹²⁴ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 42.

¹²⁵ Robbie F. Castleman, *Story Shaped Worship*, 28.

before the heart of God. . . and thus to shift our awareness of audiences to the point where only the last and highest – God – counts.”¹²⁶

Abraham’s calling reveals a model for communal relationship between God and man that transcends. Four primary principles underscore Abraham’s calling:

First, God orchestrates a plan *preparation*. God at work in Abraham’s life preparing him to become a worshipper. This preparation process begins long before Abraham formally receives God’s call to service God was also preparing Abraham for worship in and through his life. The Lord affirms Abraham of his call assuring that God is still present and active in Abraham’s daily life. This is reassuring because it affirms that the Lord is continually working all things out. Proverbs 16:9 states, “The Lord has made everything for its purpose...” God has a purpose and plan meant to bring about good and is at work in the midst of everyday life.

Second, God issues Abraham *a call to worship*. Abraham’s “call to worship” includes the mandate to forsake his previous way of life and wholeheartedly pursue Yahweh. Herald Best writes,

“There can only be one call to worship, and this comes at conversion, when in complete repentance we admit to worshiping falsely, trapped by the inversion and enslaved to false gods before whom we have been dying sacrifices.”¹²⁷

All other aspects of Abraham’s life were conformed to his new identity as a worshipper of the one true God. The call to worship, as it relates to the worshipper, references God’s initial call to all worshippers to repent and be baptized.

God’s call . . . is no cliché. It is clear, powerful, substantive and compelling. And because it comes from God, and its beginning and ending rest on him, there is no pretense that it is all up to us.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Os Guinness. “The Audience of One”, In *The Call*, CRU Press Green, CruPress.com.

¹²⁷ Harold Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 147.

¹²⁸ Os Guinness. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God’s Purpose for Your Life*, (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2003).

Third, Abraham's call compels him to *be faithful and obedient*. Abraham faithfully obeys God's calling from a heart of true worship of God. The prophet understands that worship is not some sort of religious act but a true response of his heart's commitment to build a relationship with God. Tim Ralston writes,

“Worship, whether public or private, begins as a formal statement of wholehearted obedience to God. Only those who obey God's requirements for relationship with him are qualified to offer worship that God will accept.”¹²⁹

Fourth, the final principle of worship resulting from Abraham's calling is *reverence*. After God prepares and equips Abraham, He calls him. Abraham's response is quick, decisive and direct – faithful obedience to the call. Abraham demonstrates his undeniable reverence for God by building an altar and worshiping.

Abraham's calling demonstrates key, biblical principles of worship: Worship is a genuine response to God. Abraham's response is sincere, raw, genuine and authentic. Abraham's worship reflects his preparation, calling from God, faithful obedience of Yahweh, and a reverent heart for the Lord.

¹²⁹ Tim Ralston, “Remembrance and Worship: The Mandate and the Means,” 80.

Chapter 4 – Abraham’s Worship and the Covenant

Chapter four addresses principles of worship recognized through the Abrahamic Covenant. God’s ‘intervention’ with mankind may be seen clearly through His covenantal relationship with the Hebrew people demonstrated through His covenant with Abraham. God initiates a relationship with Abraham by initiating a “Call.” He then calls Abraham to a new life, new name, and new identity as the “Father of a great nation.”¹³⁰ God does this by establishing a covenant relationship – a promise-based bond with historical and universal consequence. As a result, Abraham’s worship grows to be a deeply personal, focused and holy relationship rooted in the truth of God’s promises.

The previous chapter considered worship principles realized through Abraham’s calling. Abraham’s determination to follow God likewise demonstrates Yahweh’s continued relationship with mankind, revealing basic values for worship through a covenant relationship. This period of Abraham’s life shows how he continued to follow the Lord and reveals key principles of worship for the modern-day evangelical church. This chapter examines historical theological research in order to gather key worship ideas.

Humility and Thanksgiving in Worship

Abraham Elevates the Lord

One important act of worship is seen through Abraham’s tithe offering to the king of Salem, Melchizedek. In Genesis 14, Lot is taken when armies rise up against Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham comes to Lot’s rescue and afterward is met by two kings. One king offers Abraham all of the goods in return for all the people while king Melchizedek offers Abraham

¹³⁰ Andrew Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise*, 14.

bread, wine, and a blessing. Abraham's response to the two kings ultimately shows the importance of humility and thanksgiving in worship.

Abraham's tithe reveals that *humility* is a key principle of worship. King Melchizedek stands as a priest of God Most High who offers Abraham the priestly elements of life, bread, wine, as well as great blessing.¹³¹ After Melchizedek blesses Abraham, the prophet offers a tenth of everything that was given to him as a simple, humble gesture of gratitude and thanksgiving for Yahweh's provision. Ross writes, "Abraham's devotion was exemplary in that he took nothing for himself except what should be given to the Lord in tribute."¹³² Abraham's humble response is seen as an act of worship through acknowledging God as the ultimate provider to his victory. He in return offers back a tenth to the Lord as a tithe. Abraham denies the recognition and credit for the victory and instead turns all of the glory and honor from the victory toward God Most High.

Abraham also offers *thanksgiving*, a critical principle of worship noted through the response to both kings. Trites writes, "In the Old Testament thank offerings were expressions of thanksgiving, showing gratitude for release from trouble, affliction, or death."¹³³ Here, Abraham offers a tenth of his blessing back to God, and in the process, demonstrates his gratitude to the Lord for leading him to victory over his enemies and rescuing Lot.

Melchizedek's blessing is offered to Abraham without conditions. The king of Sodom negotiates with Abraham, offering him all of the goods in exchange for all of the people who were taken captive and were rescued by Abraham.¹³⁴

¹³¹ King Melchizedek's blessing of Abram indicates that he is a prototype of Jesus Christ. "First, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Since a superior always blesses an inferior, Melchizedek must be the prototype of the only real high priest, Jesus Christ, who can claim superiority even to Abraham." Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation*, 139.

¹³² Allen Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 149.

¹³³ Allison A. Trites, "Thanksgiving," ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1295–1296.

¹³⁴ See Genesis 14:22

Ross writes, “Abram clearly and solidly refused the offer of the king of Sodom. He did not want Sodom to take the advantage to say that he was the one who made Abram rich, especially knowing what he did about the people of Sodom.”¹³⁵ Instead, Abraham lifts the name of the Lord high with thanksgiving through the giving of a tenth of all the everything. Duguid writes, “Abram recognized that the victory was God’s by offering his representative a tenth of all the spoils.”¹³⁶ Abraham did not have to offer anything. However, he recognized that his strength and victory ultimately came through the power of God Most High and in return humbles himself and offers a tithe in response to God’s faithfulness and goodness in defeating the armies who had taken Lot.

Humbleness and Thanksgiving

Abraham realized that his blessings were ultimately due by the provisions of Yahweh and Him alone. God had promised Abraham that he would be the source of Abraham’s blessing. Abraham then discerns that Melchizedek is acting as a priest of the Most High God offering him blessing. Brueggemann writes, “The type of Melchizedek is not concerned with *continuity or derivation* but with *a free gift from God*.”¹³⁷ Abraham’s encounter with the two kings reveals that true worshippers realize God’s provision and humble their selves in submission to God’s will by directing all glory to God alone.

Mark Wood states, “Humility is a core Christian value. It is key to how Christians relate to each other. It’s the foundation for a healthy church life. It reflects our deepest understanding of what God has done for us.”¹³⁸ Abraham demonstrates true humility in redirecting the glory of the victory toward God instead of accepting all of the glory and riches for himself.

¹³⁵ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 300–301.

¹³⁶ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality*, 45

¹³⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 139–140.

¹³⁸ Mark Woods, “Why Humility is at the Heart of Christianity.”

The tithe is an important act of worship. Whaley notes,

It is important to see that the first instance of tithing came *before* the law of Moses... believers who use these Scriptures are in disobedience to God and are, in fact, robbing God by refusing to bring him the firstfruits of their increase. They are also robbing themselves of an opportunity to worship.¹³⁹

The tithe, likewise, requires humility because it expresses dependency on the sovereignty and faithfulness of God. It is, in essence worship. Peterson writes,

“Worship is the humble response of regenerate men to the self-disclosure of the Most High God. It is based upon the work of God. It is achieved through the activity of God. It is directed to God. It is expressed by the lips in praise, and by the life in service.”¹⁴⁰

The giving of a tithe is rooted in the understanding that it is ultimately God alone who provides all of life’s necessities.

Honest and Righteous Worship

Concerns of the Promise

The covenantal relationship between God and Abraham reveals multiple aspects of worship. Genesis 15:1-6 outlines an important component of worship, *Honesty*. Abraham demonstrates the importance of honesty in correlation with faith as the foundation of true worship. The progression of Genesis 15:1-6 is below:

(v. 1)	God’s promise
(v. 2-3)	Abraham’s protest
(v. 4-5)	God’s response
(v. 6)	Abraham’s acceptance

God appears to Abraham in Genesis 15:1.¹⁴¹ However, Abraham’s faith has been put to the test. In Genesis 15:2-3, Abraham argues:

¹³⁹ Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 45.

¹⁴⁰ Eugene Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 28.

¹⁴¹ “The narrative report makes a new beginning with an abrupt “fear not” from God (v. 1). It is a word of greeting, but it is also a word which shatters. It disorients Abraham who was fearful for his future. He had concluded by now that there would be no change. The call from barrenness was a false alarm. If barrenness prevails, then the

“O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, ‘Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.’”

The frustration of Abraham is evident here. His patience is running low. God has promised him a son but yet he and Sarah remain childless. Duguid writes, “The gap between what God had promised him and the reality he saw with his eyes appeared as wide as ever.”¹⁴² Abraham, expressing his fear and faltering faith, petitions God to intervene.

At this point, the only heir Abraham has is a slave but a slave is not an heir. Walter Brueggemann writes in his book, *Genesis*:

“An *heir* stands in contrast to a *slave* who only continues the hopeless present. Abraham and Sarah could possess many slaves. But a slave is no sign of the future, for slaves bespeak necessity, fate, compulsion. What is needed is an heir to break the power of necessity.”¹⁴³

Abraham intuitively knows the promises Yahweh has given will come to pass. But, cognitively and intellectually he reasons that God’s promises seem inherently useless without the fulfillment of an heir in which to bless the nations.¹⁴⁴ Abraham petitions God as a friend talking with a friend. Christy Dyer observes that:

“The language in this text also indicates that Abraham knew the Lord well. In fact, their relationship was so close he felt confident in courageously approaching the Lord with bold questions.”¹⁴⁵

God’s response brings Abraham direction and clarity. Eliezer will not be Abraham’s heir. Instead, Abraham will have his own son that will be heir to a great nation. God’s word brings comfort and restoration to Abraham’s faith. It is *this* faith that deems Abraham righteous in the

promise is null. But this God will not leave it there. He speaks (as in 12:1) with a word that reestablishes the promise.” Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 142–143.

¹⁴² Iain Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality*, 52.

¹⁴³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 142–143.

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Grossman, “Abram to Abraham: A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative,” (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016), 167.

¹⁴⁵ Christy Dyer, “Knowing the Heart of God,” *Missions Mosaic* 28 (2018): 27.

sight of God.¹⁴⁶ God did not simply dismiss Abraham's worries. He reassured Abraham and in the process, strengthens.

The presence of faith is once again a key component of worship in the Abrahamic Narrative. However, the idea of faith evidenced by righteousness is now introduced as a key component of true worship. Ross writes,

Righteousness is the correct action and attitude before God; it forms the (imputed) description of the members of the covenant as well as their covenantal responsibility. Abram accepted the Word of the Lord as reliable and true and acted in accordance with it; consequently, the Lord declared Abram righteous, and therefore acceptable.¹⁴⁷

It is important to recognize the relational connection between God and Abraham. God walks with Abraham. He meets him at his point of greatest need. He assures the prophet of the promise made, builds in his heart a richer and fuller faith, and imbeds in him a spirit of holy integrity to complete the task. God requires honesty of heart. Abraham passes the honesty test with flying colors.

Abraham as an Imperfect Worshipper

Abraham's general characteristics of worship reflect that of a true worshipper. However, it is important to note that Abraham was not a perfect worshipper by any means. Abraham had instances where he lacked faith in God. Abraham lied about his wife on two different occasions out of fear for his life despite God's promises to him. The first instance is in Egypt to Pharaoh:

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants,

¹⁴⁶ Genesis 15:6: "And he (Abram) believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

¹⁴⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 310.

female servants, female donkeys, and camels.¹⁷ But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?" ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." ²⁰ And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. (Genesis 12:10-20 ESV)

The impact of Abraham's sin and lack of faith was also felt by others. He himself lied, but he also asked his wife to lie as well. Whaley notes that "Their 'little white lie' brought dire consequences to those around them. The Egyptians were punished for Abram's sin."¹⁴⁸

Abraham also lied to King Abimelech about his wife:

From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. ² And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." ⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵ Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." ⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."⁸ So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." ¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?" ¹¹ Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' ¹² Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³ And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, "He is my brother."'"¹⁴ Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all^a who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated." ¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. ¹⁸ For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

¹⁴⁸ Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 43.

Both instances show Abraham choose to walk in fear instead of faith and was indeed an imperfect worshipper. Abraham was not a perfect worshipper but God still blessed him despite his flaws and used Abraham in order to accomplish His purposes.¹⁴⁹

Honesty and Righteousness in Worship

Abraham shows that *honesty* is a key element of true worship. The reality is that Abraham discovers that being honest is difficult because it makes him vulnerable. Duguid writes, “God doesn’t chastise Abraham for his doubts; rather, God accommodates himself to Abraham’s weakness and meets him where he is.”¹⁵⁰ God’s love for Abraham goes beyond simple, cognitive awareness, it prompts a response of true and honest worship. God declares Abraham righteous because of his trust and faith. God is more concerned with the motives behind one’s heart than the actual action that is being taken. Worship without righteousness is nothing more than empty words. Abraham’s worship was demonstrated by his honesty and ultimately counted to him as righteousness.

Worship Includes Remembrance

True worship begins with remembrance.¹⁵¹ Oliver explains that:

It is a mental act combined with an appropriate external action. As an act of obedience that proceeds from a mental awareness of one's spiritual standing with God, remembrance is an intention not to forget one's covenant relationship with God. As God revealed a true knowledge of himself in Scripture and prescribed how man should respond to him, he expects that human beings will not forget to do it. Any other practice of worship is predicated upon that foundational truth or it cannot be qualified as ‘true’ worship.¹⁵²

Remembrance, as it relates to Abraham’s worship, is the celebration of God’s faithfulness in the past, His superintending in the present and His promise for the future. The

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁵⁰ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality*, 54.

¹⁵¹ Richard Oliver, “The Development and Evaluation of a Seminary Course in Worship Theology,” 39.

¹⁵² Ibid., 39.

precedent of remembrance in Abraham's life centers around His own, personal covenantal relationship with God. Tim Ralston explains how:

A central theme of Old Testament covenant, it (remembrance) views a covenant relationship in three directions simultaneously. Looking to the past, one recalls the covenant's inauguration, keeping in mind the nature of the relationship, its promises, and stipulations. In the present, it asks if the covenant responsibilities are being fulfilled and demands integrity of both parties. In the future, it anticipates God's unfulfilled covenant promises and confidently expects their blessings.¹⁵³

Abraham and Remembrance

The principle of remembrance in Abraham's life is first recorded in Genesis 15:7: "And he said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.'" God reveals Himself to Abraham and invites him to recall his initial call to leave his native land. Baldwin writes, "By pronouncing his name and mighty acts the Lord ensures that Abram knows his identity, his proved reliability and his continuing work in his servant."¹⁵⁴ Abraham is compelled to remember so that he will recall to mind and heart God's purpose, plan and promise to be faithful.

In Genesis 17, God changes the name of Abram to Abraham. The purpose of this change is so that Abraham will always call to remembrance God's promise, especially as related to making the prophet a "father of a great nation." This name change also serves as a reminder of God's promise to remain faithful to Abraham, his family and his descendants.¹⁵⁵

Remembrance is an important component of worship in the Abrahamic narrative because it speaks of God's covenant to His people. Abraham's new identity serves as a reminder of

¹⁵³ Tim Ralston, "Remembrance and Worship: The Mandate and the Means," 80.

¹⁵⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *The Message of Genesis 12-50: From Abraham to Joseph*, ed. J. A. Motyer and Derek Tidball, *The Bible Speaks Today* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 52.

¹⁵⁵ At this point, Abraham is ninety-nine years old without any children. Now, every time someone addressed Abraham, he would remember the covenant with God and God's promised faithfulness to provide a seed in which to bless all the nations.

God's faithfulness. The meaning of his name itself brings to mind the divine covenant made with Abraham, and on behalf of his descendants.

One of the most profound evidences of God's desire for Abraham to commit himself to a "life of remembrance" is seen in the practice of circumcision. "You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you" (Genesis 17:11). Circumcision brings in the Abrahamic narrative is a physical sign of the covenant between God and his people.¹⁵⁶ Ross suggests that:

Covenant signs were meant to proclaim the nature of the covenant and remind the participants of their obligations. Circumcision was a sign that the Israelites were set apart to the LORD as members of a covenant (Gen. 17:10, 24-27: 21:4), reminding them of the standard of holiness and purity in the family.¹⁵⁷

It is important to note that the act of circumcision meant nothing apart from faith. Paul explains in Romans 4:9-11 that Abraham's faith is demonstrated *before* he is circumcised and that circumcision is simply the sign that confirmed his faith and that sealed the covenant.¹⁵⁸ Tim Hegg published an excellent article titled, *Circumcision as a Sign* and writes,

Circumcision, which spoke to the central issue of the covenant, the promise that 'in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed,' was a sign pointing to the faith required to believe God for the impossible, a faith possessed individually.¹⁵⁹

Circumcision was a physical act that cemented a person's individual faith, but it also was a sign of faith and ultimately established Abraham and his people as God's chosen people.

¹⁵⁶ "The second idea is circumcision, the sign of the covenant. Signs were attached to covenants as reminders of the participants' obligations and privileges under the covenant. In Genesis 9, the rainbow was the Lord's sign of the covenant with Noah; it was a perpetual reminder that there would never again be a flood to destroy the race. In this chapter the ritual of circumcision was the sign to be performed by the people of the covenant as evidence of their participation in it." Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 327.

¹⁵⁷ Allen Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 150.

¹⁵⁸ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. Romans 4:9-11.

¹⁵⁹ Tim Hegg, "Circumcision as a Sign: The Theological Significance," *Evangelical Theological Society Northwest Regional Meeting*, (April 1990): 9.

Anyone who did not exercise circumcision would be cut off from God's people and the covenant.¹⁶⁰

Summary of the Worship Principles: Abraham and the Covenant

Abraham is a true worshipper that demonstrates fundamental characteristics of worship through a covenantal relationship with God. Rodney Whaley offers insight and perspective as it relates to worship form and practice:

In choosing only forms that are comfortable and familiar, there is always the tendency to cater to what people want to hear and feel, rather than confronting them with God, whose presence is not always so comfortable.¹⁶¹

Abraham demonstrates that true worship is unreservedly and whole heartedly offered to God with honest, humble and holy motives:

First, Abraham's covenant experience teaches him how to embody a spirit of *humbleness*. In the words of Timothy Brunk: "Scripture reminds us that humility is a prerequisite for the kind of worship that God deems proper."¹⁶² Abraham's humble spirit enables the prophet to understand something about the greatness of God, the importance of offering sacrifices to God with a pure heart and to honor God with the first-fruits of his labor. Not once does the Bible give record of Abraham acting (or reacting) with a prideful heart. Wiersbe notes the characteristics of a prideful heart including:

An unwillingness to admit and confess our own sins, bitter spirit toward another believer. An unwillingness to forgive. A resistance to the Word of God. An inflexible attitude that can't be taught or changed. A feeling that our way is always the right way and the only way. A fear of change and an unwillingness to learn new things. A refusal to let people get 'too close'. A touchiness of spirit, a supersensitive attitude that makes it difficult for people to get along with. Being

¹⁶⁰ "The penalty for neglecting circumcision is prescribed in the text (17:14): any uncircumcised male who does not submit to the ritual is cut off from his people and therefore the covenant." Ibid., 9.

¹⁶¹ Rodney D. Whaley, "Developing a Strategy of Worship for Evangelical Believers Born From 1945 to 1955," (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 2010), 69.

¹⁶² Timothy Brunk, "Humility and Worship," *Liturgy Spirituality and Virtues*, Accessed March 14, 2021. <https://www.praytellig.com/index.php/2018/07/16/humility-and-worship/>

preoccupied with our own needs and not being concerned about the needs of others.¹⁶³

Abraham did not allow pride to blur his vision of God or his desire to faithfully worship with honest, pure sacrifices. This can be observed through Abraham's and Lot's departure. Abraham and Lot both experienced blessing to the point that the land would no longer support them. Abraham allows Lot the choice of the land in which to dwell while he goes in the opposite direction. Even when his nephew Lot chooses the more fertile land toward Jordan (Genesis 13:1-13), Abraham maintains his integrity, demonstrates humility, faithfully follows "the voice of God," and proves himself faithful and trustworthy.

Second, Abraham demonstrates a spirit of *Thanksgiving*. Abraham stands as the one patriarch that consistently demonstrates a gratitude attitude. His "spirit of thanksgiving" comes as an outgrowth of his own private and public times of worship. A thankful heart recognizes God's provision and demonstrate an appropriate heartfelt response of gratitude for his providence.

Third, Abraham's worship is an *honest expression of his heart's love for God*. God does not dismiss Abraham's concern when it comes to the fulfillment of the promise. Instead, he offers confirmation of his promise through clarification. Abraham expressed his frustration in an honest manner by questioning God concerning how the promise would be fulfilled. It is important to walk through times of questioning and uncertainty by worshipping God with an honest and broken spirit. Abraham's trial concerning the fulfillment of God's promise ultimately reassured him of God's providence in all circumstances resulting in true worship. It was an honest expression of worship.

¹⁶³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 104

Fourth, Abraham the gives priority to a life of *righteousness through worship*. Abraham believes God will count his “faith” as righteousness. Out of a heart of worship through obedience, Abraham trusts in God’s sovereign plan:

11 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ²For by it [Abraham and Sarah] obtained a *good* testimony. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.... ¹⁰for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God....¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ¹³[And Abraham] died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off [was] assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that [he was a stranger] and pilgrim on the earth. ¹⁴For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵And truly if [Abraham] had called to mind that *country* from which [he] had come out, [he] would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But now [Abraham] desire[d] a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called [his] God, for He has prepared a city for [him] (Hebrews 11:1-3,8, 10, 12-16 NKJV).

Five, Abraham demonstrates his heart for worship through *remembrance*. Abraham’s obedience through circumcision serves as a sign of his own commitment to the covenant with God. This sign functions as a reminder to Abraham, and all his descendants, of God’s promise and faithfulness - past, present, and future.

Chapter 5 – Abraham: The Faithful Worshipper

Chapter 5 observes principles of worship recognized through Abraham as a faithful worshipper of Yahweh. Historical and biblical research methodology is used to identify core values of worship in the life of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac. Abraham is the vessel through which God promises to bless all of humanity. Although moments of doubt and unbelief seem to be evident at times in the Abrahamic narrative, God continues to demonstrate His faithfulness to the aging couple. Abraham and Sarah understand that their descendants will inherit the promised land as God provides the promised seed through Isaac. This chapter, as in the two previous chapters, observes Abraham's obedience and faith in Yahweh. This chapter, however, highlights faith as the rite of "holy sacrifice."

True Worship is Word-Based

Worship directly correlates with faith. This includes both God's faithfulness and man's faith in God. Man's faith in God is the motivating factor that leads a person to express heartfelt gratitude to God for His provision in all of life. Understanding the importance of the Lord's faithfulness to His Word is a key component that motivates Abraham to worship. Prior to the birth of Isaac, Abraham's faith in God rests almost entirely on "the hope of an heir." In desperation, Abraham and Sarah endeavor to "help God" by forcing their rational strategy for seeing the fulfillment of a promised son:

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no *children*. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. ³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. ⁴ So he went into Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong *be* upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her

eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.”⁶ So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid *is* in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

⁷ Now the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

⁹ The Angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” ¹⁰ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.” ¹¹ And the Angel of the Lord said to her:

“Behold, you *are* with child,
And you shall bear a son.
You shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the Lord has heard your affliction.

¹² He shall be a wild man;
His hand *shall be* against every man,
And every man’s hand against him.
And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

¹³ Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram *was* eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram (Genesis 16:1-16 NKJV).

Abraham’s Worship is Word-Based

Abraham and Sarah both realize their attempt at circumventing God’s plan through the life of Hagar is sin. Even so, God continues to speak to the couple. And, when God speaks, Abraham listens and they both obey. Thirteen years later, God speaks to Abraham and reaffirms the covenant promise:

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. ² And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ⁴ “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of ^[b]many nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called ^[c]Abram, but your name shall be ^[d]Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish

My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in^[1] which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”...¹⁵ Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. ¹⁶ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother of* nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” (Genesis 17:1-8, 15-16 NKJV).

And even though Abraham is a man of faith, worships only Yahweh, believes in the promise of the covenant, and endeavors to live holy before the Lord, he still endeavors to “figure out for God” the plan for a great Nation. This time, Abraham comes to God and propositions the acceptance of Hagar’s Ishmael as the promised heir. God issues a resounding, “NO!”

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” ¹⁹ Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” ²² Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham (Genesis 17:18-22 NKJV).

Even though Abraham and Sarah’s faith seems to waiver, God’s promise for and provision of a son remains the same. In Genesis 21, God stands good on His promise, Sarah conceives and births a son at the age of 90. Against all odds, even at the very old age of one hundred, Abraham receives the promised heir. Once again, Abraham worships God by obeying the Lord’s command to: 1) name his newborn son Isaac; and 2) circumcise the infant on the eighth day.

Abraham’s worship is in direct response to hearing God’s *Word*. God assures Abraham of his heir on four separate occasions: Gen. 12; 15:4; 17:7; and 18:10. However, Abraham and Sarah still doubt and laugh at God. Nonetheless, Yahweh is true to His WORD and the couples

receives a son, despite their inappropriate laughter. Terence Fretheim suggests that “ The texts would be a witness to divine perseverance in the face of human mistrust and resistance.”¹⁶⁴

The literal meaning of “Isaac,” as a name, is “he laughs.” His name is important because it serves as a reminder of the Lord’s faithfulness and the assurance that His Word will come to fruition. It is somewhat ironic that God commands Abraham to name his son Isaac, considering laughter is mentioned three times concerning the promised seed: 1) Abraham laughs in joy (Gen. 17:17); 2) Sarah laughs in disbelief (Gen. 18:12) but, denies doing so; and, 3) Sarah laughs again in joy after the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21:6).¹⁶⁵ Ross states, “The laughter of unbelief, when the promise was made (18:12), now changes to the laughter of joy through the provision of the son (21:5–6).”¹⁶⁶

Abraham and Sarah’s hope of a son is fulfilled through and only through the spoken Word of promise from Yahweh. Abraham’s response? Worship. It is important to note that Abraham was not a perfect worshipper. Abraham and his wife were recipients of God’s grace. Both he and Sarah’s story consists of numerous instances of doubting God and second guessing His Sovereign purposes. Whaley writes, “Abraham was a two-time liar. He was an adulterer, and he was a doubter.”¹⁶⁷ God still chose to use these two badly flawed, imperfect worshippers to fulfill His good and perfect plan.

The importance of worship being *Word-based*, is evident throughout Scripture - and the Abrahamic narrative demonstrates the correlation between God’s spoken word and His sovereign plan for Abraham’s life. When Abraham walks with God, hears His voice, and obeys His

¹⁶⁴ Terence Fretheim, *Abraham*, 118.

¹⁶⁵ John G. Butler, *Abraham: The Father of the Jews*, 163.

¹⁶⁶ Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus*, 135.

¹⁶⁷ Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 52.

command, the prophet's immediate reaction is always face-down worship – followed by the building of an altar for sacrifice.

This principle of word-based worship is clearly evident through the birth of Isaac. John Sailhammer notes that:

“The birth of Isaac came about ‘as the Lord had said,’ a fact stressed three times within the first two verses. The plan not only came about, but more importantly, it happened as it was announced.”¹⁶⁸

Byron Wheaton concludes that Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21; 17:1-27; and 22:1-9 are similar in the sense that they all represent climatic interventions by God where He is clearly established as the dominant figure. He writes, “The action occurring in these accounts is initiated by God and is under his direction.”¹⁶⁹ All of Abraham's responses are appropriated by God's initiation, deeming the Word to be the basis of Abraham's worship.

He goes on to note parallels between the four texts:

“All begin with God speaking to Abraham. In each case God is playing the lead role in the episode. All have an imperative in the initial speech of God. All four contain significant expression of the promise with its threefold element of land, offspring, and blessing.”¹⁷⁰

While Isaac's birth was long expected, and by many considered a miracle, he actually serves a greater purpose than merely being an heir to Abraham and Sarah. According to Terrence Fretheim, “The verb *pāqad* links this act of God with Exodus events showing the import of Isaac's birth for the larger divine purpose.”¹⁷¹

Yahweh had a much larger plan for the birth of Isaac. He was the chosen seed God promised to bless all the nations. The differences between Isaac and his older half-brother,

¹⁶⁸ John Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 176.

¹⁶⁹ Byron Wheaton, “Focus and Structure in the Abraham Narrative,” *Trinity Journal* 27, no. 1 (2006): 153.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁷¹ Terrence Fretheim, *Abraham*, 116.

Ishmael could not be any more profound. Both represent a covenant, according to the author of Galatians, but Ishmael is seen through the old covenant of Mount Sinai representing bondage.

Isaac, on the other-hand, represents freedom and the seed through whom God will use to ultimately bless all the nations:

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman (Galatians 4:21-31).

The relevance of sacrifice and worship is evident through Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham portrays what it means to be a true sacrificial worshipper.

When Abraham was called from Haran, he knew nothing concerning what following God would mean. Doubts, fears, and failure are all present within Abraham’s narrative. He lied multiple times, committed adultery, and both he and Sarah experienced times of doubt. However, God still chose Abraham and proves faithful despite he and Sarah’s numerous faults. Abraham’s faith continually grew in Yahweh and was ultimately put to the test by God. In Genesis 22, God tests Abraham by calling him to offer his son as a sacrifice:

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!”
And he said, “Here I am.”

² Then He said, “Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the ^[a]lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

⁶ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷ But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.”

Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the ^[b]lamb for a burnt offering?”

⁸ And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.

⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹ But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”

So he said, “Here I am.”

¹² And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.”

¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, ^[c]The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided” (Genesis 22:1-13 NKJV).

Yahweh is calling on Abraham to sacrifice “His son, His only son, the very son that He so dearly loves.”¹⁷² Isaac is clearly treasured by Abraham. Even so, God is asking Abraham to sacrifice the very son through whom all the nations will be blessed. Abraham’s response to God’s request and to this situation is astonishing. Three words characterize Abraham’s message: “here I am.”

¹⁷² “The intensity of the test is magnified by the three direct objects of the imperative: *your son, your precious son whom you love, Isaac*. Each of the objects hits a little closer to home, as the list moves from the general to the more intimate.” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 102.

Abraham's heart for worship prompts immediate obedience. He does not question God.

Abraham does not argue with God about the promised nation. He does not seek to negotiate.

Abraham simply obeys.

Abraham's obedience to offer Isaac as a sacrifice is a clear call from Yahweh. This call is as profound as the one Abraham experiences in the land of Ur. What is notable about "this call" is Abraham's mature response and full allegiance to God as Sovereign – evidenced by a willingness to obey without question. Perhaps Abraham's response is in reaction to years of walking with the Lord, trusting in His unchanging hand, and seeing God's faithfulness demonstrated to his family time and time again. By this time in Abraham's life, he has walked with the Lord and seen God's provision and providence at work over and over. He knows God's Word will never return void. Abraham's faith in God is so strong that he believes if he does offer Isaac as a human sacrifice, God will raise him from the dead.¹⁷³ David Allen, founding Dean of the School of Preaching at Southwestern Theological Seminary observes:

It seemed to Abraham illogical for God to ask him to kill his only son when God had said it would be through that son that he would give Abraham numerous descendants. It could only be sorted out in Abraham's mind that God must intend to raise Isaac from the dead.¹⁷⁴

True sacrifice is what God desires and Abraham's faith in the Lord is strong enough to withstand the test. And God knows Abraham's love for his Lord is so deep, engaging, vibrant and unwavering that it will pass any test and at any time. Abraham is a product of a lifetime spent in fellowship with God. His worship of God is sincere, mature and based on obedience:

The sequence of these events suggests that both Abraham and the reader are being prepared for something. The cycle is going somewhere; it is not static. At almost

¹⁷³ Hebrews 11:17-19

¹⁷⁴ "It seemed to Abraham illogical for God to ask him to kill his only son when God had said it would be through that son that he would give Abraham numerous descendants. It could only be sorted out in Abraham's mind that God must intend to raise Isaac from the dead." David L. Allen, *Hebrews, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 557.

any point along the way, the reader can stop, look behind him, and see that the plot has advanced; Abraham has progressed. Difficult circumstances have consistently presented themselves, and at times the patriarch has reacted in a very immature and deceitful manner. Yet overall, the relationship of these individual stories one to another makes the point that Abraham was "growing up."¹⁷⁵

Abraham's story clearly shows that worship often requires a test of faith and that God uses these times of testing in order to strengthen and grow one's trust in His divine plan. There are two reasons that God's test of Abraham is important. First, Abraham's faith would not have been proven righteous if he had known that "the sacrificial call" was simply a test. Ross writes,

"Had he known that God was testing him to see if he would obey, the value of the test would have been diminished. To be effective as a test, the divine command had to be both sudden and surprising."¹⁷⁶

Second, Abraham's testing contributes to one's understanding of the God-man relationship.¹⁷⁷

The God-man relationship is imperative to understanding why the testing of Abraham is important and contributes to the modern-day practice of worship. The Hebrew word used for "test" in Genesis 22:1 is *nasah* and occurs five other times in the Old Testament in relation to Yahweh testing Israel. Lawlor notes, "The context of each clearly shows a relationship between the motif of 'testing' and his concern over the nation's obedience to his commandments, statutes, laws, [and] ways."¹⁷⁸

The story of Abraham's test does not end with the tragic sacrifice of his son, however. Instead, God provides the necessary offering at the right moment. The overall message of Abraham's sacrifice is that 'the Lord will provide'. This is recognized through his response to Isaac in Genesis 22:8. Abraham is confident that the Lord will provide the lamb necessary for the burnt offering. Sailhamer states, "Abraham's reply itself anticipates precisely the final outcome

¹⁷⁵ John I. Lawlor, "The Test of Abraham Genesis 22:1-19," *Grace Theological Journal* 1, no. 1 (1980): 26.

¹⁷⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 396.

¹⁷⁷ John I. Lawlor, "The Test of Abraham Genesis 22:1-19," 27.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

of the story (v. 14).”¹⁷⁹ At the last moment, God provided a ram for the burnt offering.

Abraham’s faith had withstood the test from God. His words of confidence that the Lord would provide are not simply to calm Isaac but rather an anticipation of the outcome with full assurance, confidence and trust in God.¹⁸⁰

Abraham’s heart had passed the test. His faith had become sight through recognizing that the Lord had a purpose and plan that was meant for God. What was the response of his faithful obedience? Worship. Abraham understood that God’s desire for His people was to walk with and among them. In order to do this, Abraham must walk according to God’s commands, laws, and statutes. Rowley writes, “Nowhere is Abraham a man who worships God for what he gets out of it, but always as one whose devotion to God is for God himself alone.”¹⁸¹ True worship is not adhering to a code but having a genuine heartfelt response at the revelation of the Lord. This requires sacrifice that only a true worshipper whose heart, focus, and sole desire is set on seeing and witnessing the resurrection power of the Lord.

Worship Through Sacrifice

Worship does not exist without sacrifice. The Abrahamic narrative provides the framework for what it means to be a sacrificial worshipper. Abraham was willing when called to offer his son whom he loved and cherished as a sacrifice when God called him to. This type of sacrificial obedience is what God desires from true worshippers. This does not mean that God calls everyone to offer their children as a sacrifice, but it does mean that the Lord desires this type of submission to the will of God even when circumstances make little to no sense in the most human way of comprehending them. Abraham did not understand why God was calling

¹⁷⁹ John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 178.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁸¹ H.H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 30.

him to offer his son as a sacrifice, but he knew that God would provide whatever measure was necessary if he was willing to submit to God's sovereignty. A.W. Tozer explains, "No man gives anything acceptable to God until he has first given himself in love and sacrifice."¹⁸²

Summary of the Worship Principles in this Chapter: Abraham The Faithful Worshipper

The birth of Isaac brought new meaning to the Abrahamic Covenant. God remains faithful to His word and provides Abraham with the promised seed. However, this was not the end to Abraham's story. Instead, God finds just cause to test Abraham's faith by "calling him" to offer his beloved son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. These two monumental moments in the Abrahamic narrative reveal several important principles of worship:

First, worship is *Word-based*. All of Abraham's worship is based on the promise of God's faithfulness to provide. Abraham finally receives his son and he sees first hand the fulfillment of God's promise.

Second, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac demonstrates the "price of a *true sacrifice*." Sacrifice is defined as "The act of giving up something that you want to keep especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone."¹⁸³ Abraham loved Isaac. However, he knew God and knew that even if he sacrificed his son, God would raise him from the dead. How did he know this? God had promised that it would be through Isaac that all nations would ultimately be blessed. Thus, Abraham took God at His Word and trusted with full, focused faith.

Abraham's immediate obedience and full preparation for sacrifice accentuates his understanding of "God's call" on his life. "The Call" requires a complete, total, unselfish, sacrifice. Abraham recognizes the gravity of "the call" and the true value of "the sacrifice" God

¹⁸² A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1961), 102.

¹⁸³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sacrifice>

is requiring. He truly understands that acceptable worship of Yahweh requires a sacrifice that reflects the intent of the heart.

Chapter 6 – Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify key worship principles from the life of Abraham. Of primary importance to this project was the application of practices prevalently seen through Abraham's personal worship. This study was based on three initial pre-suppositions: 1) Abraham's Worship: The Calling, 2) Abraham's Worship: The Covenant, and 3) Abraham's Worship: Faithful Sacrifice.

Overview of the Study

While Abraham's calling is a specific to a covenantal relationship with the creator of the universe, it also establishes a holy nation of worshippers through Abraham's seed. The biblical principles of worship understood through the Abrahamic narrative teach imperative values that are applicable for personal worship, public worship, and application to 21st century evangelical worship. Quoting A.W. Tozer,

The local church exists to do corporately what each Christian believer should be doing individually-and that is to worship God. It is to show forth the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. It is to reflect the glories of Christ ever shining upon us through the ministries of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁴

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study were to identify key worship principles from the life of Abraham that may be applied to the 21st Century evangelical community. Principles discussed were primarily drawn from Abraham's life experiences as recorded in the Old Testament. Of primary importance to this project was the application of practices prevalently seen through

¹⁸⁴ A.W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship?: A Call To True Worship*, (Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers, 2012), 93.

Abraham's own worship. This study was based on three initial pre-suppositions: 1) Abraham's Worship: The Calling is center to his willingness to obey God. 2) Abraham's Worship: The Covenant is the promise fulfilled in the birth of his son, Isaac. And 3) Abraham's Worship: Faithful Sacrifice is at the heart of biblical worship.

Research Questions:

- 1) What worship principles from Abraham are articulated or examined in the Pentateuch?
- 2) Why is it important to study Abraham's worship practices?
- 3) How is Abraham's worship expressed in the Bible?
- 4) What circumstances contributed Abrahams' responses to God?
- 5) How does God use His covenant promises to reassure Abraham of His own faithfulness to the prophet?

Hypothesis Statements:

- 1) Abraham understood the value of worship through sacrifice.
- 2) Abraham's call to worship is both a personal and public calling.
- 3) Abraham's worship is expressed through obedience to God's call.
- 4) God uses Abraham's obedience through worship as a means for establishing a people for worship.
- 5) God's covenant relationship with Abraham serves as an example of His Sovereign guidance and care for those obedient to His Call.

The Methodology: Biblical and historical research were the primary methodologies for this study. This included investigations into various biblical translations, commentaries, dissertations, thesis, academic journals and scholarly books.

The Limitations: The primary emphasis of biblical research methodology was to discover principles of Abraham's worship from God's Word and drawn from Abraham's life experiences. This biblical study did not develop worship practicum, curriculum or otherwise organized methodology that might have any strategic pedagogical purposes. This study limited investigation to the biblical patriarch, Abraham, and did not examine the presence or application of these principles to any other biblical characters. Qualitative or quantitative research methodology are not used in this study.

Organization: Discovery for this thesis was organized in to six chapters, as follows:

Chapter One – Introduction: Chapter one serves as an introductory chapter by establishing the rationale through a historical background of the study. In this introductory phase, specific attention was given to establishing the problem to be solved, the intended purpose to be achieved, the limitations of this study, and research methodology.

Chapter Two – The Literature Review includes a vast number of biblical resources including: bible translations, biblical commentaries, scholarly books, articles, dissertations, thesis web-site research and academic journals. A sufficient number of resources exist to justify the research. It was discovered that little is written on the subject of Abraham's worship as applied to 21st century evangelical practices.

Chapter Three – Abraham's Calling: Chapter three identified principles of worship which were discovered by observing Abraham's first appearance and calling in Genesis 11-12. Here, the foundations of worship were laid with God's inaugural call of Abraham to worship. God prepares Abraham, calls Abraham, and Abraham obediently responds to God's call. This interaction reveals the biblical foundations of all worship within Scripture and shows the importance and desire of God to be in relationship with mankind.

Chapter Four – Abraham and the Covenant: The emphasis of chapter four was to identify principles of worship which were recognized through the formation and presentation of “the Abrahamic covenant.” In Genesis 17, God established a binding covenant with Abraham, inaugurating the plan for establishing a holy nation.

Chapter Five – Abraham: The Faithful Worshipper: Chapter five focused on Abraham’s relationship with God before and after the birth of Isaac. Abraham’s response to God’s direction concerning Isaac reveals several key principles of worship foundational in application.

Chapter Six – Provided an overview of the study and related research discoveries.

Related Research Discoveries

In chapter three, the study of Abraham confirms the fact that the purposes for worship are much richer and deeper than artificial attractional settings to display some sort of superficial appreciation for the God of the universe.

Abraham’s mind was set to obey God’s command and usher in the glory of the true living God. He clearly recognized that it was God – a living and breathing deity – who was true to His promises. And he sought to live his life before God in such a way that no person could ever question his allegiance, calling and commitment to God. Abraham’s commitment to “the call” compels him to give his whole heart to God.

Abraham’s calling reveals a model for communal relationship between God and man that transcends. God calls Abraham to worship revealing four key principles of worship:

First, God orchestrates a plan *preparation*. God at work in Abraham’s life preparing him to become a worshipper. This preparation process begins long before Abraham formally receives God’s call to service God was also preparing Abraham for worship in and through his life. The Lord affirms Abraham of His call assuring that God is still present and active in Abraham’s daily

life. This is reassuring because it affirms that the Lord is continually working all things out. Proverbs 16:9 states, “The Lord has made everything for its purpose...” God has a purpose and plan meant to bring about good and is at work in the midst of everyday life.

Second, God issues Abraham *a call to worship*. Abraham’s “call to worship” includes the mandate to forsake his previous way of life and wholeheartedly pursue Yahweh. All other aspects of Abraham’s life were conformed to his new identity as a worshipper of the one true God.

Third, Abraham’s call compels him to *be faithful and obedient*. Abraham faithfully obeys God’s calling from a heart of true worship of God. The prophet understands that worship is not some sort of religious act but a true response of his heart’s commitment to build a relationship with God.

Fourth, the final principle of worship resulting from Abraham’s calling is *reverence*. After God prepares and equips Abraham, He calls him. Abraham’s response is quick, decisive and direct – faithful obedience to the call. Abraham demonstrates his undeniable reverence for God by building an altar and worshiping.

Abraham’s calling demonstrates key, biblical principles of worship: Worship is a genuine response to God. Abraham’s response is sincere, raw, genuine and authentic. Abraham’s worship reflects his preparation, calling from God, faithful obedience of Yahweh, and a reverent heart for the Lord.

In chapter four, Abraham enters into a covenantal relationship with Yahweh. Abraham is confirmed as a true worshipper that demonstrates fundamental characteristics of worship through this dynamic, deep covenantal relationship with God. We discover that Abraham demonstrates

that true worship is unreservedly and wholeheartedly offered to God with honest, humble and holy motives:

First, Abraham's covenant experience teaches him how to embody a spirit of *humbleness*. This humble spirit enables the prophet to understand something about the greatness of God, the importance of offering sacrifices to God with a pure heart and to honor God with the first-fruits of his labor. Not once does the Bible give record of Abraham acting (or reacting) with a prideful heart.

Second, Abraham demonstrates a spirit of *thanksgiving*. Abraham stands as the one patriarch that consistently demonstrates a gratitude attitude. His "spirit of thanksgiving" comes as an outgrowth of his own private and public times of worship. A thankful heart recognizes God's provision and demonstrate an appropriate heartfelt response of gratitude for his providence.

Third, Abraham's worship is an *honest expression of his heart's love for God*. God does not dismiss Abraham's concern when it comes to the fulfillment of the promise. Instead, he offers confirmation of His promise through clarification. Abraham's trial concerning the fulfillment of God's promise ultimately reassured him of God's providence in all circumstances, thus, demonstrating his true worship.

Fourth, Abraham the gives priority to a life of *righteousness through worship*. Abraham believes God will count his "faith" as righteousness. Out of a heart of worship through obedience, Abraham trusts in God's sovereign plan.

Five, Abraham demonstrates his heart for worship through *remembrance*. Abraham's obedience through circumcision serves as a sign of his own commitment to the covenant with

God. This sign functions as a reminder to Abraham, and all his descendants, of God's promise and faithfulness - past, present, and future.

In chapter five, we find the birth of Isaac brought new meaning to the Abrahamic Covenant. God remains faithful to His word and provides Abraham with the promised seed. However, this was not the end to Abraham's story. Instead, God finds just cause to test Abraham's faith by "calling him" to offer his beloved son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. These two monumental moments in the Abrahamic narrative reveal several important principles of worship:

First, worship is *Word-based*. All of Abraham's worship is based on the promise of God's faithfulness to provide. Abraham finally receives his son and he sees first-hand the fulfillment of God's promise.

Second, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac demonstrates the "price of a *true sacrifice*." Sacrifice is defined as "the act of giving up something that you want to keep especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone."¹⁸⁵ Abraham loved Isaac. However, he knew God and knew that even if he sacrificed his son, God would raise him from the dead. How did he know this? God had promised that it would be through Isaac that all nations would ultimately be blessed. Thus, Abraham took God at His Word and trusted with full, focused faith.

Abraham's immediate obedience and full preparation for sacrifice accentuates his understanding of "God's call" on his life. "*The Call*" requires a complete, total, unselfish, sacrifice. Abraham recognizes the gravity of "the call" and the true value of "the sacrifice" God is requiring. He truly understands that acceptable worship of Yahweh requires a sacrifice that reflects the intent of the heart.

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sacrifice>

Research Conclusions and Applications to 21st Century Worship

Applications to Personal Worship – Abraham’s worship practices have several applicable meanings to personal worship. Abraham reveals that worship is personal. Everyone has a unique call from God that is personal. Worship is ultimately a personal response from man toward God. Abraham also reveals that worship is relatable for people. God established patterns and practices for worship, but ultimately worship began in a manner that was relatable for Abraham.

Sacrifice was a worship practice that Abraham would have been familiar with thus Abraham related to the idea of sacrifice. Abraham also recognized the importance of erecting altars as places of worship. Worship today is also a relatable expression of praise to the Lord. Worship is a personal expression of praise whether it be singing, dancing, painting, preaching or any other form of worship that expresses praise to God. This “expression” is something that connects to an individual on a personal level thus indicating the personal response of worship. Prayer can also be a personal response of worship that seeks God’s strength and provision in all of the circumstances.

Abraham also reveals that God uses imperfect people to accomplish His sovereign plan. Abraham was not a perfect worshipper. He was an everyday person that God chose to use in order to accomplish amazing task. God still operates in the same way and chooses to use average people in order to accomplish extraordinary tasks. The manner in which God uses people differs greatly and is specific to the individual. God’s call simply requires an obedient response from a soul that loves and extols the Lord.

Applications to Public Worship – Abraham’s worship also has several applications to public worship. Abraham is the first character in Scripture where a physical sign communicates an act of worship. Circumcision was a sign that indicated Abraham’s faith in God. Just as

circumcision communicates a sense of faith in the Old Testament, communion in the New Testament is a physical sign of the New Covenant according to the words of Jesus. Luke 22:19-20 states,

And he (Jesus) took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Public worship is demonstrated corporately through the taking of the Lord’s supper. Communion does not establish a person’s faith but is rather a practice that demonstrates an individual’s faith in a personal and public manner.

Another sign that is an applicable form of public worship is baptism. Robert E. Webber states, “as an initiation rite, baptism stands in connection with the Old Testament rite of circumcision.”¹⁸⁶ Where circumcision was a physical sign into the covenant community as declared in Genesis 17, baptism is a public declaration into the community of Christ. Both are outward signs that set individuals apart from others around them. Circumcision was given to set Abraham and God’s chosen people apart as a purified nation when compared to foreign nations while baptism is a public form of worship that demonstrates a person’s personal faith in Christ.

Abraham demonstrated his faith in God by proclaiming God through his actions and even building altars that would serve as a public proclamation of his faith in the Lord. Churches publicly gather together to sing and praise to God a manner that publicly proclaims the name of the Lord. While people do not typically build physical altars to the Lord, people do still offer their worship through the altar of praise corporately. Abraham’s worship indicates that worship is meant to be a public proclamation of faith in the Lord’s provision.

¹⁸⁶ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 230.

Application to 21st Century Worship – Abraham also reveals applicable meanings for worship within the 21st century evangelical church. Abraham had a sincere desire to follow the Lord. This desire came from a realization of the true living God. His convictions ultimately led him to follow the Lord and deny his own wants and desires in exchange for God’s plan. Worshippers today can gain that all of Abraham’s expressions of praise ultimately came from a conviction over his own state in the presence of a holy God.

Abraham paints a picture that worship ultimately stems from a desire to love and obey the Lord. Worshippers in the 21st century church can understand that (1) worship begins with an obedient response to God’s call. (2) It involves the regular practice of following the Lord. (3) Worship brings an understanding God. (4) Worship ultimately results in receiving God’s promise.

Abraham demonstrated these realities through obeying God, erecting altars of worship, worshipping through giving, and worshipping through sacrifice. He worshipped God even when he did not understand God’s methods or ways. Understanding that worship is perfected through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ gives reason and purpose to surrender one’s life to God’s service. Abraham was willing to offer his beloved son. The call to worship is ultimately the call to surrender control over to God’s service. Abraham understood this reality and gladly accepted the call to the service of God.

Abraham’s reaction to building altars is a heartfelt response to his convictions based off who God had revealed Himself to be and shows how reverence can be applied in the modern-day church. The idea of sacrifice continues the ancient form of expressing gratitude and devotion.¹⁸⁷ Abraham’s sole desire is to make God’s name known which is seen through his reverence in

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 267.

altar-making. The nature of Abraham's sacrifice is unknown but his altar and offering would certainly have been a familiar practice. What is unique about the altar built in Genesis 12:8 is that Abraham identified God by name in this instance.¹⁸⁸

Distinguishing the difference between Abraham's altar versus other pagan religions is important in order to understand the significance of reverence for the modern-day worshipper. The purpose of Abraham's altar was to emphasize a meeting with God, not to earn God's approval. Castleman writes, "These altars were not erected to get a god's attention or to try to gain a god's favor but to mark the site of an encounter with the God who had revealed himself to humans."¹⁸⁹ Christians today do not worship God in order to gain merit but to show a genuine appreciation for God's faithfulness. Abraham's reaction to God shows that worship (even in the 21st century church) is ultimately a reverential response to God's revelation and faithfulness.

Ultimately, worship teaches 21st century worshippers that without sacrifice, there is no worship. Worship is no easy task and often times is heavy. However, worship is a picture to the world of God and His sacrifice for us. A question 21st century worshippers can ask is, "How does my worship reflect the God that I serve?" Worship is an act of faith. Abraham's actions were motivated by his faith in God. Are our actions motivated by faith in God? Worship is rooted in faith in the Lord. Abraham's life was forever changed by his encounter with God, showing that worship ultimately results in a changed life. The call from God is ultimately a call to completely surrender to God's plan.

¹⁸⁸ "The limited record of prayer addressing God, invoking God's name or giving God thanks seems to be part of how God heightened the awareness of his unique supremacy before the covenant with Abraham that set apart a particular people to embody his story of salvation. During this period there is a growing sense of the exclusive nature of allegiance to the one God who made heaven and earth. In the future this exclusive allegiance will be forged into a major component of Israel's identity, a people who worship the only one God." Robbie F. Castleman, *Story Shaped Worship*, 36.

¹⁸⁹ Robbie F. Castleman, *Story Shaped Worship*, 37.

The reality is that man is designed to worship and that worship requires a sense of reverence for God. A. W. Tozer writes, “We are saved to worship God. All that Christ has done for us in the past and all that He is doing now leads to this one end.”¹⁹⁰ Understanding the work of Christ should be a motivating factor that brings a sense of reverence to every worshipper’s life. Abraham recognized that his meeting with God was uniquely different than that with any other god and in return, revered the Lord.

What is clearly observed through Abraham’s biblical examples is that worship is dependent on God’s covenantal relationship with mankind. Braun writes, “We submit ourselves under the reign and rule of God and allow Him to change our hearts.”¹⁹¹ This “submission” to God’s reign is not one which is recognized through legalistic obedience to God’s law but rather a response rooted in obedient love to God’s divine revelation. It is through the divine revelation of God that man recognizes his/her standing and in response obeys God through the acknowledgement of God’s good, perfect, and loving nature.

Future Research Based on the Discoveries of this Study

This section will discuss several possible areas of future research related to Abraham’s worship practices.

(1) One study that could further the research of Abraham’s worship practices would be centered around specific application to the modern-day church. This would primarily be a pedagogical study that evaluates misconceptions of worship in the 21st century evangelical church and evaluates how churches can better equip worshippers to understand worship from a biblical perspective.

¹⁹⁰ A.W. Tozer, *Tozer on Worship and Entertainment: Selected Excerpts*. Compiled by James L. Snyder. Camp Hill, PN: Christian Publications, 1997.

¹⁹¹ Tyler Braun, “A Serious Problem with ‘Worship’” *Church Leaders*, November 26, 2012.

(2) A much needed study is investigating the process of developing curriculum for teaching Old Testament worship at the collegiate level – based on principles of worship practices established in Abraham’s private and public worship. This study would be pedagogically focused and would develop a syllabus that includes course descriptions, rationales, prerequisites, required resource purchases, additional materials for learning, measurable learning outcomes, course requirements and assignments, course grading policies, and a course bibliography.

(3) Research could also be conducted concerning how Abraham’s worship practices relate to the rest of Scripture. This type of study would be a biblical and historical study that evaluates worship from Genesis through Revelation and observes how the principles discussed in this study apply throughout all of Scripture. This research would aid individuals in understanding the theology of biblical worship.

(4) A research study concerning the historical application of the research principles discussed could be conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the worship culture among churches in the 21st century evangelical church. A study concerning the historical scene of worship within the church would perhaps aid churches in seeing the need to develop worship curriculum.

(5) Further research could be conducted concerning biblical principles of worship through other biblical characters such as Moses or King David. These would primarily be biblical research projects that observe existing literature concerning the worship practices present within the lives of other biblical characters. This would help highlight key elements of worship present within the biblical narrative. Further research would then aid churches to develop curriculum in order to prepare worshippers in the modern-day culture.

(6) One research topic that would be rather interesting to conduct would be to choose a specific principle of worship such as sacrifice or reverence and conduct research to how these characteristics appear in the Old Testament as forms of worship. This topic would widen the specific biblical understanding of a principle of worship and better help theologians have an accurate understanding of how they apply within the modern-day evangelical church.

(7) Conducting a study that observes churchgoers understanding of Abraham would prove useful in understanding how to better educate congregations concerning biblical worship. Surveys and interviews would be useful research methods in order to gauge the theological understanding of worship within the modern-day evangelical church.

(8) A research study concerning the various worship roles Abraham participated in – as prophet, priest, and king – could assist in gaining a deeper understanding of how Christ ultimately fulfills His role as “The Perfect Worshipper.” Biblical and historical research methods that observe existing material could be used as useful research in order to learn more about worship.

(9) A comparison study between the understanding of Abraham in the Old Testament compared with the New Testament would also help further the research of this study. This study could observe the principles outlined in this study while also bringing in the New Testament text and understanding of the covenants in order to gain a deeper understanding of worship throughout Scripture.

Conclusion

The worship of Abraham reveals critical evidence that gives a deeper understanding to worship for all ages. Abraham’s call reveals that God prepares individuals for worship, and calls individuals to worship. It also teaches that worship ultimately requires a response of faithful

obedience. Abraham's covenantal relationship reveals that true worship is unreservedly and wholeheartedly offered to God with honest, humble, and holy motives. Abraham's faith in God is ultimately characterized through the *Word of God* and is demonstrated through his sacrificial obedience to God. This dynamic faith is further articulated and explained by The Apostle Paul in Romans 4:9-12.

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was through Abraham's faith that he ultimately receives the promise of God.

Abraham's relationship with God is forever dependent on his faith in God. Abraham identity as a worshipper of the one true God is summed up in his unwavering faith in Yahweh. True worship is thus characterized by faith in the Lord.

Abraham provides a model of raw and authentic worship. His worship is a genuine response to God's disclosure. Sincere worship is rendered to God by a heart that loves and exalts the name of Christ in both spirit and truth. While Abraham by no means was a perfect worshipper; he was indeed an honest worshipper whose response to God was organic and unforced. God ultimately was pleased with Abraham's worship. Thus, Abraham demonstrates for worshippers today the characteristics of a real worshipper.

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Appendix A

POWER POINT FOR THESIS DEFENSE

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

"Old Testament Principles for Worship: Worship Practices Applied to Modern-Day Worship in the Evangelical Church from the Life of Abraham"

*A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Music
in Candidacy for the Degree of*

Doctor of Worship Studies

by
Cameron S. Gaddy



Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify key worship principles from the life of Abraham that may be applied to the 21st Century evangelical community. Of primary importance to this project was the application of practices prevalently seen through Abraham's own worship. This study was based on three initial pre-suppositions: 1) Abraham's Worship: The Calling is center to his willingness to obey God. 2) Abraham's Worship: The Covenant is the promise fulfilled in the birth of his son, Isaac. And 3) Abraham's Worship: Faithful Sacrifice is at the heart of Biblical worship.



Research Questions:

- 1) What worship principles from Abraham are articulated or examined in the Pentateuch?
- 2) Why is it important to study Abraham's worship practices?
- 3) How is Abraham's worship expressed in the Bible?
- 4) What circumstances contributed Abraham's responses to God?
- 5) How does God use his covenant promises to reassure Abraham of His own faithfulness to the prophet?

Hypothesis Statements:

- 1) Abraham understood the value of worship through sacrifice.
- 2) Abraham's call to worship is both a personal and public calling.
- 3) Abraham's worship is expressed through obedience to God's call.
- 4) God uses Abraham's obedience through worship as a means for establishing a people for worship.
- 5) God's covenant relationship with Abraham serves as an example of his Sovereign guidance and care for those obedient to His Call.



The Methodology:

Biblical and historical research were the primary methodologies for this study. This included investigations into various biblical translations, commentaries, dissertations, thesis, academic journals and scholarly books.

The Limitations:

The primary emphasis of Biblical research methodology was to discover principles of Abraham's worship from God's Word and drawn from Abraham's life experiences. This biblical study did not develop worship practicum, curriculum or otherwise organized methodology that might have any strategic pedagogical purposes. This study limited investigation to the biblical patriarch, Abraham, and did not examine the presence or application of these principles to any other Biblical characters. Qualitative or quantitative research methodology are not used in this study.



Organization:

Discovery for this thesis was organized in to six chapters, as follows:

Chapter One – Introduction: Chapter one serves as an introductory chapter by establishing the rationale through Biblical and historical background of the study. In this introductory phase, specific attention was given to establishing the problem to be solved, the intended purpose to be achieved, the limitations of this study, and research methodology.

Chapter Two – The Literature Review includes a vast number of biblical resources. It was discovered that little is written on the subject of Abraham’s worship as applied to 21st century evangelical practices.



Organization: Continued

Chapter Three – Abraham’s Calling: Chapter three identified principles of worship which were discovered by observing Abraham’s first appearance and calling in Genesis 11-12. Here, the foundations of worship was laid with God’s inaugural call of Abraham to worship. God prepares Abraham, calls Abraham, and Abraham obediently responds to God’s call. This interaction reveals the biblical foundations of all worship within scripture and shows the importance and desire of God to be in relationship with mankind.

Chapter Four – Abraham and the Covenant: The emphasis of chapter four was to identify principles of worship which were recognized through the formation and presentation of “the Abrahamic covenant.” In Genesis 18, God established a binding covenant with Abraham, inaugurating the plan for establishing a holy nation.



Organization: Continued

Chapter Five – Abraham: The Faithful Worshipper: Chapter five focused on Abraham's relationship with God before and after the birth of Isaac. Abraham's response to God's direction concerning Isaac reveals several key principles of worship foundational in application.

Chapter Six – Provided an overview of the study and related research discoveries.



Related Research Discoveries

In chapter three, God's Calling:

First, God orchestrates a plan preparation. God is at work in Abraham's life preparing him to become a worshiper.

Second, God issues Abraham a call to worship.

Third, Abraham's call compels him to be faithful and obedient. Fourth, the final principle of worship resulting from Abraham's calling is reverence.

Worship is a genuine response to God. Abraham's response is sincere, raw, genuine and authentic, reflecting his preparation, calling from God, faithful obedience of Yahweh, and a reverent heart for the Lord.



Related Research Discoveries

In chapter four, His Covenantal Relationship:

First, Abraham's covenant experience teaches him how to embody a spirit of *humbleness*.

Second, Abraham demonstrates a spirit of *Thanksgiving*.

Third, Abraham's worship is an *honest expression of his heart's love for God*.

Fourth, Abraham gives priority to a life of *righteousness through worship*. Out of a heart of worship through obedience, Abraham trusts in God's sovereign plan.

Five, Abraham demonstrates his heart for worship through *remembrance*. Abraham's obedience through circumcision serves as a sign of his own commitment to the covenant with God.



Related Research Discoveries

In chapter five, Birth of Isaac & the Promise Fulfilled:

First, worship is *Word-based*. All of Abraham's worship is based on the promise of God's faithfulness to provide, including the fulfillment of God's promise of a son.

Second, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac demonstrates the "price of a *true sacrifice*." Abraham's immediate obedience and full preparation for sacrifice accentuates his understanding of "God's call" on his life.

"The Call" requires a complete, total, unselfish, sacrifice. Abraham recognizes the gravity of "the call" and the true value of "the sacrifice!"



Research Application to 21st Century Worship

Applications to Personal Worship

- 1) Abraham's worship reveals that worship is personal. Everyone has a unique call from God that is personal.
- 2) Abraham's worship reveals that worship is relatable for people. God established patterns and practices for worship, but ultimately worship began in a manner that was relatable for Abraham.
- 3) Abraham recognized the importance of erecting altars as places of worship.
- 4) Abraham's worship demonstrates how God uses imperfect people to accomplish his sovereign plan.

Research Application to 21st Century Worship

Applications to Public Worship

- 1) Abraham is the first character in scripture where a physical sign communicates an act of worship. Circumcision was a sign that indicated Abraham's faith in God.
- 2) Just as circumcision communicates a sense of faith in the Old Testament, communion in the New Testament is a physical sign of the our own New Covenant in Christ.
- 3) Another sign that is an applicable form of public worship is baptism.
- 4) Churches publicly gather to sing and praise to God a manner that publicly proclaims the name of the Lord.

Research Application to 21st Century Worship

Application to 21st Century Worship

- 1) Worshippers in the 21st century church can understand that (a) worship begins with an obedient response to God's calls. (b) It involves the regular practice of following the Lord. (c) Worship brings an understanding of God. (d) Worship results in receiving God's promise.
- 2) Abraham demonstrated these realities through obeying God, erecting altars of worship, worshipping through giving, and worshipping through sacrifice. Our own altars should celebrate a special meeting with God.
- 3) Ultimately, worship teaches 21st century worshippers that without sacrifice, there is no worship.
- 4) Biblical worship is dependent on God's covenantal relationship with mankind.

Future Research Based on the Discoveries of this Study

- 1) Further research of Abraham's worship practices could be centered around specific pedagogical application to the modern-day church.
- 2) A research study could be conducted that develops curriculum for teaching Old Testament worship at the collegiate level based off of principles of worship noticed through the life of Abraham
- 3) Research could also be conducted concerning how Abraham's worship practices relate to the rest of scripture.
- 4) Further research could be conducted concerning biblical principles of worship through other biblical characters such as Moses or King David.
- 5) A Biblical research project might include specific principles of sacrifice and reverence appear in the Old Testament as forms or prompters of worship.
- 6) A quantitative research project might include a study that observes Church goers understanding of Abraham's worship.

Conclusion

Abraham's call prepares him for worship and ultimately requires a response of faithful obedience. The lesson learned is that God prepares individuals to worship and then "calls" them to the task. Abraham's covenantal relationship prompts unreserved, whole heartedly worship -- with an honest, humble and holy heart-motive. Abraham's faith in God is ultimately shaped and identified through the *Word of God* and lived out through sacrificial obedience.

Abraham provides a model of raw, authentic and sincere worship. While Abraham by no means was a perfect worshipper; he was indeed an honest worshipper whose response to God was organic, spontaneous and genuine. Ultimately, God was pleased with Abraham's worship and refers to the prophet as friend.