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SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Seeking Biblical Clarity Through Blended Worship in Georgia Baptist Churches

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Worship Studies

by

Angelia N. Weide McLeroy

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Abstract

Despite worship training, many leaders in Georgia Baptist churches struggle to combine music styles cohesively to produce biblical worship. Because of the musical “worship wars” regarding traditional, contemporary, and blended styles, many leaders encounter congregations that lack an understanding of blended worship that marries varied music styles. Guided by survey findings of Georgia Baptist music leaders, this qualitative research case study may identify challenges leaders face concerning stylistic music selections while striving to achieve biblical worship. By evaluating the educational and training process and biblical content, the methodological selection of music can be assessed through this study as documented worship patterns in Georgia Baptist churches. A collection of respondents surveyed throughout the state will be reviewed to demonstrate the variety of music styles in worship employed in Georgia Baptist churches. The results can better understand how song selection may affect biblical worship. This work is essential because current trends suggest that training for worship leaders should include theological influences and varied song selection instruction for biblically blended worship. The findings of this study may encourage worship leaders to have other styles in song selection that they may otherwise avoid. The results may warrant the intentional inclusion of unfamiliar elements and patterns of worship that honor God, biblically and theologically. Moreover, church volunteers and undergraduate students may benefit from the coursework provided due to this case study.

Chapter 1

“‘Worship wars’ have become an unwanted, common theme for many Christian churches. Christians have been arguing about music in worship for centuries.”¹ One of the first questions guests may ask is: “What style of music does this church have?” Sadly, this has narrowed the field of potential fellowships for many worshipers, who select their membership based on music style, creating “much of the current turmoil in church music [centering] on the idea of aesthetics, or musical value.”² This predicament casts a negative view on worship styles that are not widely preferred. “The church is in desperate need of worship that is biblical, theological, and pastoral.”³ While many music leaders are fond of varied musical offerings, the opportunity to blend them seldom includes occurs in worship services. “Regardless of whether one...likes the music or not, as an institution of worship practice [Praise and Worship] is unquestionably one of the defining elements of evangelical culture in the United States.”⁴ As a result, “the church today is starting to suffer from success [of popular music], and the only remedy is to return to worship.”⁵

¹ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Sovereign Grace Ministries/Crossway, 2008), 97.

² Michael Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship* (Indianapolis, IL: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 130.

³ Matt Boswell, *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. (Nashville TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 3.

⁴ Gesa F. Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the Times—Praise & Worship Music as Today’s Evangelical Hymnody in North America,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 48 (2009): 365.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship: Playground, Battle Ground, or Holy Ground?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 15.

Music in the Georgia Baptist Church

Church music in the northern hemisphere has changed drastically. “Within the last forty years, the North American evangelical Christian church music tradition has experienced a series of far-reaching transformations.”⁶ With the onset of “Jesus Music” in the 1960s, Contemporary Christian Music has provided musical transformations that include changes in instrumentations, voicings, lyric patterns, and emotionality, far-outreaching songs from decades ago. “Many writers on church music concur that it may be sufficient for music to [be] compositionally ‘good’ if it conjures moods and images which prove distracting for worship or potentially morally corrupting.”⁷ The definition of good may be too subjective to apply to church music, as “It is undeniably true that not all music is worthy of inclusion in worship.”⁸ This point of view supports the worshipers’ perception of worship as “receiving [a] blessing from God, rather than responding to God’s majesty with praise. Does that shift toward self-reveal that...worship may sometimes not be as God-centered as [leaders and worshipers] hope it is?”⁹

The need to reference God’s Word is imperative when defining worship. Unfortunately, leaders “approach the issue of worship style subjectively.”¹⁰ Comparing worship songs to Scripture may be the proverbial litmus test as the words sung in worship are measured.

⁶ Monique M. Ingalls, “Transnational Connections, Musical Meaning, and the 1990s ‘British Invasion’ of North American Evangelical Worship Music.” Oxford Handbooks Online, 2013.

⁷ Ian Jones and Peter Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music for Worship in Contemporary Christianity.” *Crucible: The Journal of Christian Social Ethics* (July-September 2006).

⁸ Walters, *Can’t Wait for Sunday*, 131.

⁹ Matt Merker, “How Contemporary Worship Music is Shaping Us – for Better or Worse. *The Gospel Coalition*, (February 6, 2019), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/singing-congregation-contemporary-worship/>.

¹⁰ Derek W.H. Thomas, *Let Us Worship God: Why We Worship the Way We Do* (Ann-Arbor, MI: Ligonier Ministries, 2021), 31.

An example might be whether a modern piece like “Reckless Love”¹¹ would be appropriate for congregational worship. Would “Precious Memories”¹² pass that same evaluation? Leaders must utilize God’s Word as the theology taught in the church. This teaching provides the philosophy for the worshiper, which drives the methodology or acting out of beliefs or actions through ministry, as described in Hebrews 12:28 as “acceptable worship” (ESV).

Background of Topic

The role of the worship leader has changed titles and responsibilities over time. Originating in the Levitical tradition, the music leaders in worship have gradually assumed more responsibilities. Often referred to as the Minister of Music, the “Expectations for the modern worship leader extend well beyond musical skills.”¹³ In addition to selecting songs and leading the congregation in singing, “The worship pastor...must be a theologian, pastor, counselor, mentor, producer, videographer, audio engineer, leader, and servant.”¹⁴

These roles are executed simultaneously from the platform, the marketplace, and the home. While each position is significant, the central issue appears as the worship leader’s training and skill to lead the congregation in “acceptable worship,” as described in Hebrews 12:28 (NIV). Musicians are enlisted to plan and execute worship because their knowledge of

¹¹ Cory Asbury, Caleb Culver, and Ran Jackson, *Reckless Love*, Musical Composition (Nashville, TN: Cory Asbury Publishing (Admin by Bethel Music Publishing), Richmond Park Publishing (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing, LLC.), Watershed Worship Publishing (Admin. by Watershed Music Group (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing.) and Bethel Music Publishing, 2017).

¹² J.B.F. Wright and Lonnie B. Combs, *Precious Memories*, Music: Public Domain, Song Lyrics, (Nashville, TN: Bridge Building Music, Inc., (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Publishing, Inc.), 1966).

¹³ Frank S. Page and Lavon L. Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today’s Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014), 80.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Christian songs is necessary to facilitate corporate, congregational worship experiences.

“Worship requires serious planning.”¹⁵

Leaders must expand and exercise their knowledge of songs to accommodate biblical worship, particularly since “Songs and sermons are key elements in the Christian life.”¹⁶ The musical expertise that allows varied repertoire combinations promoting the Gospel through song must be demonstrated consistently. Leaders must weave pieces together, which requires intentional practice. “Worship leaders want to help God’s people encourage one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in corporate worship.”¹⁷ In addition to musical prowess, worship leaders are trained and exhibit knowledge of God’s Word to educate further and edify the Body of Christ. The resulting discipleship becomes cyclical, returning to adoring, praising, and worshipping God.

Problem Statement

Educating leaders on song selection for worship requires preparation and intentional discipleship. According to Charlotte Kroeker, collegiate music students become “musicians [who] study little service music and no theology...clergy, and musicians arrive in the parish [or new church] unprepared for the task ahead, each with a language [learned in their training] the other does not understand.”¹⁸ Frank S. Page and Lavon L. Gray assert that college institutions must teach more than musical skills to students serving in ministry, improving the modern skillsets of worship practitioners and the classical model of music education. Herein lies the

¹⁵ Brenda Eatman Aghahowa, “The Need for Milk and Meat in Contemporary Christian Worship Part One: Music that ‘Moves’ Worshipers to Spiritual Growth and Activism.” *Liturgy*, Vol. 36, No.1, (2021).

¹⁶ Stephen Miller, *Worship Leaders: We Are Not Rock Stars* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2013), 119.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 111.

¹⁸ Charlotte Kroeker, “The Church Choral Director: Leader of the Sacred, the Good, the Beautiful,” *Choral Journal* 56, (2016): 12.

problem. If traditional training through colleges and seminaries is no longer adequate, how will worship leaders acquire the knowledge needed? The answer may lie in finding biblical clarity in the worship ministry of Georgia Baptist churches.

Music style selection has become the errant scapegoat for many ailments of the church, from poor attendance to failed evangelism efforts. “Music becomes a convenient whipping boy in the worship of the [church] when other things are going poorly.”¹⁹ Instead of searching for the source of the problem, members often find areas of weakness and shift blame to avoid facing reality. As a result of this blame, reasons for the poor efforts of the church could include poor ministerial relationships, members embracing and assimilating a consumerist culture into the church, and elevating preference over truth. Michael Walters asserts that worship leaders “must find ways to use music for its theological and liturgical purpose and not merely to satisfy musical tastes.”²⁰

Purpose Statement

This qualitative study explores the music selection method of worship leaders in Georgia Baptist churches and discovers biblical approaches to combining musical genres within a single worship service. By evaluating songs from three categories of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,” worship leaders assess methods of music selection through this study, which may materialize through worship patterns in Georgia Baptist churches. A collection of responses surveyed throughout the state will be synthesized to identify the variety of music styles in worship employed in Georgia Baptist churches. The results may provide a better understanding

¹⁹ Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday*, 125.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 129.

of how song selection may influence biblical worship, how songs might be combined in worship, and compare pieces that allow scripture to guide worship.

Combining music styles from traditional and contemporary under the umbrella of “blended,” worship leaders may find a balance that ministers to the congregation and honors God. Using contemporary worship songs with intermingled hymns facilitates disciple-making by teaching praise and worship through the sound theology of all church music.

Walters states, “Churches should not dispense with good hymns, despite the fact...they are musically out of fashion, [because] they represent some of the best theological content the church has produced.”²¹ Worship leaders must choose songs to enlighten and educate the Body of Christ, the Church, not entertain and entrap them. “There is a way for worship wars [to cease finally],”²² but it will require prayer, training, and intentional music selection by the worship leader.

All congregation members must know why other generational worship music is relevant. Older congregants, especially those over age 50, base their theology on the texts of their hymnody. What they know of doctrine and scripture is found in what they sing. Hence, when the music they prefer is discarded or omitted from worship in deference to contemporary selections, that generation tends to express their feelings of not worshiping.

Significance of the Study

Worship leaders should exercise care and wisdom when selecting songs. These methods could include textual content and singability. Modeling after the New Testament, “the predominant sound throughout [worship] is the [congregation's singing].”²³ Congregational

²¹ Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday*, 123.

²² Terry W. York, *America's Worship Wars* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 125.

²³ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 102.

singing is one of the responses to God's revelation of Himself through Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. The primary purpose of singing in worship represents the church's unity through the people's worship. The results can enhance the understanding of how song selection may affect biblical worship by exploring the selection methods of current Georgia Baptist worship leaders. This study is essential because current trends suggest that training for worship leaders should include song selection instruction for biblical worship.

Because of the congregation's diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and experiences, no one style of music can speak to and minister to every person in a worship gathering. For example, the early church combined peoples of varied backgrounds, rich and poor, master with an enslaved person, men with women, old with young, and Jew with Greek. To appease every person with their preferred style of music would be impossible. Some music is pleasing to many but will only please some. If the purpose of music is to "worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24, NIV), more than one genre of music espouses truth. All congregation members must be valued when unity is promoted. All members are equally important, even though their positions in the body of Christ are not deemed as visually or publicly critical. The Apostle Paul confirms this equity of members in Romans 12:4-5 when he writes, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all members have the same function, so in Christ, we who are many are one body, and each member belongs to one another" (NIV).

As each member is part of the body, so are their preferences and likings. Every person is embraced within the body of the church, including their favorite style of music. Paul also exhorts the church at Ephesus to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3, NIV), and by doing the same, the church at Philippi is encouraged to "do everything without grumbling or arguing" (Philippians 2:14, NIV). These scripture directives

remind the church members that unity is a priority, setting aside personal preferences when seeking the will of God for the body of Christ. It is possible to balance taste with biblical and theological integrity, but choices should never usurp the truth found in scripture.

According to Steven Brooks, every Christian should exercise three types of worship: personal/private, corporate/community, and lifestyle/familial worship. “Each type is founded on biblical principles and is important to the development of the worshiper.”²⁴ Worshipers often confuse the three during unified congregational meetings. Personal worship, according to Brooks, “is that time [worshippers] set aside to be in God’s presence...alone.”²⁵ This solitary devotional includes “praying to, meditating on, thinking about, singing to, and listening for God.”²⁶ It is intimate and private, and while it can occur around others, it is intentionally not worshipping alongside others. Brooks adds that when worshippers gather for corporate worship, it “should be fueled by the personal worship in which [worshippers] have participated throughout the week...As [worshippers] gather, [the] corporate worship can help fuel [the] personal worship for the week to come.”²⁷

In response to God’s revelation, His people are called to worship. “Worship is not only a personal experience but also a group endeavor.”²⁸ Corporate worship encourages the family of God and the Body of Christ to glorify God and edify the body. Brooks provides insight into the relationships of the body. “In corporate worship, gathered Christians reflect the very nature of the triune God, simultaneously singular and plural, and experience God corporately through both

²⁴ Steven D. Brooks, *Worship Quest: An Exploration of Worship Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 65.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 68.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷ Brooks, *Worship Quest*, 70.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 72.

the presence of the Holy Spirit and through one another.”²⁹ Since worship is a group endeavor, personal worship is often substituted for corporate without the worshiper realizing the difference. “Too often worshipers engage in personal worship in a corporate setting.”³⁰ When this occurs, the Body is rarely edified, and the purposes of Paul’s mandates in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 are not fulfilled. “The Apostle Paul encourages the church to not only worship [vertically]—with...attention and focus on God—but to also worship horizontally, encouraging one another in”³¹ and through worship. In Ephesians 3:10, Paul also “invites them to do more than use music as a ‘warm-up’ to the sermon. The song is not ornamentation; it is participation in the very redemption of all creation. It plays its own role in God’s showcasing his saving power before humans and angels.”³²

Disciples of Christ not only worship personally and corporately but “should engage in a lifestyle of worship.”³³ This engagement is more than participating in the activities planned by the church leadership. “Practicing lifestyle worship means that Christ-followers demonstrate their love, and thereby their worship, through their obedience to God.”³⁴ Romans 12:1 supports the mindset as Christians should remember the mercies they received and worship by “offering [their] bodies as a living sacrifice” (NIV). Brooks asserts that “God expects faithful worshipers to live in such a way that their lives demonstrate righteousness and justice. The world is meant to see and know something about [how] God’s faithful worshipers live out their lives.”³⁵

²⁹ Brooks, *Worship Quest*, 73.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Reggie M. Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ’s Cong in Our Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 21-22.

³³ Brooks, *Worship Quest*, 78.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Brooks, *Worship Quest*, 79.

“Worship determines the quality of our walk with God.”³⁶ Though a preferred style of music is controversial, the worship leader’s job is to lead people in worshipping God. This study and its results could benefit potential music leaders being encouraged to lead congregational worship through varied styles of music. Further, the findings of this study may encourage worship leaders to include other types in song selection that may otherwise be avoided or neglected. The results may warrant the intentional inclusion of unfamiliar elements and patterns of worship that honor God, biblically and theologically. Among the many facets of the worship leader roles, leaders must view their role as pastoral.

Bob Kauflin speaks about the pastoral role of worship leaders. “Worship leaders [need] to see corporate worship as a context for pastoral care. [Leaders] are not just singing songs. [The] desire in worship planning is to pray and plan toward the goal of seeing God’s Word brought home by the Holy Spirit to the hearts of those who gather for worship.”³⁷ Stephen Miller confirms this view: “There must be more to this role than simply playing songs with excellence.”³⁸

The Old and New Testaments do not prescribe musical style. Instead, they invite variety, explicitly named in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. However, there is “much conjecture as to what is being described”³⁹ in those verses. Those categories may not seem delineated, “but an inclusive phrase which reflects a variety of forms and the indistinctness of boundaries between them.”⁴⁰ The leader employs the patterns and elements to call and lead people in worship; hence,

³⁶ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 16.

³⁷ Boswell, ed., *Doxology & Theology*, 200.

³⁸ Miller, *Worship Leaders*, 58.

³⁹ Douglas Galbraith, *Assist Our Song: Music Ministers in the Local Church* (Edinburgh, UK: Saint Andrew Press, 2021), 33.

⁴⁰ Galbraith, *Assist Our Song*, 33 .

“He is building the Gospel into them. Using psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the worship leader is giving them the spiritual food that they desperately need.”⁴¹ Bob Kauflin contends, “Different styles of music can be brought together in one meeting. More importantly, the church can be taught that setting aside their musical preferences for the sake of others is obeying Philippians 2:4, ‘Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others (NIV).’⁴²

Additionally, II Timothy 2:2 instructs leaders to disciple others continually. “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (NIV). Proverbs 27:17 affirms the principle that “Iron sharpens iron” (NIV). Worship practice is part of the discipleship process. Each worship leader should seek to grow spiritual giants within the church, so that the leader is the least mature on the team one day because the members have grown in their faith through teaching and discipleship.

The progress and spread of the contemporary music style seem to create friction in churches, denominations, and believers across the globe. “In most mid-20th century churches, a musical triumvirate of choir, organ, and hymnal reigned supreme...[Many] congregations have now augmented or replaced these with instrumental ensembles, worship bands, or electronic music.”⁴³ David Peterson explains, “Worship is an issue that continues to divide us, both across the denominations and within particular congregations.”⁴⁴ However, many contemporary worshipers blame the hymnal and its contents for their desire for newer material. Alice Parker

⁴¹ Miller, *Worship Leaders*, 59.

⁴² Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 100.

⁴³ Jones and Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music,” 9.

⁴⁴ David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 15.

contends, “The fault is not in the book.”⁴⁵ Scripture (specifically the Book of Revelation) presents a clear position that music can be both *neos* (Greek for “new, newborn” and in respect for a recent reworking of composition) and *kainos* (Greek for “newness” and in consideration for a contemporary composition).⁴⁶ These terms are used in the Book of Revelation, referring to music in worship. Both types of songs of worship create music never sung before, and existing worship songs performed as never before. Both have a place in corporate worship and are supported by verses encouraging worshipers to “O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth” (Psalm 96:1, KJV).

Music books and hymnals can never be the culprits. The person choosing the music is the determining factor in whether the piece is valuable. Aaron Keyes states that “discipling worship leaders”⁴⁷ is the foundation for building churches that engage in biblical worship. Music should be selected “based on its usefulness—not its age—in leading God’s people in worship.”⁴⁸ Through its usefulness, music is subjective to the degree to which each congregation needs it spiritually, mentally, emotionally, socially, etc.

Worship leaders must learn the current repertoire of the congregation, whether psalms, hymns, or contemporary songs, to properly select a repertoire for maturing Christians. Regardless of style or category, “When the musician chooses music solely on the basis of its being liked by the congregation (emotionally fulfilling, devoid of reason, and in a pop style), then one can be sure that music ministry has become entertainment.”⁴⁹ Worship leaders must

⁴⁵ Alice Parker, *Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2013), 62.

⁴⁶ Definition of *neos* and *kainos*, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv.html>.

⁴⁷ Boswell, *Doxology & Theology*, 156.

⁴⁸ Walters, *Can’t Wait for Sunday*, 133.

⁴⁹ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 53.

intentionally choose music that edifies and encourages the congregation while teaching the Gospel. Proper selections can be confirmed through prayerful music choices to support biblical and theological doctrines that guide the community.

The matter of personal preference dictates where worshipers engage and invest themselves and their resources. When worshipers consider that the church is sinner-centered instead of Jesus-centered, worship becomes less about the salvation experience and more about the saved one. Worshipers “debate styles, genres, levels of participation, and levels of volume. When [leaders] factor in the other Singer as well—this Singing Savior—[worship] conversations...will take on a different tone.”⁵⁰ As a result, music becomes a commodity and a marketing tool for churches to attract their chosen demographic. The problem with churches marketing worship is evident. God never intended worship to be marketed. Worship leaders must “learn to prefer [the church’s] preferences”⁵¹ to build biblical liturgy for the congregation. Through this service, the arts “serve the liturgy, helping...awaken imaginations and affections as the Gospel is proclaimed in word, prayer, [song], water, bread, and wine.”⁵² Songs shape the belief system, creating channels of theology. Through careful song selection, “Correct theology remains the power of the music”⁵³ through worship.

Miller says that “Songs...rich with gospel truth and weighty in God-centered, Christ-honoring content will shape worshipers who understand and adore God, while deficient, flimsy, man-centered songs will produce a lack of understanding of who God...is, which leads to

⁵⁰ Kidd, *With One Voice*, 21-22.

⁵¹ Boswell, *Doxology & Theology*, 144.

⁵² *Ibid*, 145.

⁵³ Miller, *Worship Leaders*, 70.

deficient, flimsy, man-centered worship,”⁵⁴ resulting in deficient, flimsy, man-centered disciples who fail to focus on the gospel. Regardless of style preference, worship leaders are theologians. Therefore, they must be able to “lead away from the cultural norms and engage the emotions and affections of people with the truth that God alone is worthy of...worship.”⁵⁵ This statement asks, “What is the appropriate type of music that should be used in corporate worship?” The music focuses the worshiper on praising God and Him alone, as displayed in the Gospels. Should this music be primarily disciple-making or evangelistic? Will one of these produce the other naturally? What music is considered “appropriate/acceptable” for worship? Further discussion will answer these questions, but discipleship and evangelism should be natural by-products of adoring and worshiping God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Great Commission, presented in Matthew 28 and Mark 16, instructs Jesus’ followers to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel” (KJV). As a result, leaders must intentionally reach worldwide, including those with preferential differences. Worship leaders often struggle when selecting genres that the congregation dislikes, are unfamiliar with, or feels are inappropriate for corporate worship. “The prophetic character of music ministry may very well necessitate going against the grain of popular trends...Musicians, as ministers, respond to what they believe their congregation’s well-being requires.”⁵⁶ As a result, some leaders consider popular music as “problematic and should at best remain an exceptional feature;”⁵⁷ however, the use of popular songs in the church goes back centuries. The use of Isaac Watts’s hymns (1674–

⁵⁴ Miller, *Worship Leaders*, 72.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 74.

⁵⁶ Calvin M. Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-first Century Directions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 4.

⁵⁷ Jones and Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music,” 9.

1748) versus singing psalms primarily in Christian worship caused many churches in the late 1700s to shut out divinely inspired psalms.

Tradition often dictates music style, particularly in older and smaller congregations. If the primary goal of church music is congregational participation, corporate worship is for the unity of the church's response. Hence, introducing new music frequently can be difficult because many in the congregation cannot participate due to a lack of knowledge of the new music. "Musicians know that congregations are seldom perfect; teaching is needed [to mature the worshipers]."⁵⁸ If the goal of corporate worship is congregational participation, then the worship leader must select music known by most of the congregation. The intentional selection process of music education in the church requires the worship leader to introduce new selections using various methods, such as solos, ensembles, choirs, and instrumental arrangements. It also requires the congregation to be willing to learn. Calvin Johansson suggests, "for teaching to be successful, what is needed, above everything else, is a willingness on the part of the congregation to be taught."⁵⁹ Another variable in the congregation's ability to learn is the frequency of attendance norms that have shifted over the years. Attendance frequency can also affect the congregational ability to learn worship repertoire.

Modern worship leaders lack resources for planning varied styles of music while learning to combine genres to effectively accommodate integrated worship for all generations. Ensuring biblical theology through musical style in worship is a challenge for many Georgia Baptist worship leaders. Regrettably, many authors who address this topic need to explain the process of

⁵⁸ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

combining the various genres into one worship service. “The study of church music in general (and popular worship music in particular) has fallen between several disciplinary stools.”⁶⁰

The number of secondary educational institutions that have chosen to offer theological training for worship leaders is limited, and the availability of these programs may not accommodate the need. This topic may address the lack of instruction for so-called “blended” worship in Georgia Baptist churches and provide education for future worship leaders and continuing education for veteran worship leaders. Worship leaders need constant training and reinforcement in theological leadership in worship, not only individual and personal devotional encouragement. “‘How-to’ manuals on popular worship for music have tended to focus mainly on the state of mind and heart of the worship leader, rather than engage in theological reflection on particular styles of music themselves.”⁶¹ The survey included in this study may provide data that will support the need for college coursework that will serve as worship instruction and provide training in worship planning for student leaders.

Research Questions

Despite the “worship wars” that contribute to church debate and disagreement, worship leaders in Georgia Baptist churches can find harmonious balance in biblical worship by combining various congregational music styles that are God-honoring and acceptable worship.

As an exploration of these ideas, this study will seek to answer the following questions:

Research Question One: What are the challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to “acceptable worship” and musical variety in worship, as employed through multiple musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches?

⁶⁰ Jones and Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music,” 10.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Research Question Two: What musical challenges do worship leaders in Georgia face when implementing and executing worship plans involving congregational participation through worship?

Hypotheses

Research Question One may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis One: Challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to musical variety in “acceptable” worship, as employed through blending musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches, can include frustrations with biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education.

Worshippers internalize the song’s messages in worship. “Worship is formative; it not only expresses but forges the community’s belief. [Therefore], worship practices are informed and shaped by doctrine, and simultaneously they embody and express particular theological beliefs.”⁶² The goals of the worship leader are to facilitate and educate worshippers in biblical worship and utilize musical expression to accomplish those goals. “The acceptance of a *de facto* pluralism in worship and theology frequently [lead] not to greater dialogue between different traditions of worship but an increased tendency towards distinct musical sub-cultures within the church.”⁶³ To best serve the Church’s spiritual needs, the worship leader should recognize that the theological implications of the song selections will encourage or stall growth. “What is most important to note...is that the texts for...sung musical expressions in worship will be—for better or for worse—instrumental in the theological formation of the community because the things

⁶² Mariña Eugenia Cornou, “Formative Worship ‘at the End of the World’: The Worship Practices of Methodists, Baptists, and Plymouth Brethren in the Emergence of Protestantism in Argentina, 1867-1930,” *Studies in World Christianity* 25, no. 2 (August 2019): 166. <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/10.3366/swc.2019.0255>.

⁶³ Jones and Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music,” 12.

[worshippers] sing, say, hear, and do in worship will shape [their] faith.”⁶⁴ When the preferred worship method becomes a priority rather than [focusing on the] worship of God, leaders fail to serve the Church’s needs, and Satan seeks to win a stronghold in the fellowship. Unfortunately, “Churches are filled with people hungry for a specific worship style...rather than a [personal,] life-changing dialogue with God.”⁶⁵

Because music makes the most profound impressions during one’s formative years, the songs familiar to and desired by the congregation may determine what “music of the style that was popular in [one’s] youth.”⁶⁶ These experiences, while young, create style preferences. Since children are more malleable in their learning versus adults who are more set in their ways, a solution could be to institute training in the early grades with the goal that future generations of worshippers would be raised.

Research Question Two may be answered with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Two: Challenges that worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist Churches when implementing and executing worship plans that involve congregational participation through worship include selecting lyrics that are sound theologically, pairing music stylings that complement one another, and teaching the congregation to appreciate the various genres used in worship.

Congregational or corporate worship is not a spectator activity. Although scripture commands the worshiper to sing and “make melody to the Lord” (Colossians and Ephesians), an unfortunate but common response to music styles that are not pleasing to the attendee is to refuse

⁶⁴ Andrew Roby, “Worshipful Singing: Four Roles of Song in Worship,” *Choral Journal* 57, (2017), 61.

⁶⁵ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 24.

⁶⁶ J. Gertrud Tönsing, “‘That Song Moves Me to Tears’—Emotion, Memory, and Identity in Encountering Christian Songs,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 3 (2020), Conclusion, ProQuest Library.

to sing or participate in the congregational activity. This response speaks more about the spiritual maturity of the one who should be participating than the one who has planned the service.

However, providing opportunities through spiritual growth in worship will disciple and equip the congregation to embrace worship opportunities over preferences.

Combining music styles requires more planning than sequential organization. Ian Jones and Peter Webster provided one critical thought for the process: “The most fundamental question is why [to] use music in worship at all.”⁶⁷ Worship guidance through music instructs the leader in the Psalter. Whether hymns or modern songs, the focus remains that determining worship plans may include more than one music category. “The main difference between hymns and [praise and worship] ...is that because of their [long] history, hymns also create a connection with congregations of the past, while the often-short-lived worship songs get replaced more quickly.”⁶⁸

John MacArthur explains the purpose of classic hymns. “Classic hymns were written to teach and reinforce biblical and doctrinal concepts in the context of worship directed to God.”⁶⁹ Praise choruses and modern worship songs “[have] no didactic purpose,”⁷⁰ which means these songs are not primarily intended for educational purposes for the congregation. Unlike hymns that aim to teach and enforce biblical theology, worship songs are designed to take the worshiper into more profound meditation by repeating phrases and are more contemplative than traditional hymnody. Worship songs direct the singer's affections toward glorifying God, not the worshiper's edification. As the number of church songs increased, only a portion was included in

⁶⁷ Jones and Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music for Worship,” 12.

⁶⁸ Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the Times,” 369.

⁶⁹ John MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 201.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 202.

hymnals or recorded onto worship albums for public consumption, “not all of which can claim to be excellent.”⁷¹ By ensuring that all songs are biblically sound, pairing selections complementing one another allows congregational music education. Once a worship leader recognizes and appreciates varied genres in worship, employing the worship ministry in presenting the various styles becomes second nature. With careful presentation, the congregation will accept the different genres experienced within worship, which allows the mindset of “all things equal” in music and other ministry areas. Johansson asserts that because music is incarnational, it reflects the gospel. “Music which mirrors theology as an analog of gospel meaning operates in the tension between the human and the divine.”⁷² As worshipers learn the purpose of worship, why their response is worship, and how to best respond to God in worship, their spiritual lives will deepen, and they will be able to share that depth with others.

Gesa Hartje provides an alternate idea to why music style and genre are less critical in worship. Citing the need for worshipers to engage in their relationship with God, Hartje shares a quote that supports the position. “Joe Harness adapts a different perspective when he points out that it does not matter what kind of music is used in worship...the heart and engagement in the music and the faith matter more than anything.”⁷³ Alice Parker affirms this concept by stating, “Learn ways to introduce new tunes that predispose people to want to sing them. Constantly increase the variety of tunes...[the] congregation knows, maintaining a balance of different styles.”⁷⁴ Discussion of these will continue in Chapter 2.

⁷¹ Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the Times,” 370.

⁷² Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 109.

⁷³ Joe Horness, “A Contemporary Worship Response,” (quote in response to Harold Best’s “Traditional Hymn-Based Worship” essay), Paul A. Basden, ed. 102-3. Accessed January 15, 2022.

⁷⁴ Alice Parker, *Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2013), 78-9.

Core Concepts

A discussion of each concept and the advantages and disadvantages of its use in worship within churches are included to comprehend the terminology within this study. Varied perspectives are included from scholarly authors to provide meaningful insight.

According to Vernon M. Whaley, worship is the “instinctive response in knowing God personally.”⁷⁵ Worship becomes the response to God’s revelation of Himself to humans, which can occur through external expressions or internal resolutions. Discipleship and evangelism should be by-products of the essential purpose of corporate worship, through the glorification of God in Jesus Christ by the method of the Gospel and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through worship, disciples are created and trained to make more disciples. Disciples should focus on worshiping God in worship, and discipleship and evangelism will naturally flow as the outpouring of God-centered worship. Human worshipers are joining the worship already in progress in Heaven.

It is imperative to understand that worship through music is not the only element of worship, but is the most prevalent pattern in modern churches. This pattern is stated plainly: God reveals Himself, and worshipers respond. This cyclical pattern continues throughout worship. It is also crucial to note that the primary purpose of corporate worship is to get the entire congregation to respond to God after His initial revelation of Himself, requiring careful planning on the part of the worship leader.

The New Testament does not prescribe worship methodologies, but several principles found in scripture may inform chosen methodologies. These principles can be applied to worship

⁷⁵ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God’s Call* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 3.

in various ways, which may be more lenient or spontaneous than prescribed worship. Harold Best affirms that view: “Everything we know of needs help from and is informed by the Word [of God].”⁷⁶ According to the regulative principle, God has specified how He should be worshiped in Scripture. “Anything without [a] scriptural warrant is prohibited.”⁷⁷ However, the normative principle contends that what is not forbidden from worship is allowed. This would support the assumption that the choice is reinforced based on Normative and Regulative principles when music is selected. Glenn Sunshine explains, “What Scripture commands, [worshippers] do, but [they] have [the] freedom to go beyond those and introduce elements not commanded in the Bible if they are not prohibited either expressly or implicitly.”⁷⁸ He also contends that the Normative Principle “holds sway in most evangelical churches.”⁷⁹

In comparison, the two principles guide leaders to plan worship differently. “The Regulative Principle sees Scriptures as a set of unalterable rules laying out how...to worship, while the Normative Principles sees Scripture as principles...to follow in worship.”⁸⁰ These Principles influence how leaders organize worship through scriptural application, and the differing positions concern the application of scripture to worship. The Normative Principle conveys that anything not restricted from worship is acceptable. On the other hand, the Regulative Principle contends that anything done in worship should be “prescribed” in scripture

⁷⁶ Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 156.

⁷⁷ Glenn Sunshine, “Exploring Worship: Part Four, The Regulative vs. Normative Principles - Breakpoint,” Accessed April 2, 2022. <https://www.breakpoint.org/exploring-worship-part-four-the-regulative-vs-normative-principles/>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Glenn Sunshine, “Exploring Worship: Part Four, The Regulative vs. Normative Principles.”

for it to be permissible. As a result, both principles may allow the same actions or liturgy in worship for different reasons.

The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 that worshipers should teach and admonish “one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (NJKV). These verses instruct the early churches in their discipleship and fellowship toward one another. These passages have contributed to discussions on exact terminology over the years. Scott Aniol further explains the distinction of the words by stating, “What these terms exactly mean has been a matter of disagreement since the church fathers and worship warriors frequently use dogmatic, and often unsupported, assertions concerning their meaning to defend their arguments.”⁸¹ Using scripture cross-references and popular interpretations to define these terms should assist in understanding how scriptures influence the music selections for worship.

Aniol affirms that the three categories listed in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 should not inform the clearly defined groupings of songs but “should rather be seen as overlapping near synonyms.”⁸² While he believes these songs are similar, other scholars maintain that each of these types of songs can interpret varied categories of pieces to be utilized in worship. “Scholarly opinions can be generally divided into two categories: those that contend there is a clear distinction between the terms and those that believe the terms are ambiguous.”⁸³

⁸¹ Scott Aniol, “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: Assessing the Debate—Artistic Theologian,” n.d., accessed March 30, 2022, 13.

⁸² Aniol, “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs,” 13.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 14.

“Within the Book of Revelation exist both direct and indirect references to music.”⁸⁴ Included is the “ode” terminology, which implies the Greek word “song.” Often interpreted as “a fresh song of praise,”⁸⁵ these songs were composed for special occasions. According to Thomas A. Seel, ode and song were hymns and psalms that preceded “the time...of the early church.”⁸⁶ In the book of Revelation, the author, presumably the Apostle John, or no less than a Johannine scholar, included texts of more than 30 odes. Many question why the author used the term “odes” instead of psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs. Was it standard practice to clump songs together as odes, or was the author less trained in distinguishing between the types of worship songs?

Congregations are navigating these principles through the “worship wars” in one of three ways: “(1) by maintaining steadfast loyalty to traditional hymns; (2) by adopting fully contemporary approaches; or (3) by attempting to blend the two.”⁸⁷ Bob Sorge asserts that “When [leaders] intentionally incorporate psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs into [their] corporate worship services, something else happens: The breadth of [the] vocabulary expands, which in turn makes worship richer and deeper.”⁸⁸ As worship becomes deeper and richer, spiritual depth and maturity become evident in the worshiper’s life.

Historically, the traditional worship style involves piano, organ, choir, hymnals, and print music for all worshipers. This liturgical tradition assumed that most worshipers could read the music provided. Juxtaposed against this style is the contemporary method. Services are

⁸⁴ Thomas A. Seel, *A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation*, Studies in Liturgical Musicology, No. 3. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 48.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 196.

⁸⁸ Bob Sorge, *Next Wave: Worship in a New Era* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2021), 117.

characterized musically by a band, vocal ensemble, no choir, and hymns abandoned for Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) or Contemporary Worship Music (CWM).

In contemporary worship, “emphasis is generally put on the difference between traditional...hymns and liturgy, ...modern worship... (songs in popular music styles and few liturgical elements).”⁸⁹ Combining these two styles results in the “blended” style of worship, which provides a mixture of all types. Preference is subjective. “Many writers on church music concur that it may be insufficient for music to be compositionally ‘good’ if it conjures moods and images which prove distracting for worship or potentially morally corrupting.”⁹⁰

Definition of Terms

Acceptable Worship—“Christ’s work on the cross...assures [sinners] that [their] worship is acceptable to God.”⁹¹ Only the finished work of salvation through the blood of Jesus is to be celebrated during worship. As mentioned in John 4:24 (NIV), while Jesus spoke to the Woman at the well drawing water midday, the conversation began with worship begun by the woman. “The ultimate factor of acceptable worship is faith in and union with Jesus Christ.”⁹² True or acceptable worship is Christ-centered and “*always* in response to [God and] God’s Word.”⁹³

Blended Worship—“Blended worship draws from the biblical and historical sources that have faced the changes in traditional worship, but it has been equally concerned [with drawing] from contemporary worship. For this reason, blended worship is characterized

⁸⁹ Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the Times,” 365.

⁹⁰ Jones and Webster, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music for Worship,” 13.

⁹¹ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 74.

⁹² Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 75.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 91.

by these three concerns: first, to be rooted in the biblical and early church tradition; second, to draw from the resources of the entire Church; and third, a radical commitment to contemporary relevance.”⁹⁴

Contemporary worship music—Contemporary worship music (also known as Modern Worship Music) “is a large umbrella that encompasses several types of congregational song heavily influenced by popular (secular) Western music.”⁹⁵

Liturgy—In generic terms, liturgy refers to the congregation's actions during a corporate meeting. “ ‘Liturgy’ comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*, translated as ‘people’s work.’ It refers to worshipers’ actions to do the work of worship. Since all worshipers engage to some degree in actions of worship, all worshipers engage in the liturgy.”⁹⁶ This word carries no positive or negative connotation, but indicates that acts of worship “constitute...liturgy.”⁹⁷ “Liturgy refers to the [actions taken as the] assembled gathering of God’s people.”⁹⁸

Normative Principle—This principle is defined as “worship with any element not forbidden in Scripture...permit[ting] for extra-biblical acts such as incense, drama, or dance.”⁹⁹ (Both Normative and Regulative principles developed from the Protestant Reformation.)

⁹⁴ Webber, *Planning Blended Worship*, 16.

⁹⁵ Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 184.

⁹⁶ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 51.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 51.

⁹⁸ Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 141.

⁹⁹ Martin, “Love for Christ and Scripture-Regulated Worship – Artistic Theologian,” blog/article.

Regulative Principle—“The regulative principle of worship states that the corporate worship of God is to be founded on specific directives of Scripture. Put another way: it states that nothing ought to be introduced into gathered worship unless there is a specific warrant of Scripture.”¹⁰⁰

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs—“Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,” described in New Testament passages by the Apostle Paul, encourage and commend church members in their interaction with one another. Ephesians 5:19 instructs Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit by “speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (NKJV). Colossians 3:16 is similar in verbiage: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (NKJV). Regarding the Psalms, “ ‘Psalm’ referred to Old Testament Jewish psalms,”¹⁰¹ also known as the Book of Psalms, containing 150 poems compiled within the book, often referring to musical directions or accompanying stringed or percussion instruments. “Psalms from the Old Testament psalter would have been included in worship.”¹⁰² Used directly from the Bible, these Scriptures provide composers with rich material for worship. For some, the psalms represent not only the songbook of the church but also the prayerbook that, through much of Christian history, has been largely unaccompanied. For many congregation members, “The Psalms [can be]

¹⁰⁰ Derek W.H. Thomas, *Let Us Worship God: Why We Worship the Way We Do* (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2021), 32.

¹⁰¹ Aniol, “What Are ‘Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs’?,” 14.

¹⁰² Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 177.

either songs or hymns.”¹⁰³ Regarding hymnody, “Hymns are formal and traditional songs which are sung by the congregation in praise of God in public,”¹⁰⁴ which “conveys developed statements of objective Christian belief, to or about God, expressed in metered stanzas and written to be sung by the Christian community.”¹⁰⁵ Hymns “have a particular rhythm (8.8.8.8.)”¹⁰⁶ and “the music [accompaniment]...used with hymns is referred to as chordal.”¹⁰⁷

In modern understanding, hymns found in worship are not composed with a metrical or poetic rhythm. According to Calvin Johansson, “Hymn singing is part of God’s plan for his chosen people,”¹⁰⁸ which is supported by 1 Corinthians 14:15, in which Paul writes: “What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also” (ESV). This statement indicates a singing in the Spirit that Johansson describes most accurately. Another example is in Ephesians 5:14, through which God reveals Himself to his people in hymns. Before, in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 (NIV), Paul teaches the church “to use hymns...for the praise of God and the edification of the saints.”¹⁰⁹ The final example from the Pauline writings is in 1 Corinthians 14:26, which historically displays that “the New Testament church did sing hymns as part of their worship.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Nimisha Kaushik, “Difference Between Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs,” “*Difference Between,*” n.d. Accessed May 5, 2022. <http://www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/religion-miscellaneous/difference-between-psalms-hymns-and-spiritual-songs/>.

¹⁰⁴ Kaushik, “Difference Between Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs.”

¹⁰⁵ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 199.

¹⁰⁶ Kaushik, “Difference Between Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 125.

¹⁰⁹ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 125.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Spiritual Songs–“‘Spiritual songs’ would seem to refer to songs that express or reflect upon what the Holy Spirit has inspired in Scripture.”¹¹¹ According to Johansson, “spiritual songs have an immediacy and improvisatory quality which distinguishes them from the psalm and the hymn. The adjective *pneumatikos* (spiritual), which describes song or ode in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, is the same adjective used by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1 to describe ‘spiritual’ gifts, specifically those which are supernatural and hence do not depend upon the rationality of humans but upon special inspiration from God.”¹¹²

Traditional Worship–Modeled after the pattern of revelation and response in chapter 6 of the book of Isaiah, “Traditional worship attempts to accomplish the goal of bringing the congregation to the Word” with acts such as the Prelude, Entrance Hymn, Greeting, Call to Worship, Invocation, Act of Praise, Confession, and Forgiveness, and Opening Prayer,” all of which are prescribed by the traditional pattern and require little to no spontaneity.¹¹³

Contemporary Worship (also known as “Praise and Worship”)–“Some used the term [Praise and Worship] to refer to the whole swath of contemporary worship for the past half century; others use it to refer to a particular two-part sequence of songs.”¹¹⁴ Cherry explains further that the understanding of contemporary Praise and Worship music describes “a second generation of [Modern Worship Music] occurring in the 1980s and

¹¹¹ Matt Merker and J. Ligon Duncan. *Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God’s People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 137.

¹¹² Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 140.

¹¹³ Robert E. Webber, *Renew Your Worship: A Study in the Blending of Traditional and Contemporary Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 42.

¹¹⁴ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 186.

‘90s when lighter-fare contemporary worship songs sported more substantial compositional forms and crossed over into mainstream evangelical churches to stay.”¹¹⁵ As a result, modern worship songs presented the third generation “around the turn of the twenty-first century as musicians and congregations waned in their interest in the simpler verse-chorus structure, along with its polished praise team presentational format.”¹¹⁶ Just as young people lost interest in their parents’ secular music, worship music of lighter nature also lost ground with young worshipers. As a result, “The natural course for songwriters was to extend the art form further in musical structure, lyrical content, and instrumentation,”¹¹⁷ creating the modern worship song.

Modern Hymn—Appearing approximately around the turn of the twentieth century, “when a number of worship leaders became interested in revitalizing classic hymnody,”¹¹⁸ mainly due to “emerging generations...longing for a reconnection with the past.”¹¹⁹ Hymn texts written in past centuries were researched and recast “either by composing new arrangements of the hymn tunes...or providing alternate tunes for the old texts (a method known as retuning).”¹²⁰ Another process of modern hymn composition is to add a short chorus to familiar and classic hymns, popular with contemporary worship composers and churches who embrace varied styles of music, rejecting monolithic music styles. These songs could also fall into *neos* and *kainos*, as described earlier by the author.

¹¹⁵ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 186.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

Worship—Worship is man’s response to God’s initial revelation of Himself through inward and outward self-expression.¹²¹ “Worship is supposed to be at the center of everything...the church believes, practices, and seeks to accomplish.”¹²² Evelyn Underhill defined worship as “the total adoring response of man to the one Eternal God, self-revealed in time.”¹²³ William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, describes worship succinctly as “the submission of all our nature to God.”¹²⁴ Temple’s book, *The Hope of a New World*, further defines worship through personal application for the Christian:

To worship is:

To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God;
 To feed the mind with the truth of God;
 To purge the imagination by the beauty of God;
 To open the heart to the love of God;
 To devote the will to the purpose of God.¹²⁵

Wiersbe further explains that Temple sees worship as “the response of all that [worshippers] are to all that God is and does.”¹²⁶

Chapter Summary

The qualitative methodology was considered as described in the work of John Creswell and J. Creswell regarding research methods. This application assisted in gathering historical data on the implications of stylistic music choices in Georgia Baptist worship ministries and how Georgia Baptist worship leaders choose repertoire for corporate worship. Modeling this research after an outline by Creswell and Creswell, this case study provided the best opportunity to inform

¹²¹ Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 13.

¹²² Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 16.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 21.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*.

¹²⁵ William Temple, *The Hope of a New World*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: The Macmillan Co., 1941), 3.

¹²⁶ Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 21.

the implementation and execution of worship plans involving combinations of music styles. The study also addressed the challenges worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist churches when implementing and executing those plans. However, the collected data argued that this case study would not provide typical qualitative material.

According to the findings gathered through the proposed research, the case study provided an enlightened point of view of Georgia Baptist worship leaders regarding blended music styles that impacted biblical worship. The survey inquired about who selects the music for worship services and will determine the process of whether the songs chosen demonstrate lyrics thematically, seasonally, or preferentially. Respondents indicated if there is shared responsibility for worship planning. The researcher queried methodological patterns used by the worship leaders. This data authenticated and affirmed Georgia Baptist worship leaders' selection methods when combining song choices for the argument's foundation for targeted education classes for worship leaders. The hypotheses and research questions of the case study were answered through the exploratory nature of the survey of worship leaders serving in Georgia Baptist churches. The findings of this survey supported the idea that proper training through balancing musical styles provided potential biblical worship models from the churches surveyed.

According to the recommended research questions using the defined research method and approach, extant literature was compiled and inspected for possible details, philosophies, and implications that defined the parameters of biblical worship as it applied to varied musical styles within worship. Examinations completed and compiled for the accumulated literature for common philosophies and theologies in music styles of biblical worship and, specifically, the implications of these philosophies and beliefs that have influenced processes utilized by Georgia Baptist worship leaders.

As prescribed by the data collection provided by Creswell and Creswell, texts such as scholarly books, scholarly and professional journals, peer-reviewed journal articles, abstracts, theses and dissertations, trade journals, and periodical articles were assessed as needed. In addition to the data collected through the study, all findings were reviewed and reported synchronously, in addition to any books, websites, educational course materials, pedagogical materials, or the like. The assemblage and analysis of the materials formulated the groundwork to guide the study toward a better comprehension of musical balance in biblical worship in Georgia Baptist churches, providing the foundation needed for worship leaders trained in their field.

Chapter 2

To fully explain the positions and discussions found in the resources utilized in this paper, each resource has been reviewed for scholarly research and input. Some resources do not speak directly to musical balance in Georgia Baptist churches; however, the processes and principles addressed are as viable for Georgia Baptist churches as any. Most of the resources cited in this thesis contain worship as their primary topic while discussing various tangential applications.

Worship

Worship is essential to this paper's theological, biblical, and philosophical discussions. Each author cited as a resource in this study provides a distinct and robust presentation within their writings. A summarization of content and quotes will further the discourse within this paper and will be disclosed through each resource.

The English translation for worship is “worth-ship.” “Only God is worthy of...worship.”¹ All of creation was designed to worship God and glorify Him only. Examining the patterns of worship in history should illuminate practices for application. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.), worship is defined as reverence offered to a divine being. Vernon Whaley explains worship as an “act of expressing such reverence.”² David Peterson further describes worship as “the supreme and only indispensable activity of the Christian church,”³ specifically referring to the Body of Christ and its members.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship: Playground, Battle Ground, or Holy Ground?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 20.

² Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God's Call* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), xiv.

³ David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 15.

According to Warren Wiersbe, “Four different Hebrew words are translated ‘worship’...but the one used most often is *shachah*, which means ‘to bow down, to do homage.’”⁴ This term is initially used in Genesis 18:2, in Abraham’s story of bowing to three visitors, one of Whom was the Lord. In Greek, *proskueno* is “to express deep respect or adoration.”⁵ This term also means “to kiss toward,”⁶ which connotes reverence or obeisance toward the Lord, as mentioned in John 4. Thomas Seel reports eight words that occur for worship, agreeing that *proskueno* is found in the Apocalyptic visions of John.⁷

Two other words for worship provide a deeper meaning for the act. *Latreuo*, Greek for serving or ministering, as in Matthew 4:10, Hebrew 9:9, and Revelation 22:3, provides the idea of servanthood. Finally, “a related word is *leiturgos*, which means ‘a priestly ministry’ and gives [the] English word *liturgy*.” All these terms reflect worship and cannot be “measured by the songs...[sung]; by the atmosphere, space, or environment...[created]...by the number of Scriptures...read: or by the technology...used.”⁸ “Worship is not an unexpressed feeling, nor is it an empty formality. True worship is balanced and involves the mind, emotions, and...will. It must be intelligent; it must reach deep within and be motivated by love; and it must lead to obedient actions that glorify God.”⁹

The best definition for worship found in scripture is directly from Jesus’ instructions to his disciples. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...mind...and with all your

⁴ Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 20.

⁵ Whaley, *Called to Worship*, xiv.

⁶ Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 20.

⁷ Thomas A. Seel, *A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation*. Studies in Liturgical Musicology, No. 3. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995, 4.

⁸ Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 3-4.

⁹ Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 21.

strength” (Matthew 12:30, NIV). This instruction is foundational for disciples, providing the initial and internal response to God’s revelation toward His creation. As such, Christians must be “fully devoted followers”¹⁰ in their private and public worship.

To best understand worship and the purposes that God has for human worship, Vernon M. Whaley’s book, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God’s Call*, follows the woven thread of worship throughout the Bible and provides the narrative for the reader to understand the spiritual, personal, and theological preparedness worship leaders need to serve God and His people. Written primarily for ministry professionals and seminary students, Whaley prefaces the content by defining worship as the concept that applies to scripture. Through the exploration of genuine worship, the writer supplies insight and application for the reader to understand God’s purpose and intent of worship. This text furnishes an overview of worship through the Bible and may provide a deeper understanding of worship than taught in the local church or those surveyed through this paper.

Vernon Whaley states, “Our instinctive response in knowing God personally is worship.”¹¹ The author claims, “The Creation account is, in fact, God’s call to worship, for in it, He reveals to us His person, presence, power, plan, and purpose.”¹² Through all of God’s revelation, His goal is to reconcile man to Himself. “When God is with us, when He is present, worship is our immediate response.”¹³ God reveals something about Himself, and in response, His people worship.

¹⁰ Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 6.

In *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*, Harold M. Best defines worship for the reader and explains how worship manifests the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life and through the church through the first section of the text. The author also debunks various myths and misunderstandings regarding the use of music in worship and provides remedies for biblical worship in modern churches. Though published in 2003, this text's application may provide a foundation for explaining the role of music in biblical worship as it should apply to the church, whether Georgia Baptist or other. Unceasing worship offers dialogue and discourse through which the author provides wisdom for not only worship leaders but also "all worshipers who seek to renew their spiritual life."¹⁴

In the second portion of the book, the author provides a framework for musicians and artists to focus on the concept of unceasing worship and the arts used within worship by explaining how the idea of the continual indwelling of the Spirit of God provides the basis for worship. As a result, Harold Best addresses the point succinctly when he writes, "Let the music come. Traditional, contemporary, avant-garde, ethnic, jazz, rock, and chant—name it and pour your heart and mind into it...but for Jesus Christ's sake,...get music back where it belongs—as a lipping sign and not a glittering cause, as the response to a commandment and not just a set of tools for influencing people."¹⁵

David Peterson's book, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, simplifies and clarifies the scriptural teaching of worship. Using scripture as the infrastructure of his content, the author expounds on the concepts of worship in various stories from both Testaments. Through his explanations, the reader better understands how worship affects everyday life, which

¹⁴ Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), inside front cover, review by John D. Witvliet.

¹⁵ Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 151.

is imperative to finding musical balance since music has become the primary method of worship in many churches today. This book may establish the framework of biblical worship as it should be evident in the modern church. David Peterson asserts, “Despite the continuity between the Testaments, the gospel demands a transformation of many of the traditional categories and patterns of worship.”¹⁶ Not only does this apply to the churches found in the Testaments, but also to those found in modern society. Understanding that worship is not an event to attend, but a lifestyle with which to engage daily encapsulates the author’s perspective. Peterson states, “People who emphasize that they are ‘going to church to worship God’ tend to disregard what the New Testament says about the purpose of the Christian assembly... ‘Corporate worship’ may express more accurately what is involved, but Paul’s emphasis is on coming together to participate in the edification of the church.”¹⁷ Through corporate edification of the Body of Christ and its members, the understanding of putting the needs of others first is essential. In addition to this understanding, Thomas Seel contends that “the New Testament, particularly the largely ignored Book of Revelation, does have practical, ‘down-to-earth’ and specific things to say regarding the use of music for worship in the life of the contemporary church.”¹⁸

Addressing these challenges along with many others, Frank S. Page and L. Lavon Gray authored *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today’s Church*, a product of the decades-long issues that the “worship wars” have produced in many churches. The writers facilitate training for new and veteran leaders by applying biblical principles to potential problems. Throughout the text, Page and Gray encourage the reader to point worshipers to the Cross and its message in worship. The authors caution the reader about worship that is

¹⁶ Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 24.

¹⁷ Ibid, 219.

¹⁸ Seel, *A Theology of Music for Worship*, vii.

performance-driven rather than worship-based. “If the focus is on the music or individuals, it does not matter whether it [is] a singer or an organist with an attitude. The results are the same: performance-driven worship.”¹⁹ While worship should maintain excellence in artistry, the goal is not performance but to honor and glorify God through the arts. The authors clearly explain the challenges leaders face in ministry. The text expounds on what the Bible says, its applications, and the implications and consequences if the precepts are not employed. As a result, Page and Gray’s text supports those potential applications for worship leaders in training.

With the inclusion of technology and current music styles into worship, Tim Alan Hall discusses worship through scripture in his thesis, “Biblical Principles of Music and Worship.” As instructional material for current and future worship leaders, this project combines the theological purpose of worship with its robust history. As a result of these examinations, the author concludes that the vertical relationship with God should influence the horizontal relationship with humans for the worshiper. “Understanding the Biblical history of music ministry can help identify the changes in musical styles and other significant changes in church worship over the years and how they have altered the way we worship.”²⁰ This case study may provide biblical documentation and quotes to correlate worship ministry to history. “The music ministry traces its roots from the Bible, whereby music ministers share the same unique roles given to the Levites as outlined in the Old Testament. Thus, it is vital to consider the music ministry as a spiritual ministry instead of entertainment and social activity.”²¹

¹⁹ Frank S. Page and Lavon L. Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today’s Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014), 58.

²⁰ Tim Alan Hall, “Biblical Principles of Music and Worship,” Master’s Thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological University, 2020, 32.

²¹ *Ibid.*

It is also essential to define what worship is not. One can easily confuse a style of music with worship. However, music is only one part of the worship response offered to God.

Worship is not a standard set of guidelines to conjure the Spirit into the presence of those seeking to worship. Worship is not an atmosphere or environment created to feel or stir emotions that simulate the presence of God. Worship is not exclusively reading scriptures, hearing God's Word preached, or praying and meditating at length. Wiersbe defines worship as "the believer's response of all that they are—mind, emotions, will, and body—to what God is and says and does."²² Worship must focus entirely on God's initial revelation of Himself and the worshiper's response.

Subsequently, Daniel Block proposes a "working explanation of worship"²³ by offering this description rather than a definition: "True worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign, in response to his gracious revelation of himself and in accord with his will."²⁴ True worship requires the Believer to be honest with oneself and God, or a response of awe from human worship of God. Attendance in worship does not automatically mean engagement.

Worship involves many aspects or elements. Every worship gathering should include singing, praying, preaching (proclamation of the Word), giving, holiness, and brokenness. Each part has veritable reasons to study. Each of these elements works interdependently to provide a deeper understanding of God's worthiness to celebrate; However, worship does not have to be relegated to a specific time or location. God's glory can be honored at any time and at any place.

²² Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 26.

²³ Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 23.

²⁴ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 23.

Due to the limited scope and condensed timeline of this study, only the element of congregational singing and the influence of musical style in worship will be examined in this study.

Theology and Biblical Worship

One must know how to follow when seeking to lead. Worship leaders must understand where they are attempting to go (hypothetically, spiritually, figuratively, and literally) before they can effectively show anyone else the path. Knowing scripture and recognizing what it means are necessary to lead others in worship, and “musical decisions must be made with the congregation in mind.”²⁵ Matt Boswell states, “One of the great joys of being a worship leader is putting God’s truth on the lips of God’s people.”²⁶ As a result, teaching God’s truth appropriately to His people creates deep spiritual wells within the lives of those people. “Where the Word of God is taught correctly, the opportunity exists for the informed worshipers to respond to God with their heart and mind, with affection and thought.”²⁷ Knowledge of God's Word (theology) must inform one’s understanding of that Word (philosophy), which in turn applies to one’s application (methodology), which also influences one’s doxology. Michael Bleeker provides a more precise explanation. “Our biblical theology (study of God) should inform and propel our doxology (praise to God).”²⁸ Worship education in the local church is a constant process as the membership of congregations changes frequently. “Musicians know that congregations are

²⁵ Calvin M. Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-first Century Directions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 4.

²⁶ Matt Boswell, *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 26.

²⁷ Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*, 45.

²⁸ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 46.

seldom perfect; teaching is needed. But in order for that teaching to be successful, what is needed...is a willingness on the part of the congregations to be taught.”²⁹

“Worship leaders are always in danger of falling into the pharisaical trap of honoring God with [their] lips but keeping [their] hearts far from Him. [The] mandate is [actually] to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength—not to simply make people think we do.”³⁰ The Gospel of Jesus Christ forms and informs the worship leader in doctrine, thought-life, personality, compassion, and every other sense of being. Worship leaders point to the depth of mercy found at the cross each time worshipers enter to seek God’s grace.

Singing has become an integral part of corporate worship since it is the heaviest portion of congregational involvement in the service. Scott Aniol states, “It has always been a characteristic of God’s people that they are a singing people.”³¹ Reflecting on Paul’s admonition for singing in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5, many scholars emphasize the emotional and transforming power of singing on the congregation. John Chrysostom, an early church leader, reinforces this mindset when he states, “Nothing so arouses the soul, gives it wings, sets it free from earth, releases it from the prison of the body, teaches it to love wisdom, and to condemn all the things of this life, as concordant melody and sacred song.”³² The influence of singing in worship remained consistent throughout the church’s history. Martin Luther said, “We have put this music to the living and holy Word of God in order to sing, praise, and honor it. We want the beautiful art of music to be properly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians. He is

²⁹ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 5.

³⁰ Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*, 103-4.

³¹ Scott Aniol, “An Old New Song – Artistic Theologian” n.d. Accessed April 29, 2022, 1.

³² James W. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 80.

thereby praised and honored, and we are made better and stronger in faith when his holy Word is impressed on our hearts by sweet music.”³³

In addition to Luther’s affirmation of music in worship, Jonathan Edwards maintains that “The best, most beautiful, and most perfect way that [worshippers] have of expressing a sweet concord of mind to each other is by music.”³⁴ Because music influences worshippers, “God’s people have also recognized that [they] must always look to Scripture [for guidance] in understanding why [they] sing in worship and what this singing should be like.”³⁵ Scott Aniol suggests that “there is perhaps no better...source of such guidance than the God-inspired collection of songs—the Book of Psalms.”³⁶ In an editorial piece, “An Old New Song,” Scott Aniol argues in singing the Psalms, “profound things are taking place: [worshippers] are expressing deep affections from [their] hearts like joy and exultation; [worshippers] are magnifying God’s glory and strength and proclaiming what [He] has done. Singing helps...express thanksgiving, lament, contrition, praise, confession, grief, love, and so much more.”³⁷

Scott Aniol contends that singing in worship provides an outlet for expression that cannot occur otherwise. “Singing helps...to express those things to the Lord in ways that would not be possible if [worshippers] did [not] have a song.”³⁸ These expressions are not simply for expression

³³ Martin Luther, “Preface to the Burial Hymns” 1542, in Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther’s Works*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1999), 53:327-28.

³⁴ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), 2:619.

³⁵ Aniol, “An Old New Song – Artistic Theologian,” 2.

³⁶ Aniol, “An Old New Song,” 2.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

or communion. The words do not exist merely for existence’s sake;³⁹ “Singing to the Lord is a response—a response to who God is and what [He] has done.”⁴⁰

The author refers to Psalm 96 as one of the best models of how and why God’s people should engage in singing. “A psalm like [Psalm 96] serves as a key example of that fact that when [worshippers] sing to the Lord, [they] are not just making music; [they] are not just doing something pretty or enjoyable.”⁴¹ Worship [occurs] “among the nations...among all the peoples” (Psalm 96:3, NIV). Aniol asserts that in Psalm 96, singing in worship allows the worshippers to “express appropriate heart affection toward God in response to the worthiness of [His] character and works.”⁴²

Singing provides avenues of expression for the worshiper, and “singing forms us.”⁴³ Singing shapes the belief system of worshippers. The theology continually sung from the platform will be echoed through the worshippers’ memory. “Christians often fail to recognize the formative power of song. Songs both express *and* form.”⁴⁴ Songs chosen for corporate worship demonstrate their ability to emote, in addition to deepening, maturing, and solidifying Christian beliefs. Whether an unfamiliar old song or a newly composed tune, “A new song is a song that shapes and forms [believers], molding minds and hearts such that [worshippers] cannot help but believe and sing.”⁴⁵

³⁹ Aniol, “An Old New Song,” 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 5.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 6.

David G. Peterson agrees that biblical truth must be included in the song selection. Colossians 3:16-17 confirms a three-way movement of expression. “The New Testament teaches that there was a three-way movement in the early church’s meetings: from God to his people, from the people to God, and from the members of the congregation to one another.”⁴⁶ Not only does God’s Spirit move vertically and horizontally in worship, but it engages all those who abide in Him. Peterson argues that expression includes edification in corporate worship. God ministers to believers in worship when “His Word dwells richly among [his people].”⁴⁷ His people minister to each other as they “teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19, NIV), and worshipers “respond to God collectively but also personally.”⁴⁸ He argues that “edification is the missing factor in much of [the] thinking about music and corporate worship.”⁴⁹

In his article, “Worship, Edification, and Theological Method,” David Peterson continues exploring the relationship between these three concepts. Quoting Timothy J. Keller in his essay, “Reformed Worship in the Global City,” Peterson questions the understanding of how worship affects one’s daily life.

Worship is meant to be expressed in every area of life, but does the New Testament allow us to speak about corporate worship? Given the importance of edification as a way of describing the purpose of our [worship] gatherings, is it misleading to apply worship categories to the same events? “Is worship primarily what happens on Sundays when we do specific activities of singing, praying, offering, confessing, and so on? Or is worship primarily the way we live all of life for the honor of the Lord in such a way that Sunday gatherings are no more ‘worship’ than any other time of the week? Or is a ‘middle’ position possible, whereby the whole of life is viewed as the sphere of worship, but the

⁴⁶ David G. Peterson, “Music, Praise, and Edification,” *David G. Peterson*, May 18, 2010. Accessed May 17, 2022, 2. <https://davidgpeterson.wordpress.com/worship/music-praise-and-edification/>.

⁴⁷ Peterson, “Music, Praise, and Edification,” 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

gathered worship of the church is seen to have a distinctive function within that broader framework?”⁵⁰

This debate resurfaces occasionally, and Peterson argues that “the terminology of worship is used extensively of church gatherings—particularly with reference to music and singing—but not much in the wider biblical sense.”⁵¹ He argues that worship theology founded on biblical principles from both testaments is the most proper and appropriate corporate worship.

The Old Testament poses questions to [readers] about corporate expressions of worship under the New Covenant. It is not inadequate to construct a theology of the gathering [based on] what is not said in the New Testament. Moreover, there are ways in which the New Testament uses the terminology of worship that requires some application to the gathering of believers.⁵²

In some churches, this theology may be better explained by the signage for those entering and exiting. Worshipers are encouraged through their participation by the signs, “Enter to Serve in Worship. Depart to Worship in Service.”⁵³

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews explains that the purpose of corporate worship is more than drawing near to God, but also gathering together. “The purpose of gathering together in Hebrews 1:24-25 is simply fellowship and edification.”⁵⁴ The article’s writer asserts that the “‘praise and worship’ theology that emerges from some Charismatic circles...suggests that God can be contacted through the experience of singing and the ecstatic activities of the church.”⁵⁵ Juxtaposed against this theory is the Catholic theology in which

⁵⁰ David G. Peterson, “Worship, Edification, and Theological Method,” *David G. Peterson*, February 18, 2010, 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵² Peterson, “Worship, Edification, and Theological Method,” 1.

⁵³ T.A. Seel provided anecdotal signage from prior churches. The researcher also has seen this type of message in church bulletins when visiting other congregations.

⁵⁴ Peterson, “Worship, Edification, and Theological Method,” 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

humans approach God through “a hierarchy of human activities, mediated by human priests.”⁵⁶ Neither of these concepts fully supports the Gospel. Peterson contends, “both of these theologies can obscure the gospel teaching about the way [worshippers] approach God through faith in Jesus, and his finished work of salvation...[To avoid] error, [worshippers] must not become more restricted than the New Testament in defining a theology of worship,”⁵⁷ then fail to exercise it for corporate gatherings.

Scott Aniol’s recent text, *Changed from Glory into Glory: The Liturgical Story of The Christian Faith*, provides a historical guide for worship practices in the Old Testament into the New Testament as the Christian church matures from Pentecost to the present. He contends with biblical and historical supports, as in his other works, that the process of worship reveals and forms one’s faith. His intention with this text is “to demonstrate that corporate worship does something far more significant than many Christians realize—liturgy forms [one’s] religion...the reverse is equally true—religion forms [one’s] liturgy.”⁵⁸ As a result, the elements of worship create communion through worship. “Worship entails drawing near to communion with God himself in his holy sanctuary. This communion is on [God’s] terms and is initiated by his revelation to his people.”⁵⁹

Aniol’s text demonstrates the link between “worldview, belief, worship, and Christian living.”⁶⁰ By organizing and arranging worship around the story of the Gospel, leaders are

⁵⁶ Peterson, “Worship, Edification, and Theological Method,” 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁸ Scott Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory: The Liturgical Story of the Christian Faith* (Peterborough, Ontario, CA: JoshuaPress, 2022), 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 300.

encouraged to view worship traditions as “inevitable and valuable.”⁶¹ This book includes worship methods in the Old and New Testaments. Then it explores the worship patterns of the Catholic liturgy, changes through the Reformation, and the development of evangelical practices, including the evolution into contemporary worship. Scott Aniol’s research reveals that “the most significant contributions to contemporary worship are Pentecostalism and the Church Growth Movement.”⁶²

While contemporary worship gathered steam during the Jesus Movement of the late 60s and early 70s, “Pentecostalism emerged in the early twentieth century, combining the Methodist holiness movement and revivalism.”⁶³ This movement led to the Azusa Street revivals in the early 1900s, which encouraged the spread of the Pentecostal movement. With the belief that Holy Spirit baptism was separate from the conversion experience, “Their theology was rooted in, among other theological influences, Wesleyan Perfectionism and Charles Finney’s theology of entire sanctification.”⁶⁴ Throughout the differences of each denomination, the shared belief between each group contends that the Holy Spirit manifests himself through physical and miraculous ways during worship.

According to Aniol, “Pentecostalism can be credited for recovering a focus on worship within the [evangelical revivalist] traditions that had shifted the focus of the Sunday morning service from worship to evangelism and revival.”⁶⁵ As a result, more splintering occurred within denominations, and theology within each tradition created confusion for its members.

⁶¹ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 251.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 252.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Charismatic theology assumes that the Holy Spirit's movement in worship is to make God's presence known through clearly perceptible, physical means for worshipers to encounter God. "This theology places a high emphasis and expectation in worship upon physical expressiveness and intensity, resulting in what is sometimes called a 'Praise and Worship' theology of worship. The goal, in this theology, is to experience the presence of God in worship, but praise is considered the means through which Christians do so."⁶⁶

Psalm 22:3 states: "Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel" (NIV). This verse supports the concept that "praise is the very means of entering the presence of God."⁶⁷ Judson Cornwall taught that "the path into the presence of God [is] praise."⁶⁸ Since praise and worship are two distinct concepts in responding to God, Cornwall maintains, "Praise is the vehicle of expression that brings [worshipers] into God's presence. But worship is what [is done to] gain an entrance into that presence."⁶⁹ According to Cornwall, both actions must occur for a worshiper to commune with God.

Thurlow Spurr distinguishes between praise and worship in this way: Praise and worship are not the same. Praise is thanking God for the blessings, the benefits, [and] the good things. It is an expression of love, gratitude, and appreciation. Worship involves a more intense level of personal communication with God, centering on his person. In concentrated worship, there is a sort of detachment from everything external as one enters God's presence.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 252.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 253.

⁶⁸ Judson Cornwall, *Let Us Praise* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos Associates, 1973), 26.

⁶⁹ Judson Cornwall, *Let Us Worship* (Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1983), 49.

⁷⁰ Thurlow Spurr, "Praise: More than a 'Festival.' It's a Way of Life." *Charisma* 11, no.6, (August 1977): 13.

Scott Aniol continues his explanation of Praise and Worship theology in this text by correlating liturgical practices with theology. “Praise and Worship...aims to bring the worshiper through a series of emotional stages from rousing ‘praise’ to intimate ‘worship.’”⁷¹ In short, the music portion of the service begins with faster tempos and upbeat congregational songs. As time draws toward the sermon or teaching portion, the musical selections grow slower and more reflective. Many contemporary leaders agree that this focused energy helps worshipers to seek God’s presence, not only through the gradual decrease in tempi, but other physical and theatrical changes on the platform.

Zac Hicks, the author of *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams*, poses the idea that “Part of leading a worship service’s flow...involves keeping the awareness of God’s real, abiding presence before his worshipers. As all of the elements of worship pass by, the one constant—the True Flow—is the presence of the Holy Spirit himself.”⁷² This mindset of planning has permeated all theological worship traditions currently. Scott Aniol labels this concept “Transdenominational Impact,” through which he implies, “The Pentecostal Praise & Worship theology and practice have...spread to other non-charismatic churches and denominations through the popularity of music produced from these movements, [an] adaption of the theology by Church Growth advocates, and even from within more modern “liturgical renewal” movements.”⁷³

Aniol continues the discussion of trans-denominational impact through modern worship patterns as he provides examples of worship leaders who espouse this theology. “The default

⁷¹ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 253.

⁷² Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 184.

⁷³ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 253.

expectation of contemporary evangelical worshipers is that the Holy Spirit works in worship in such a way...to create an extraordinary experience.”⁷⁴ Aniol uses a popular worship song by Bryan and Katie Torwalt to further his point.

Holy Spirit, You are welcome here
Come[,] flood this place and fill the atmosphere
Your glory, God, is what our hearts long for
To be overcome by Your presence, Lord⁷⁵

Traditionally, the expectation of emotionality through worship has become central in most denominations. “Worship in which the Holy Spirit is directly active is often necessarily connect[ed] with engaging music, spontaneity, and ‘freedom’ of form. Worship that is formal, structured, and regulated is the opposite of ‘Spirit-led’ worship in this view.”⁷⁶ Many churches that follow the more formal tradition are considered “Spiritless” and not lively enough to keep the congregation’s attention. “The worship in...[most] evangelical churches is more characterized by Praise and Worship philosophy and contemporary music than...traditional practices rooted in the Reformation or earlier.”⁷⁷

The value of tradition encourages worshipers to “reenact the gospel of Jesus Christ and aesthetically embody values consistent with God’s holiness.”⁷⁸ Through practices built through a church’s life, the discipleship process creates more disciples and trains them to do the same.

The primary way churches can shape the inclinations and impact the behaviors of people in their churches is by influencing their habits...One of the primary means they have to do this is through...corporate liturgies. Scripture-shaped gospel liturgies and reverent art

⁷⁴ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 257.

⁷⁵ Bryan Torwalt, and Katie Torwalt, “Holy Spirit,” (2011). Capitol CMG Genesis, Jesus Culture Music, <https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/6087919/holy-spirit>.

⁷⁶ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 259.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 252.

forms will inform people's liturgies of life, which will, in turn, form them into mature disciples of Jesus Christ.⁷⁹

Analyzing and evaluating worship patterns and processes provides a means by which leaders teach and disciple worshipers.

How a church worships week after week progressively shapes their beliefs since those worship practices were cultivated by and embody certain beliefs. This is why it is so important for church leaders, and indeed all Christians, to carefully identify what kinds of beliefs have shaped their various worship practices so that they will choose to worship in ways that best form their minds and hearts consistent with their theological convictions.⁸⁰

Worship Leadership

Charlotte Kroeker identifies the purpose of leadership within the landscape of worship ministry in her article, "The Church Choral Director: Leader of the Sacred, the Good, the Beautiful." Citing numerous studies, the author produces data that supports the use of choral groups in worship, including the need for theological support of resources for leaders of choral groups. She claims, "Those who plan worship, finding resources that work week-to-week that have the capacity to form...deeply honed values for the long term [are] difficult. Scripture is the foundation." As such, the author identifies characteristics of congregations that support varied styles within the music program, which should apply to all churches, regardless of denomination.

Worship leaders must draw parallels between age-segregated worship and stylistic preferences. Leonard L. Tomlin provides theological benchmarks for his readers to understand the necessity of intergenerational worship in his thesis, "A Plan to Unify Generational Worship Divisions Through the Development and Implementation of a Biblical Philosophy of Generational Worship." This paper may provide already-completed research to cite in support of the possible survey results discussed later, as it combines similar resources compiled for the

⁷⁹ Aniol, *Changed from Glory into Glory*, 300.

⁸⁰ Ibid, back cover.

current project. Leonard Tomlin argues, “The enemy [Satan] has used worship to divide the church for far too long. The church must be disciplined through a biblical understanding of God’s plan for worship.”⁸¹

In Calvin M. Johansson’s text, *Discipling Music Ministry*, the author affirms that pastors and worship leaders must endeavor tandemly to encourage the congregation’s engagement in worship. Music is “inextricably linked with worship”⁸² through the “biblical injunctions which give music a place of importance in the corporate life of God’s people (see 1 Chronicles 6; 2 Chronicles 5; Nehemiah 12; Psalm 149; Matthew 26:30; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19).”⁸³

The pastoral leadership within a fellowship must intentionally build the biblical mindset of theological underpinnings of worship to include more than music. The “spiritual ramifications of church music”⁸⁴ must be understood by all pastoral members. Teaching theological truths are imperative as “Pastors simply need oversight into what it is that gives certain music the potential for strengthening spirituality, and other types of music the potential for weakening it.”⁸⁵ Spiritual goals must be set to create a church music doctrine that allows the worship leader to be musically creative without damaging the spiritual nature of worship. “The purpose of music in the church and the point of the musician’s pastoral work [is] their spiritual impact on the life of the congregation,”⁸⁶ which creates discipleship results from worship. Worship builds the spiritual foundation required to mature in the faith. Worship leaders must teach how to apply these

⁸¹ Leonard L. Tomlin, “A Plan to Unify Generational Worship Divisions Through the Development and Implementation of a Biblical Philosophy of Generational Worship,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021, 103, ProQuest Theses & Dissertations Library.

⁸² Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 6.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 10.

concepts to the congregation as they lead corporate gatherings for all worshipers, regardless of circumstance or station.

Recalling the purpose of church music as worship discipleship, Johansson also states several categories affirming music's functionality. "Textual information, utilitarian function, and offertories"⁸⁷ are helpful in the worship service, but these purposes pale in the pursuit of discipleship. "Function must grow out of a well-conceived, biblically based objective...determined by the nature and mission of the church itself."⁸⁸ Worship becomes the vehicle for evangelizing, teaching discipleship, and creating mature Christ-followers who worship.

Discipleship through worship creates the desire to include all other generations. "Each church must understand and disciple their worshipers to remember that worship is a lifestyle, not a music style. Each church must disciple all ages to understand the value of new and old music while honoring both young and old believers."⁸⁹ Through this method of discipleship, worshipers understand that preference must remain subservient to the needs of other worshipers. Joshua Morton explores the generational needs of churches in these areas in his thesis, "Methods and Motivations of Multigenerational Churches in Selecting a Worship Music Identity." The author analyzes the processes churches may experience while navigating current worship genres. Comparing all persons in worship to influencers on social media, the writer discovers a different role of the leader as an expert while still promoting the biblical concepts of the Holy Spirit as the ultimate worship leader. Morton states, "Different worship styles offer value, and...they can be

⁸⁷ Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry*, 13.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Tomlin, "A Plan to Unify Generational Worship Divisions," 104.

brought together to build a service that is functional for all who worship.”⁹⁰ This project offers research involving varied music styles within many churches and could assist in defining and discussing music genres in the Core Concepts.

The Development of Worship Styles: Traditional, Contemporary, and Blended

This thesis intends to address the different music styles found in traditional, contemporary, and blended worship services. The varied musical styles within each stated worship form find similarities in other denominational worship styles. “Good music will just as certainly help to draw people to church as unworthy music will, in the end, alienate.”⁹¹ Good music or quality and style of music are not to be confused. While relationships between worship forms and denominations will be mentioned briefly, the purpose of the correlation is to understand the foundation for each worship style and how it could be utilized in corporate worship.

While not considered as scholarly as others, Chuck Fromm provided an editorial for the periodical *Worship Leader* in January 2022 entitled “Beyond Mere Performance,” reminding the reader that the purpose of worship is the Audience of One—God. The performance aspects of worship are not for self-glory but to honor God in every aspect. The calling of the worship leader must be reflected in the music chosen for worship. Fromm supports this statement by writing, “While the Word of God teaches [believers] the holistic view of a life lived as a sacrifice of worship, it is thunderously silent on the form, musical style, and cultural conventions our

⁹⁰ Joshua Charles Morton, “Methods and Motivations of Multigenerational Churches In Selecting a Worship Music Identity.” (*Master’s Thesis*, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 694, ProQuest Theses & Dissertations Library.

⁹¹ L. Dakers, “The Establishment of the Need for Change.” *Spirit and Truth*, ed., R. Sheldon, (London, UK: Hodder, 1989), 72.

corporate worship music in church services should have.”⁹² Even though the culture around the modern church is changing, many changes in worship are biblical and theologically sound.

Gesa Hartje states that “Hymnbooks and [Praise and Worship] are not only related to environments that rely on orally transmitted song repertoires; they are also the result of cultures that enjoy using church music outside the church service.”⁹³ Describing the similarities between contemporary worship music styles and traditional hymns, this writer reviews the corporate process of learning praise and worship music as liturgy, providing each style’s technological, sociological, and theological perspectives, drawing parallels between them. The author encourages readers to see both as a “greater whole.”⁹⁴ Through this text, the author proves that all music contributes to the learned theology of the worshiper. “It is thus through hymns and [praise and worship songs] that believers create their own theology, far more than through any other medium.”⁹⁵ As a result, this article assists in building the argument that all styles of music are valuable and contribute to biblical worship.

Lyrical content sung by congregations in worship builds theology and affirms doctrine far more often than the sermons encountered in each service. Fewer congregants can quote sermons than can sing the songs from the services. Andrew Roby explores the various theological purposes of singing in his article, “Worshipful Singing: Four Roles of Song in Worship,” published in *Choral Journal* in 2017. His four main points envelop the expression of faith individually and corporately. The author contends that singing in worship builds one’s faith and community by affirming that “What is important to note here is that the texts for our sung

⁹² Chuck Fromm, “Beyond Mere Performance.” *Worship Leader*, Editorial, January 19, 2022.

⁹³ Gesa F. Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the Times—Praise & Worship Music as Today’s Evangelical Hymnody in North America.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 48 (2009): 364-373. Accessed January 15, 2022, 366.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 371.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 368.

musical expressions in worship will be—for better or for worse—instrumental in the theological formation of the community, because the things we sing, say, hear, and do in worship will shape our faith.”⁹⁶ Andrew Roby contends that leaders “must not overlook the fact that conflicts surrounding...musical expressions in worship sometimes have become a threat to the cohesion of community.”⁹⁷ As a secondary source, this article may support the belief that worship expression preference should not usurp unity. “A good hymn or song will [be] God-centered,...encouraging [believers] in [their] Christians lives,...[and] easily sung by the majority”⁹⁸ of worshipers.

Contemporary music tends to resemble popular secular music. As such, many traditional worshipers dislike the style due to their preference for worship music being “set apart” from the world. This preference refers to scripture from John 17:14, which describes Jesus’ instruction as being in the world “but not of the world” (NIV). Ian Jones and Peter Webster address this concept in their article, “The Theological Problem of Popular Music for Worship in Contemporary Christianity.” Exploring the potential problems of popular music in contemporary worship, these authors discuss the developing history of the genre. Through further discussion of the definitions of “good” and “popular,” the authors challenge the readers to consider the spiritual implications realized through the genre. The authors do not resolve the questions by presenting arguments pertinent to the discussion. This article may only serve as a secondary resource for a historical review or provide quotes for dialogue. This article affirms that the “worship wars” were precipitated by sinful arguing and sparring over musical style. “The

⁹⁶ Andrew Roby, “Worshipful Singing: Four Roles of Song in Worship.” *Choral Journal* 57, (2017), 61.

⁹⁷ Roby, “Worshipful Singing,” 61.

⁹⁸ Peterson, “Music, Praise, and Edification,” 3.

adoption of new popular music styles for worship gradually became widespread, but sometimes remained contentious.”⁹⁹

Many authors provide disparate opinions regarding musical styles of worship. Even innocuous publishing tends to lend itself to a unique platform. In “Celebrating Grace Hymnal: Five Years Later,” David Toledo explains the inclusion and purposes of songs in the hymnal. The formats or materials substantiated the growing conflict between the more conservative and the moderate delegations of the Southern Baptist Convention. As stated in the article, the Conservative Resurgence of the 1980s led to the organization of the more liturgically minded *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* in response to the 1991 Baptist Hymnal adoption, which received a mixed reception due to the inclusion of numerous praise choruses and modern Christian songs. In response, David Toledo noted:

As most denominations have struggled to navigate the waters of the so-called worship wars, the struggle for Southern Baptists has often been between contemporary popular styles and the gospel song, not traditional hymnody as in other denominations...By and large, the gospel song is a quickly diminishing style in modern Baptist worship services.¹⁰⁰

As a result, this opinion may provide discussion for specifying music genres’ denominational or conventional overarching perspectives.

Worship can purposefully and properly allow popular worship music without losing credibility. Veteran ministry leaders often present applications for worship leaders to navigate the ever-present argument of traditional versus contemporary worship. Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger establish principles that may assist in bridging the gap for worship leaders caught

⁹⁹ Ian Jones and Peter Webster. “The Theological Problem of Popular Music for Worship in Contemporary Christianity.” *Crucible. The Journal of Christian Social Ethics*, July-September 2006, 9-16, 5.

¹⁰⁰ David M. Toledo, “Celebrating Grace Hymnal: Five Years Later.” *The Hymn*. Vol. 66, no. 1, (2016), 19.

in the middle. In their article, “Here We Are to Worship: Six Principles that Might Bring a Truce to the Age-Old Tension Between Tradition and Popular Culture,” the authors pose questions about intergenerational worship, through which each generation learns biblical precepts from other age-level worshipers. Because culture influences liturgical actions throughout history, cultural context must be informed and influenced by biblical and theological mandates instead of the reverse. The authors remind the readers that being relevant in the culture will allow evangelistic opportunities to flourish. Being relevant can still be biblically consistent with God’s Word. The writers affirm this statement by maintaining that “Worship must reflect common elements of the Christian tradition through the unique expression of a particular cultural context.”¹⁰¹ When churches attempt to make their worship culturally relevant, “this invariably raises questions about the nature of Christian worship.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, “Here We Are to Worship: Six Principles that Might Bring a Truce to the Age-Old Tension Between Tradition and Popular Culture.” *Christianity Today*, 53, no. 8, (August 2009), 34.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 32.

Chapter 3

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the methodology for this individual case study. The research focused on determining the necessity of blended worship education and training worship leaders in Georgia Baptist-affiliated churches. A survey approach allowed for an understanding of the variables that factor into the field of worship planning. The applicability of this case study approach is discussed by addressing the research design, research questions and hypotheses, setting, participants, procedures, data analysis, and summary.

Research Design

According to Creswell and Creswell, “Case studies are the qualitative design in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bounded by time and activity, and the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.”¹ Creswell and Creswell also stated, “Qualitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables.”² Qualitative techniques rarely involve statistics or mathematical equations. These methods connect emotive reactions and words, often providing findings from case studies, observations, focus groups, and open-ended questions. Initially considered by the researcher, two qualitative methods, Narrative Analysis, and Grounded Theory, could not be applied to this study. Rather than utilizing scientific research, Narrative Analysis and Grounded theory share the methodology of interviews, audiovisual documentation, written response analysis, and other observations. These methods engage an inductive approach through which

¹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2018) 247.

² Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 250.

data is developed through themes, patterns, and units of study. Furthermore, these correlations of findings “emerged out of the collected data instead of imposing prior to data collection and analysis.”³

Grounded theory indicates that a study’s findings should provide “a theory or model that includes key themes or categories.”⁴ Themes for the current study include worship leader education lacking in some material and the biblical correlation of worship to varied song styles in worship. Since inductive qualitative research does not find writing hypotheses appropriate for grounded theory, the primary researcher considered this project a case study, which could be argued as an Ethnographic Research project. “Ethnography is a design of inquiry coming from anthropology and sociology in which the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time.”⁵ Because this study consists of only Georgia Baptist Churches, an argument could be made for the ethnography’s point of view. However, worship style, not ethnography, is the project’s focus, so the appropriate methodology is a simple case study.

³ Michael Quinn Patton and Michael Quinn Patton. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.)

⁴ Felicity Goodyear-Smith and Bob Mash, eds. *How to Do Primary Care Research* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2019), 213.

⁵ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 13.

Research Questions & Hypotheses

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to “acceptable worship” and musical variety in worship, as employed through multiple musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches?

RQ2: What musical challenges do worship leaders in Georgia face when implementing and executing worship plans involving congregational participation through worship?

The hypotheses for this study were:

H1: Challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to musical variety in “acceptable” worship, as employed through blending musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches, can include frustrations with biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education.

H2: Challenges that worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist Churches when implementing and executing worship plans that involve congregational participation through worship include selecting lyrics that are sound theologically, pairing music stylings that complement one another, and teaching the congregation to appreciate the various genres used in worship.

Study Participants

Participants were recruited for an online survey through targeted emails, social media postings, and word of mouth. A recruitment email, which included the survey link, was sent to worship leaders who actively participated in the Jubal Ministries, Inc. (JMI) and served in their respective Georgia Baptist Mission Board-affiliated churches as staff worship leaders. The

survey link was posted on Facebook, a social media platform to which many JMI members have access and participate daily.

Only qualified participants were permitted to complete the study upon online access to the survey. The qualifier was administered through Google forms and included three questions at the beginning of the study. To participate, the participants had to answer the first three survey questions in the affirmative. First, respondents must consent to their answers being included in the research study. Second, participants agreed they were employed by a church affiliated with Georgia Baptist Mission Board. Third, participants must be the primary worship leader or equivalent, serving full-time, part-time, or a volunteer in the ministry. If any of these questions had negative responses, the survey immediately closed, and none of the answers were recorded as study data. Of the open invitations online and through the GBMB and JMI missions' organizations, 33 submissions were received, and 21 completed survey findings were included in this case study.

In this case study, the Research Questions identify and categorize each participant's educational and musical training. This design allows collecting information as challenging measurable data. The subjective participant answers include limited personal information, beliefs, meanings, and attributes specific to individuals surveyed. This study provides descriptive research that provides worship leader characteristics provided through the survey.

The study method begins with the hypothesis of determining if worship leaders are circumspectly trained to include varied music styles in worship. A worshiper posed a question to the paper's author, who was curious about the purpose of pairing modern worship songs with traditional hymns. The immediate answer was that the pieces contained messages aligned with the selected sermon topic, which compares creation to the gospel provision.

Upon further examination, the author experienced mixed styles when observing other non-worship musical performances while programming several choral concerts each year, and the inquiries evolved as curiosity and angst to understand why the “worship wars” still exist. “Much of America’s worship wars have been fought with the pride of having found the most excellent way of worshipping.”⁶ Preference for musical style and opinion often plays into this conflict. “The decision on the part of a congregation to reorder worship on a design outside the denomination (Baptists following Pentecostals) or around a denomination’s trends or traditions proved volatile and contributed to the worship wars. While the option to reorder worship is most readily observable in the free-church tradition, it is not confined to non-liturgical settings.”⁷ Still, the researcher focuses on the purpose: At what point did music style preference usurp spiritual needs? Why did Georgia Baptist churches not incorporate the same musical styles, training, education, or programs as other evangelical churches with the same moniker?

Attending a Georgia Baptist college, the primary researcher knows that her training included all performance styles for worship; however, not all program contemporaries utilize the same worship-planning methods. Hence, the survey questions about training and education necessitate the call to be included in the study to ascertain whether leaders were not trained in all styles of musical worship. Many classically trained musicians attend large or mega-churches (membership rolls with at least 2,000) that provide worship arts ministries, utilizing a modern or blended worship pattern reminiscent of Passion City, Hillsong, and similar ministries. Through informal observations, smaller churches⁸ often struggle musically without instrumentalists other

⁶ Terry W. York, *America’s Worship Wars* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 96.

⁷ York, *America’s Worship Wars*, 116.

⁸ In Georgia, most mid-sized churches consist of approximately 75 members, according to the data kept and provided during the annual meeting held in November 2022. Having served on staff at several smaller churches through ministry, the researcher has first-hand knowledge of the struggle for resources in smaller churches.

than keyboards, pianos, organs, or small rhythm bands. While not ideal, the traditional worship style provides this instrumentation for many fellowships. The lack of leaders available has contributed to the pervasiveness of artists/worship leaders who need more musical training in leading congregational worship songs.

Procedures, Instruments, and Data Analysis

This study's methods include response collection via survey, and procedures are detailed. The researcher prepares all expected results as hypotheses for presentation to Advisor, Reader, and IRB proposal and presentation. After IRB approval of the case study, the survey and any attachments are sent to the administrative offices of Jubal Ministries, Inc. (JMI). Their office provides the survey's link via email and disseminates the promotional letters that include instructions and consent directions to the membership of this mission's organization. The membership of JMI includes many worship leaders throughout Georgia.

Unfortunately for the researcher, some Georgia Baptist worship leaders do not participate in JMI. In fact, as of the annual meeting in 2021, the listing of Georgia Baptist churches numbers approximately 3,500 individual fellowships. As a result, additional surveys were emailed to as many churches as possible. The questionnaire in MS Outlook forms was made available to worship leaders via email to the GBMB Worship and Music Catalyst's office. With potential duplicate members between the GBMB and JMI organizations, both offices requested that members in both groups would complete the survey only once. An approximate availability schedule of 3-4 weeks of submissions was provided, and immediately after the survey closed, the data collected from respondents would be sorted. Only those employed in the worship leader position were surveyed.

From the standpoint of a research case study, intuiting should reflect the hypothesis. The analysis provides raw data, and reviewing this data should give the findings needed in the narrative analysis form of the study. The benefits of this analysis include results that should help support the hypothesis. These findings can be described in the author's own words, and errors of interpretation tend to be fewer. Circumstances of survey entries allow more clarity and detail due to the reporter having the liberty to present hypotheses from their points of view. Several analysis disadvantages include that this type of finding does not hold to standard procedures or is textually objective. Inquiries of varied content include training and education experiences for the worship leaders surveyed, music styles used within worship services, participation in worship arts ministries, and relationships with other ministers. These questions surmise how lead musicians conclude that specific songs are appropriate for corporate worship and how leaders reason that conclusion.

Due to the subjective manner of individual experiences, the survey findings appear anecdotal. This analysis targets the personal experiences that "narrative analysis is [a] list of themes in stories [that]...aims to [explore learned] and lived experiences of individuals."⁹ As a result of these strategies, "narrative analysis has no specific evaluation methods but only follow[s] qualitative analysis trustworthiness."¹⁰

All participant responses collected were compared and reviewed for the case study. Researcher noted any correlations between worship education and training that influenced stylistic, numerical, and past responses. Relationships between the size of churches and ministries were considered as they noted musical styles employed in their corporate worship

⁹ "Differences Between Grounded Theory and Narrative Analysis." Bartleby Research (2015). <https://www.bartleby.com/writing/document/FJEFHGY3U>. Accessed October 31, 2022.

¹⁰ "Differences Between Grounded Theory and Narrative Analysis." Bartleby Research.

services and if the church provided more than one style of worship service. Any information deemed interrelated or complementary to the responses was analyzed and synthesized through the similarities or contrasts of church congregations and music ministries.

Summary

According to the case study's findings, worship leaders who have attended college or seminary are employing worship planning that includes blended song styles. However, many churches experience less blended music styles when they hire music leaders without training and education to combine worship styles with all music genres in a corporate environment. The researcher sought interdependence between worship leader training/education and current worship styles within church services. According to the research findings, many respondents have acquired the skills and abilities to combine traditional church music with contemporary praise and worship styles. However, other music genres such as non-Western cultural music, Black gospel and traditional spirituals, Southern Gospel, Christian rock and metal, and urban contemporary gospel are rarely reported by worship leaders in an intergenerational corporate worship service in the GBMB-affiliated churches. The leaders selected the music and the genres to present within the songs. Still, based on biblical evidence, the author's expectation inferred that the worship leader should also consider the senior pastor's leadership and accountability for the church body's spiritual maturity and needs.

Survey responses are stored for no less than three years, and those participating will have access to the results of the complete case study upon completion. Participants provide the necessary consent for using their responses in the survey since they supply needed data for the dichotomy of blended worship. According to the research case study findings, the researcher

composed a worship leader course for GBMB undergraduate programs as an 8-week course for worship arts students.

Calvin M. Johansson clarifies how worship music drives the spiritual formation and foundations of the Christian life. “Church music is a symbol. It is an [analog] of the gospel, a musical witness to gospel meaning. It not only passively represents the numinous but actively works out gospel principles in notes, rhythm, and harmony, constituting a musical show-and-tell of the gospel...Music always gives off a theological witness which is assimilated unconsciously or consciously.”¹¹ Keith Getty simplifies this concept by saying, “Throughout the centuries, the people of God have in huge measure learned their faith through what they sang together. Eat good soul food on a Sunday, and you will find your soul growing and thriving through the week and through your life. Here’s how that happens...Singing takes Sunday’s truths into Monday.”¹²

¹¹ Calvin M. Johansson, *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-first Century Directions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 107.

¹² Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017,) 38.

Chapter 4

Introduction

This chapter provides the results or findings of the analytic process through the survey issued to those serving in worship leadership in the churches of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board and Jubal Ministries, Inc. The participant's responses answer the research questions posed by the author above and support the arguments or theories provided to demonstrate the purposes of the study. Hypothetically, the findings will support and connect to the framework posed by the researcher, which will provide analysis for creating an undergraduate course for worship leaders.

The Research Questions in chapter 2 were drafted so that worship leaders might seek to find harmonious balance in biblical worship by combining music styles during corporate gatherings considered God-honoring and acceptable worship. These questions are as follows:

Research Question One: What are the challenges to implementing the Bible's clear exhortation to "acceptable worship"¹ and musical variety in worship, as employed through multiple musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches?

Research Question Two: What musical challenges do worship leaders in Georgia face when implementing and executing worship plans involving congregational participation through worship?

Each question has been considered, and hypotheses have been posited below.

Hypothesis One: Challenges to implementing the Bible's clear exhortation to music variety in "acceptable" worship, as employed through blending musical styles in Georgia

¹ "Acceptable worship" as defined in Chapter 1: Core Concepts.

Baptist churches, can include frustrations with biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education.

Hypothesis Two: Challenges that worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist Churches when implementing and executing worship plans that involve congregational participation through worship include selecting lyrics that are sound theologically, pairing music stylings that complement one another, and teaching the congregation to appreciate the various genres used in worship.

Importance of Findings

As a case study, this survey reports findings, which include similarities that have emerged from or are included in the data supplied by the participants within the survey. The findings are the product of the author's synthesis of the data collected. As a result of these responses, the chapter is organized based on the proposed research questions. In qualitative research, confidentiality is ensured through anonymous surveys. A copy of the survey questions presented to the participants can be found in Appendix A. Raw data is presented as evidence of the responses to the survey; however, these answers will be challenged if evidence contradicts the research questions.

While the primary researcher considered the findings of this study would support the need for "acceptable worship" and variety in worship education for leaders, the researcher also assumed that many undergraduate programs for music education rarely include worship training education in their degree completion programs. The findings may indicate a trend of biblical alignment in worship from leaders not received in college instruction.

Responses and Findings

Frustrations with a lack of biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education are the proposed challenges for worship leaders in GBMB churches. Data collected between September 14, 2022, and October 31, 2022, from the survey responses suggest that additional worship leader training and education is needed for recent hires to worship leader positions that lack the secondary education or theological background of ministry. Each question's findings will be individually discussed for organizational purposes, and any interrelationships will be corroborated at the end.²

While many worship leaders serving in Georgia Baptist churches graduated from colleges supported by the Georgia Baptist Mission Board (GBMB), some were transplanted and relocated from other states and institutions. These educational backgrounds provided criteria for the study, ensuring that all serving in these leadership roles offered corporate worship that was theologically and doctrinally sound. The sources of the survey documented the findings of this assurance. Worship leaders who were participants were expected to equip and educate worshipers who may not have been taught biblical principles, although they had been teaching and singing music that was stylistically favorable.

Consent and Inclusion: Questions 1–4

The findings of the survey included 33 individual anonymous responses. Of those, twelve were disallowed due to unfavorable reactions to the first three questions, which negated their inclusion in the survey. Of those 21 remaining, all serve as the primary worship leaders employed by churches affiliated with GBMB and are primarily responsible for planning,

² While the author of this research study is eligible to complete the survey, her findings were not included so as to avoid influencing the research results.

preparing, and implementing worship services, including song selection and coordinating individuals or ensembles leading during worship services.

Questions 5 and 6: Church Congregation Size and Worship Ministry

Each church's approximate attendance or size was reported as 25 to 850 congregants. The answers of 25, 125, and 200 received 15% of the responses, with all other respondents answering individual answers numerically. There is an apparent correlation between smaller congregations and lower numbers of participants in worship ministry, as 6% (1 reply) of responses indicating "50" for this question also reported in the majority of answering "12" for Question 6, referring to the participant number in worship arts ministries.

Questions 7–10: Style, Number, Design, and Ethnicity of Worship Services

Respondents were asked to describe their worship services using the terms below: contemporary, blended–traditional and contemporary, traditional, liturgical or seeker, or other. In response, 18 of 21 (86%) describe their services as blended, whereas only 2 (10%) replies indicate a traditional worship model. One response indicates "other" but does not give further detail.

Question 8 concerned the number of weekly worship services, and 11 of 21 respondents answered that only one corporate worship service is available. Eight responses indicate two services per week, and two replied with three corporate services within the week. Some of these entries include mid-week worship services in their reporting; however, there is an unknown correlation between the church size and the number of services. Congregation #2 records an attendance of 50 but hosts two services a week, whereas Congregation #4 reports average attendance of 850 within two weekly services. The responses of three services are from

congregations #18 and #23, running attendance numbers of 300 and 100, respectively, and the latter group indicated traditional worship styles.

Questions 11–12: Average Age and Worship Importance of Church Member

Survey question 11 asks about the ethnic background of each corresponding flock. Interestingly, 95% (20 of 21) mainly indicated Caucasian, with less than 10% other ethnicities. This data suggests the racial involvement of the SBC, the GBMB, and those churches affiliated with this entity. Only one response includes the percentages of the fellowship: “60% Caucasian, 15% African-American, 15% Asian, and 10% Hispanic.”³ This response regarding congregation size also indicates approximate attendance of around 550 persons, with 100 involved in worship ministry.

According to the findings in this survey, worship service participation is segregated not only by ethnicity but also by generational experiences. The average age reported in the responses is 51 to 75 (65%), with ages 31 to 50 creating 25% of the answers. The remaining averages are mainly over 75 (1 response) and one response was left blank. From those numbers, the worship leaders were asked to rank the importance of worship in the people's everyday lives in question 12. Ten leaders (48%) indicate that daily worship is essential. Nine leaders (43%) respond with daily worship being very important. Only two replies (10%) suggest that worship is somewhat important in the everyday lives of their people, one of which is congregation #9, which includes the most significant number of non-Caucasian ethnicities in their congregation, which the ethnic correlation may or may not be indicative of the question of daily worship's importance.

³ See Question 10 response for congregation #9.

Questions 13–14: Instrumentation and Organization

Within the responses received for questions 13 and 14, the current organization of the instrumental ministry for each church seems very evenly organized. Seven ministries (33%) of those responding indicated that instruments are based on musical needs during the service. Five replies (24%) suggest that a small praise band leads during the services, most of which could provide a blended worship style. Three respondents (14%) indicate only piano and organ are used, and one leader (5%) notes that piano, organ, and orchestra provide leadership during worship services. Five responses (24%) indicate “other” without further details. In direct correlation to question 14, similar numbers are reported for the instrumentation utilized for song selection in worship. The only changes are piano/organ only lowered from 4 to 3 (19% to 14%), and the mixture of all moved numerically from 6 to 7 (28% to 33%). Two responses (10%) of the “other” indicates that licensed videos and worship music tracks have been included in their planning and execution of worship music.

Question 15: Worship Elements

Question 15 inquired about the worship elements used during church worship services. The researcher received two emails and two in-person requests to define “elements,” specified as the main congregational engagements or liturgical exercises during worship, such as singing, giving, scripture reading, preaching, praying, baptism, and eucharistic or communion participation.⁴ Still, thirteen (62%) responses include prayer as the central focus of their worship elements. Multiple synonyms of musical offerings are also included in the replies.

⁴ Jesus demonstrated that only baptism and communion were required of His followers. Upon hindsight, the researcher could have provided a potential list of worship elements.

Question 16: Discerning Congregational Maturity

Question 16 probed the process of determining the congregation's spiritual maturity when new to the worship leader's position and how to deepen the spiritual walk of the members. Since this question provided space for a constructed response, there were varying lengths of answers from brief phrases like "ask questions and listen," "by asking in person," or "questions and answers. Biblical truths," and then lengthier responses with multiple paragraphs from leaders.

Due to the varied responses that are lengthy, the key concepts and ideas that are repeated are "observations and conversations with members" and "listen...watch...observe...look closely at their discipleship." The prayer life of membership and worship engagement is often emphasized in the leaders' responses; however, of the 21 answers, only three leaders specifically spoke to their prayers to God for insight into the congregation's spiritual maturity. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7, ESV).

Respondent #8 focuses on the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 2:20) that is evident in following Jesus, which helps determine the congregation's spiritual maturity.

Discipleship level is evident primarily by the subject and tone of conversations, worship engagement, ministry participation, and prayer life demonstrated by members. If I ask for volunteers to lead in prayer or have a testimony sharing time in rehearsal or on a retreat, the results are telling. Also, if I lead with a healthy dose of devotional scripture in rehearsal, complaining from those not wanting to be discipled will surface over time. The most effective tool for growth is direct teaching on biblical worship and discipleship done in unity across [the] pastoral staff. Modeling as lead worshipers across the...leadership team is very helpful as well, especially if that team is a larger community of people, which represents a "tithe of the talents" of the church.⁵

Within the same question, another worship leader mentions the unfortunate circumstance of spiritual immaturity in many established ministries. "One reason for spiritual maturity as it

⁵ Response from worship leader #8.

relates to worship is the poor training of leadership (musically and spiritually). Whether it [is] a new member of the orchestra or the next main worship leader, I want to assist them to serve well.”⁶ Another reply includes the idea that personal preference is rarely a priority. “A spiritually mature church is selflessly unified in its focus on exalting Christ. Indeed, they are so focused on magnifying Him and making Him known that the methodology becomes secondary. Such focus is birthed from an all-encompassing love for God and...others, as well as a willingness to submit to God’s Word above personal preferences and opinion[s].”⁷

Leaders indicate that this depth of maturity manifests itself in the worshiper's life.

A mature congregation speaks little about the personal preferences related to music (worship style, repertoire, instrumentation, use of technology, dress code, etc.)...[worshippers] engage in worship rather than merely attend or watch. [Additionally,] their worship does not stop at the gathering’s end. Instead, they continue to praise the Lord throughout the week, and such worship fosters both discipleship and evangelism.⁸

Some leaders admit that their congregations are sometimes more spiritually mature. One response states that the leader sought “the older members...to assist...in growing...[his] spiritual maturity.”⁹ This principle is affirmed by Proverbs 27:17 (NIV), in which “iron sharpens iron,” meaning the members of the Body of Christ should be equipping and encouraging each other to grow in their spiritual relationships with God. Most responses agree that spiritual maturity will provide true worship that bears the fruit of discipleship and evangelism.

Question 17: Role as Worship Leader

The next question (17) asks directors to define their church worship leader role. Most responses include the selection of “music to enhance the overall worship service...[songs] that

⁶ Response from worship leader #10.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Response from worship leader #11.

are biblically sound and that support faith in Christ Jesus.”¹⁰ Basing decisions on the pastor’s sermon title, focus, and scripture reference, another leader indicates that receiving this information “several weeks in advance[,] this allows [him] opportunity to design a service around [the pastor’s] theme, selecting music and other elements that will help...focus on that topic.”¹¹ Identifying as the lead worshiper during the service, this individual mentions that the worship pastor is “very aware that what [is said and done has] a big influence on our worship experience.”¹² He also states that his responsibility is “to do all [he can] to help minimize anything that would distract us from communing with Him[,] to engage the people in corporate worship[, and] point them to Christ.”¹³

Other critical words from varied replies include helping “shepherd the flock in biblical worship,”¹⁴ encouraging biblical values by example, and removing distractions for worshipers. Often the goal of the worship leader is not only to provide biblically based, acceptable worship but also to direct the congregation to join the worship of God throughout their lives, not just in corporate gatherings. Another leader states that “[The] worship leader encourage[s] Biblical values by example...[and] work[s] to remove distraction...[from] the greater goal of Biblical worship.”¹⁵

By organizing, preparing, and overseeing the details of each corporate worship service, all musical and technological elements used are under this interim leader’s purview. This particular response includes a profound responsibility that few leaders mention. The worship

¹⁰ Response from worship leader #2.

¹¹ Response from worship leader #3.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Response from worship leader #8.

¹⁵ Ibid.

leader affirms that his “calling is to help others behold the wonder, the majesty, and the grace of our God in such a way that the congregation [cannot] help but to participate in praising the Lord.”¹⁶

Many staff ministers serve in additional roles to worship leaders. Although music director #11 states that he selects the corporate songs for gatherings, he does not choose music solos for the pianist. He plays several instruments, prepares service music with others, and serves as church clerk/general assistant. Juxtaposed to this busy minister is worship leader #12, who plainly states that he operates “under the umbrella of the pastor...[who] is the primary worship leader.”¹⁷ Often, when a pastor does not engage in worship (singing, praying, giving, etc.), the congregation will not engage.

Worship leader #17 emphasizes music evangelism through worship by stating that his role is to “help do outreach through music.” Another aspect of family worship is mentioned by leader #23, who “encourage[s] the congregation to participate in singing and express the importance of men leading families by singing.”¹⁸ Referencing Colossians 3:16 as the basis for his methodology, leader #31 states he “teach[es] the gospel and biblical doctrine “through singing to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.”

Of the completed responses, only three said they were not in full-time leadership positions. One is a bi-vocational worship leader; another is interim music director; and the latter is a Minister of Music, “part-time in retirement from full-time music ministry.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Response from worship leader #10.

¹⁷ Response from worship leader #12.

¹⁸ Response by worship leader #23.

¹⁹ Response by worship leader #3.

Questions 18–19: Formal or Secondary Education and Training

As a result of question 18, each participant provided more anecdotal information about their music education and worship leadership training. Of the 21 participants, only 13 were classically trained in college programs for music education. Through that training, all were from Christian colleges/universities or seminaries or received church music training for ministry. Five respondents indicate no formal musical training through undergraduate degrees or seminary. Most of the music they could emulate was through vicarious learning and observations of previous directors.

Specifically, two leaders held Associate of Arts, and three received Bachelor of Arts from their undergraduate work. Among eleven leaders, Bachelor of Music and Music Education degrees were awarded, with an Early Childhood Education major and a music minor granted. Two leaders continued with studying music in a Master of Arts program. Another leader was conferred the completion of the Master of Music in conducting, and another received a Master of Music Education.

Three leaders from the group completed the Master of Music or church music degrees, and another three received conferred degrees of Master of Divinity. Two leaders pursued a Doctor of Ministry and Musical Arts, and one completed the Doctor of Christian Education degree.

Seven of these doctoral programs were provided through seminaries. Only a few leaders indicate their annual training is from conference attendance or seminary workshops. Of the group, four leaders affirm their training came solely from vicarious observations of former choral directors under whom they performed. Their observations of these conductors are the only training they indicate for this question. However, in the following question (#19), several

identify other conferences and training attended over their careers; the feedback sounds contradictory.

Many worship leaders have suggested opportunities for optional, intermittent training through the GBMB, The Gettys' SING! Conferences and regional and local churches that provide worship leader training, lasting from afternoon sessions to week-long workshops by well-known musicians and pastors. The briefest of meetings include the Round Table discussions provided by the Worship and Music office of the GBMB. Rhon Carter is the catalyst for this statewide effort and has begun to link many worship leaders with their colleagues within associational and regional ministry partners. This catalyst position has provided collaboration training for many leaders whose church budgets cannot provide the lengthier training at the statewide or regional levels, such as Nashville for the SING! Conferences.

Other conferences given by respondents are various camps and retreats offered through the GBMB for youth groups and their leaders. Music Weeks at Ridgecrest in North Carolina, owned by LifeWay Christian Bookstores (Southern Baptist/Sunday School Bookstore previously) until recently, was host to decades of campers who sought to make music in worship and find their niches. During the camps, leaders would seek out others for ideas or suggestions to solve their ministry's music/worship obstacles. A few respondents comment as such:

This is the first year I have attended any training in a while, and the local SBC association [as well as the state offices have] recently had an increased emphasis in training for all areas, including worship. There is an annual meeting with a breakout session focused on worship, and worship leaders for the association church have begun meeting quarterly, of which I am able to attend 2 of the [four] meetings. I have purchased digital access to the Gettys' SING! Conference and would love to begin attending annually, but it [is] hard as a bi-vocational educator to do so.²⁰

²⁰ Response from worship leader #19.

Other conferences mentioned that were not as popular include the Experience Conferences (or EC22), which allows all denominational worship leaders to attend for opportunities to learn and be encouraged. Held in the Orlando area, this conference could also be cost-prohibitive for many bi-vocational leaders. The Baptist Church Music Conference and the National Baptist Music Conference are held annually in varied locations nationally, similar to the EC22. Some responses indicate these conferences might be possible for most local leaders, but the travel and lodging would be out of smaller budgets unless presiding or presenting.

Question 20: Essential Worship Mindset

Question 20 of the survey asked leaders to identify the most crucial idea a worship student should retain in preparing for the vocation of a worship leader. Since most of the responses were given by musically-inclined leaders, the survey's results indicate that worship should envelop every part of the preparation for those seeking the vocation. One leader encourages others to “Always remember that music is the envelope through which [leaders] deliver the Good News to God’s children.”²¹ Other statements reflect this mindset of viewing all service to God as a means to deliver the Gospel through music and worship. “Worship leadership is a spiritual battleground, so values such as reverence, authenticity, and excellence must come from a culture of strong spiritual health, or we risk idolatry (especially if we crusade for any given style over that spiritual health).”²²

Spending time in God’s Word and worship of God is another common theme from the responses to the survey. “God’s Word and spending time in prayer are vital to hearing from the Lord. Hearing from Him is the way [leaders] plan worship and lead teams effectively. Your

²¹ Response from worship leader #3.

²² Response from worship leader #8.

personal relationship with the Lord is the most important.”²³ One pastor states those who help with worship “cannot lead someone [or a congregation] to a place they [have] never been.”²⁴ Leading out of one’s depth can be dangerous and unpredictable, and “The student should learn it [is] all about Jesus and not about [self] as [a] leader. Humility is key.”²⁵ Biblical worship is Christ-centered, and through this “constant state of growth, [worship leaders should] always remember who you [are] giving your worship to because[,] someday[,] that will be your only motivation.”²⁶

Veteran worship leaders contribute more suggestions for worship students. “Study and be obedient to the Scriptures in all aspects, and definitely those regarding worship, and to not sacrifice family at the altar of service.”²⁷ Through service to others, leaders should “Be ready for anything”²⁸ because “The student is a vessel to feed others. Anything other than that will feed [the] ego.”²⁹ Another leader stated this concept as it applied to music style preference. “In leading, we are challenged to go beyond personal preferences and minister to a wide variety of styles, levels of talent, and maturity of belief. [Leaders] must be prepared to meet this challenge.”³⁰

One leader reply consists of instructions for practical focus on the song lyrics chosen for corporate worship gatherings. “Carefully curate the lyrics...you choose for your congregation to

²³ Response from worship leader #13.

²⁴ Response from worship leader #14.

²⁵ Response from worship leader #15.

²⁶ Response from worship leader #16.

²⁷ Response from worship leader #19.

²⁸ Response from worship leader #22.

²⁹ Response from worship leader #23.

³⁰ Response from worship leader #29.

offer as an offering of praise to their Lord. You are putting prayers into the mouths of [God’s] people, [so] make sure it is theologically and spiritually sound!”³¹ Worship leaders are “under the authority of the Pastor who is under the Authority of God.”³² Others affirm this instructional suggestion in the survey. “Serve, [but] do [not] supersede. Your leadership should serve the volunteers around you. Work together with your pastoral staff and listen twice as much as you speak.”³³ Another leader states that “Building relationships is the key.”³⁴

Question 21: Individual Roles of the Worship Leader

Question 21 was a constructed response with possible paragraph-type answers.

Participants were asked, “In your opinion, what role does the worship leader have as A. a worshiper; B. theologian; C. disciple; D. professional; E. musician; F. pastor; G. artist; H. leader; and I. family person? Research for each role will be discussed sequentially to understand the worship leader’s feedback best, as listed in the question.

Several responses are delineated between each role. As a *worshiper*, leaders must worship. The leader’s “desire to lead worship should grow from your desire to worship Christ. If your worship is [not] rich and full, your...worship [leadership] will suffer.”³⁵ Respondent 8 identifies the leader as “an example”³⁶ as “a worshiper.”³⁷ The idea of leading beyond one’s knowledge surfaces in the replies in the statement following. “A leader cannot guide someone where they [have] never been. A worship leader, therefore, must constantly be a worshiper of the

³¹ Response from worship leader #27.

³² Response from worship leader #31.

³³ Response from worship leader #9.

³⁴ Response from worship leader #4.

³⁵ Response from worship leader #2.

³⁶ Response from worship leader #8.

³⁷ Response from worship leader #31.

Living God.”³⁸ While many leaders engage personally in worship during the service,³⁹ one leader states that leaders “set the example for how the congregation communicates with the Lord”⁴⁰ and are “worshippers for credibility to set [an] example to others.”⁴¹ Another leader cautions, “A worship leader must be someone who worships God in spirit and truth; fake it until you make it might make it a short way, but it [will not] be enough.”⁴²

The worship leader serves as a *theologian* through the many words and lyrics chosen to be shared during worship. “As a theologian, the songs that you sing, listen to, and incorporate into the services must ALL be biblically sound. If any part of a song goes against doctrine,⁴³ the song should [not] be sung.”⁴⁴ The theologian’s role in corporate worship gathering is “teacher”⁴⁵ because “The worship ministry is undeniably a part of the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4), so it is imperative that worship leaders study and understand scripture accurately (as Paul admonished Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15).”⁴⁶ Worship is “based upon the truth of Scripture,”⁴⁷ according to respondent 14. Worship leaders, as theologians, “should be adequately researching the songs to make sure they are theologically sound,”⁴⁸ in addition to ensuring lyrics are “doctrinally

³⁸ Response from worship leader #10.

³⁹ Response from worship leader #14.

⁴⁰ Response from worship leader #27.

⁴¹ Response from worship leader #18.

⁴² Response from worship leader #19.

⁴³ “Doctrine” should be better defined as God’s Word, because many doctrines are not biblical – which is part of why this study was completed.

⁴⁴ Response from worship leader #2.

⁴⁵ Response from worship leader #8.

⁴⁶ Response from worship leader #10.

⁴⁷ Response from worship leader #14.

⁴⁸ Response from worship leader #15.

relevant”⁴⁹ to those in the congregation, instead of “leading congregants astray through presenting or approving heretical theology.”⁵⁰ Leaders “must know biblical doctrine to make sure music is sound,”⁵¹ because protecting the congregation from false teachings is one of the responsibilities of pastoral leaders, reinforcing “sound theology in the songs, prayers, and scripture they use.”⁵²

“Being a disciple is tough. [Worship leaders] should point others to Jesus no matter [their] role at a church.”⁵³ Respondents also concluded that a *disciple* should be “an encourager,”⁵⁴ “a worship leader [who] must be actively and consistently striving to follow Christ as Lord,”⁵⁵ while simultaneously inviting “others into a relationship with Christ through worship.”⁵⁶ Challenged to “constantly growing in Christ,”⁵⁷ “A worship leader must be a follower of Christ, or else they are just a performer; a branch can [not] thrive when not attached to the root.”⁵⁸ Often, worship leaders are “the primary discipleship and pastoral care [contact] for those in the worship ministry,”⁵⁹ and field ministry challenges through which they become “learners for a lifetime,”⁶⁰ not only of God’s Word but life application.

⁴⁹ Response from worship leader #18.

⁵⁰ Response from worship leader #19.

⁵¹ Response from worship leader #31.

⁵² Response from worship leader #27.

⁵³ Response from worship leader #2.

⁵⁴ Response from worship leader #8.

⁵⁵ Response from worship leader #10.

⁵⁶ Response from worship leader #14.

⁵⁷ Response from worship leader #15.

⁵⁸ Response from worship leader #19.

⁵⁹ Response from worship leader #27.

⁶⁰ Response from worship leader #31.

The worship leader as a *professional* requires more than knowledge of God’s Word, but “one who operates with integrity.”⁶¹ One leader remarks, “In all things, be professional! If you behave as if your actions do not matter, you will kill your testimony and effectiveness.”⁶² Another response includes the admonition of Psalm 33:3, which “reminds us to ‘play skillfully.’” Colossians 3:23 reminds us to do everything ‘for the Lord.’ The implication is clear; excellence and professional integrity are essential to any role... Worship leaders need to remember that our primary calling is to lead people to worship with excellence, not to produce musical perfection [which is the next discussion point].”⁶³ As leaders “seek to give God [their] best,”⁶⁴ these musicians use the skills of their profession “to perform [worship], and to lead others to ‘perform’ music with excellence, and stylistically appropriate”⁶⁵ for God to deem it acceptable. “Competence is needed, as the worship leader should be able to help those under their care in ministry to be competent and grow in their abilities as well, and not to distract the congregation through poor musical quality,”⁶⁶ nor should “music become an idol.”⁶⁷

Although music seems to dominate a large portion of worship, one worship leader cautions that many in the choir or worship arts might not be musically inclined. Although worship leaders “seek to do [their] best musically,”⁶⁸ few individuals strive to become perfectionists or professionals. This point leads to the following point of worship leaders as

⁶¹ Response from worship leader #8.

⁶² Response from worship leader #2.

⁶³ Response from worship leader #10.

⁶⁴ Response from worship leader #14.

⁶⁵ Response from worship leader #18.

⁶⁶ Response from worship leader #19.

⁶⁷ Response from worship leader #27.

⁶⁸ Response from worship leader #31.

musicians. One response states, “As a musician, God has given [leaders] a talent. Use what [He] has given you to bring honor to Him!”⁶⁹ Another reply says, “Artistry which is Spirit-filled and proclaims the truth of the gospel can spur life change.”⁷⁰

According to one response, the worship leader may not create music.

Technically, a worship leader does not need to be a musician. I see every senior pastor as the primary worship leader of their congregation. But music is a powerful tool; a worship leader who plans to lead the music should do so with sufficient skill. Consider it another way: Music is a language. The goal of language is not to merely say the words, but to communicate the message. However, it [is] important to know sufficient vocabulary and grammar in order for such communication to occur.⁷¹

Being a leader does include musical knowledge as far as constructing complementary pairings. “The worship leader...must have music that goes along with the Pastor’s sermon. That would lead the congregation into a time of worship prior to the Pastor getting up and preaching God’s word. Leading the congregation for the first part of the service, toward the preaching of God’s word, is essential.”⁷²

Some leaders say, “music must be accessible to the average congregant.”⁷³ Respondent 18 consistently uses the term “perform,” possibly to indicate God’s deserving position of our best efforts. He also suggests that the spiritual “musician [should]...perform and lead others to perform correctly.”⁷⁴

Many who serve as the lead musicians are the corporate services' worship leaders. These leaders, while often not seen as *pastors*, serve in the pastoral role of musically shepherding the

⁶⁹ Response from worship leader #2.

⁷⁰ Response from worship leader #8.

⁷¹ Response from worship leader #10.

⁷² Response from worship leader #11.

⁷³ Response from worship leader #14.

⁷⁴ Response from worship leader #18.

flock, and one response elaborates on how leaders “shepherd people toward Jesus.”⁷⁵ “Every worship leader ministers to both God and to the congregation. But some are specifically called to a different level of leadership within the church: pastor/shepherd/elder/bishop (it [is] all the same word in the New Testament).”⁷⁶

One participant indicates that she refuses to “consider [herself] a pastor since [she is] female and the Bible is clear that pastors should be men.”⁷⁷ This controversy in the GBMB has caused friction in some fellowships; however, many females fulfill the tasks, but either do not accept or are not offered the title. Regardless of title, gender, or position, all leaders still “minister to others and lead others to worship.”⁷⁸

The leader's responsibility is to know those in the congregation facing difficulties or trials. “A worship leader must be able to pastor and care for those directly under his care, and for the congregation as well; if a trial is present, it helps the worship leader to be aware of and help care for the need, such as if someone or a group has recently suffered [a] loss. It would seem trite to not acknowledge that [loss] through worship as well as not reaching out to them personally.”⁷⁹ One leader states, “As a pastor, I minister to those who fall under my leadership,”⁸⁰ which complements another participant’s response that as a leader, he is “a pastor to those on [his] team especially but serve alongside the senior pastor to assist him as needed.”⁸¹

⁷⁵ Response from worship leader #14.

⁷⁶ Response from worship leader #10.

⁷⁷ Response from worship leader #15.

⁷⁸ Response from worship leader #18.

⁷⁹ Response from worship leader #19.

⁸⁰ Response from worship leader #23.

⁸¹ Response from worship leader #31.

As discussed previously, it is possible to be a worship leader as an *artist* and still not be a musician. Worship artists are not considered solo musicians. These artists “create beautiful moments that bring glory to God and God alone.”⁸² It could be speaking prayers, reading scripture verses, or sharing one’s testimony through which God’s glory will manifest. As mentioned, an artist “proclaims the truth of the gospel [which] can spur life change.”⁸³

One reply examines the God-man relationship through artistry.

Our God is the ultimate Creator (literally)...His word clearly commands us regularly to “Sing to the Lord a *new* song” [emphasis added]. It is, therefore, imperative that a worship leader strive to be creative in both their planning and in their own music. However, such creativity should always be tempered with appropriate humility and wisdom, as worship gatherings should be focused more on Christ than on the leader or his music.⁸⁴

Artists “constantly hone our craft,”⁸⁵ which “show[s] creativity in preparing and leading music—both congregational and presentational.”⁸⁶ One response includes a valuable insight that while worship leaders are not always “tremendously creative, an awareness of expression is a tremendous help.”⁸⁷ One can be artistic but need not to be “a showman.”⁸⁸ Progressing to the leadership role of the worship leader, “If you are the leader, then lead. God will equip you with the skills that you need as long as He has called you to the position.”⁸⁹

⁸² Response from worship leader #2.

⁸³ Response from worship leader #8.

⁸⁴ Response from worship leader #10.

⁸⁵ Response from worship leader #14.

⁸⁶ Response from worship leader #18.

⁸⁷ Response from worship leader #19.

⁸⁸ Response from worship leader #31.

⁸⁹ Response from worship leader #2.

Another surveyed participant states, “A Christian leader is one who serves out of delegated authority to the end of discipleship and the glory of God alone.”⁹⁰ In addition to the previous leader’s opinion, another leader maintains, “Every worship leader has a responsibility to point others to Christ. Ideally, the congregation would be mature enough to worship Him regardless of what the leader does. But realistically, every leader must know their people well enough to know how to guide them well.”⁹¹

Seeking to “be a positive influence for the gospel,”⁹² worship leaders not only lead the congregation in worship, but leaders continually point others outside the four walls of the church to worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24, NIV), while being “intentional of helping people grow musically and spiritually, plan well, [and] show care.”⁹³ There was little to no explanation if “showing care” meant spiritually, physically, personally, emotionally, or in other areas. However, to conclude the inference contextually, the ministry is likely involved. “The worship leader should seek to enable those under their care to grow and provide opportunities to do so, as well as ensuring that the ministry volunteers and congregation are inspired to travel with the worship leader in spiritual growth.”⁹⁴

Participant #23 indicates he is “blessed to have administration as a spiritual gift, so leadership is natural.”⁹⁵ This researcher was surprised by that statement because many can lead without that gifting, but it is not always by nature. Leading “by example and not by heavy

⁹⁰ Response from worship leader #8.

⁹¹ Response from worship leader #10.

⁹² Response from worship leader #14.

⁹³ Response from worship leader #18.

⁹⁴ Response from worship leader #19.

⁹⁵ Response from worship leader #23.

hand”⁹⁶ demonstrates Jesus’s leadership style and explains the preference of many responses received in this survey.

Finally, the worship leader’s role as a *family person* creates dynamics seldom replicated in other non-ministry families. “As a family person, your role is to be an example for your family. If your family does [not] see Christ in you, no one else matters.”⁹⁷ Participant #8 solidifies the primary role of the family in ministry. “The family is the first Biblical example of worship, and it lasted for thousands of years. Cultivating healthy family worship is foundational for a cross-generational healthy church.”⁹⁸

According to Leader #10, “Early in ministry, [he] realized that [his] priorities should be: God, Family, Ministry.”⁹⁹ Most leaders recognize that congregations will not heed truth from those who cannot live it; hence, leaders must “lead [their] family in worship.”¹⁰⁰ While some responses combine answers and state their ability to simplify their replies, one asserts, “I have a family, so that makes me a family person.”¹⁰¹ Another indicates their role as a family person means they should “help the family grow and demonstrate their priority.”¹⁰² The mindset of family priority is evident in this response. “As a family person, the worship leader must not sacrifice their family at the cost of serving a church well. One’s family is their primary ministry, and it is easy for me (and other worship leaders I have known) to respond yes to anything that

⁹⁶ Response from worship leader #31.

⁹⁷ Response from worship leader #2.

⁹⁸ Response from worship leader #8.

⁹⁹ Response from worship leader #10.

¹⁰⁰ Response from worship leader #14.

¹⁰¹ Response from worship leader #15.

¹⁰² Response from worship leader #18.

will help them in ministry or help the church without first tending to their family.”¹⁰³ The final entry of surveyed participants seems to agree. “I must put my family first (after the Lord)[,] not the church or anyone therein.”¹⁰⁴

Two submissions prioritize their roles differently than most. Participant #12 states that his roles are “worshiper first, disciple, theologian, and pastor next, [with] everything else [coming] after this.”¹⁰⁵ Submission #29 says, “After our love of the Lord and service to Him, [the] family must a recognized as priority. All the other attributes must be balanced based on particular occasions of service.”¹⁰⁶

Eight responses state that worship leaders consider all roles necessary in one phrasing or another. Seven of those eight are equally brief with statements such as “all of the above” or “these go hand in hand.”

The other outside of those eight yields this confession:

I attempt to be all those at different times. I worship in public. I regularly study the Bible to be able to speak or teach upon a moment’s notice. I strive to be a disciple by lifestyle and by witnessing inside and outside my church walls. At all times [I] attempt to look and act in [a] positive way. I study music, lyrics [to] songs, presentation of those songs, and expect excellence out of those who join me in music ministry. Excellence is giving the best, not being the best.¹⁰⁷

One of the participants who completed the survey earlier during the research combines all the roles as a multifaceted experience. While this quote is lengthy, it summarizes much of the worship leader’s career.

I could write a full book on each role! But one thing I would emphasize is that my first ministry is to my own family. I cannot afford to give all my time and attention to my

¹⁰³ Response from worship leader #19.

¹⁰⁴ Response from worship leader #31.

¹⁰⁵ Response from worship leader #12.

¹⁰⁶ Response from worship leader #29.

¹⁰⁷ Response from worship leader #23.

church and sacrifice my wife and children. In a very real sense, I am a theologian, one who interprets God’s Word for my people through my own training, experience, and understanding. This means I must always remain a student, a disciple, being disciplined in my own personal Bible student and prayer life, my own lifestyle of witness and ministry outside my official duties. Yes, my musical skills never “arrive” but must constantly be honed and sharpened. This is especially important after one leaves school. Yes, I am a pastor for those in my musical groups—I call, I visit, I minister, I pray for, I encourage, and sometimes I even exhort and hold accountable. I have to do this from a spirit of humility and confession, never from a point of pride, but sometimes it’s needed. I’m also a teacher and mentor. One of my greatest joys is to help a young person discover, develop, and dedicate his/her God-given gifts.¹⁰⁸

“For all these aspects, sincerity is the key. All of these things are necessary to be an effective leader. Everyone does [not] care how much you know, [but] they just want to know how much you care. Be intention[al] and work daily at all these aspects because that is the call on your life”¹⁰⁹ as a Christian and a worship leader.

Questions 22 and 23: Primary Worship Leader and Pastoral Roles

The next question asks, “Between you and your pastor, who serves as the primary worship leader? Explain. (Constructed response).” Of the 21 responses, 11 (52%) state that the senior pastor is the primary worship leader. Many responses indicate deference to the pastor’s leadership, regardless of the pastor’s acceptance. (Response #11 mentions his pastor insists he, the worship leader, is the leader of the service; however, the worship leader views the senior pastor as the leader, regardless of the pastor’s agreement or acceptance.)

Many of the 11 (52%) state they serve as the primary worship leader, one of whom clarifies the roles they often share between them in service. “Neither is “primary.” We just have different roles. In Baptist worship, we often spend about the same [amount] of time in a worship service worshipping through music as we do the spoken word. Appropriately done, music is [not]

¹⁰⁸ Response from worship leader #3.

¹⁰⁹ Response from worship leader #9.

less than “preaching,” just because it employs God’s gift of melody, harmony, rhythm, and dynamics...it simply describes two roles in worship.”¹¹⁰

In several entries, leaders state that the lead musician is the primary worship leader, but many defer to the pastor in final decisions about worship matters, including participants #12, #15, #19, and #21. Leader #15 shares in his response that “Some see the music portion of service as WORSHIP—but worship is the entire service—music and preaching [among other things]. So, the music director and pastor are both the worship leaders. It [is] not primary and secondary.”¹¹¹

Another leader who considers the worship leader role as equal is Leader #19, who says, “We both contribute largely, as the pastor brings the largest portion of the Word, other than 1 or 2 passages I might share, and he sings loudly from his seat when not on the platform. We work together to see God glorified through the message and [through] the musical worship, and we often correspond [with suggestions] if thoughts hit us regarding relevant songs, etc.”¹¹²

Another leader says he sends his music list to the pastor, who “simply says yes or no each week.”¹¹³ All other responses submit that the duties are shared equally, except for #23, #27, and #29. These three indicate that the worship leader is responsible only for music, and pastor “is responsible for all else, and the two of us never meet except on Sundays and Wednesdays at the appointed hour of worship,”¹¹⁴ and the “pastor sets the tone and direction for worship, [while the] worship leader serves to support the pastor’s vision for the church.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Response from worship leader #3.

¹¹¹ Response from worship leader #15.

¹¹² Response from worship leader #19.

¹¹³ Response from worship leader #21.

¹¹⁴ Response from worship leader #23.

¹¹⁵ Response from worship leader #27.

In conjunction with the previous question, the following question queries the pastor's role in leading weekly worship. Some pastors' responsibilities, regardless of congregation size, are limited to preaching and praying, while others are more involved in the church's daily operations.

Of the 21 submissions, only eight leaders state that the pastor's responsibility is preaching or crafting the sermon for the corporate worship service. Leader #4 gives his one-word answer of "sermon," which may indicate the staffing relationship held in that office. Leader #16 states, "The pastor sends me the scripture he is going to preach on each week so we can be on the same page."¹¹⁶ Yet a similar answer is submitted: the worship leader attempts to program the music to complement the sermon. "I try to set up where all the pastor has to do is preach. If he wants something special, he has always let me know."¹¹⁷ Yet another leader states that the Pastor "preaches and extends the Invitation/Response."¹¹⁸

Some worship leaders share that their pastors only provide the sermon and prayer "as he likes to allow others to lead in worship"¹¹⁹ and "he prepares the messages to be delivered."¹²⁰ Another worship leader submits that his pastor's role in worship was "delivering the sermon and prayer."¹²¹

Some other leaders that responded to this survey commented that their pastors contribute to the collaborative planning of the services. At times, engagement in the musical offerings through the choir, instruments, and from their seats as congregational singing was provided. One leader affirms that the pastor and worship leader "should be on the same page as pre-planning

¹¹⁶ Response from worship leader #16.

¹¹⁷ Response from worship leader #17.

¹¹⁸ Response from worship leader #18.

¹¹⁹ Response from worship leader #22.

¹²⁰ Response from worship leader #23.

¹²¹ Response from worship leader #29.

has happened. My job is to execute the plan under the Holy Spirit's leading and help with the flow of the service."¹²² Another leader states his opinion on the purpose of worship. "The primary purpose of New Testament worship is to declare the word of the Lord, see Him revealed, and respond. Through sermons, prayer time, administering the Lord's Supper, and other functions, our lead pastor is the first to facilitate this end."¹²³ In addition to this mindset, another leader feels strongly about the pastor's involvement viewed by the congregation. "His participation and engagement in the other aspects of the service are vital to preparing for the message. Not only are we preparing the hearts of the people to worship, [but we also] prepare our own hearts before and during the service. When [the pastor] is engaged, the congregation sees unity within the leadership, thus leading them to do the same."¹²⁴

A worship leader, who seems to have an extroverted pastor, states that his pastor "leads the church in prayer time, announcements, and especially in preaching God's Word. Also, our pastor is...a member of the choir and sings with us every Sunday."¹²⁵ Leader #15 shares that his pastor "plays bass guitar on the praise team. But, in general, the pastor leads the congregation in worship by breaking open the Word. He rightly divides the word of God so it can be understood and applied."¹²⁶

Some pastors will provide boundaries of the service, allowing others to fill in details. One leader indicates his pastor "has set the general order of service, leaving the specifics of the musical portions to me. He...occasionally mentions a song that would tie in with his message

¹²² Response from worship leader #31.

¹²³ Response from worship leader #8.

¹²⁴ Response from worship leader #9.

¹²⁵ Response from worship leader #11.

¹²⁶ Response from worship leader #15.

and often tailors [sections] of his message to tie in a song I [have] included in the service, if possible. He leads the congregation in prayer and Scripture readings and is the primary administrator of Communion when we observe it monthly.”¹²⁷ Additionally, one leader shares that his pastor enjoys the “welcome, announcements, prayers, scripture, sermon, actively singing, and praising the Lord.”¹²⁸

A couple of submissions are outliers for the group; those entries are specific in their details. Leader #10 shares more pertinent information on his pastor’s preferences in his response. “As I...mentioned, the senior pastor should determine [or focus] the direction of each week’s gathering by deciding on a series, topic, or scripture emphasis [and choose the songs based on lyrics]. In addition, [there are] some pastors [that] prefer to be more proactive in this role by directing transitions, adding service elements, and even assisting in music selection.”¹²⁹

One or two respondents have served in part-time, full-time, and interim positions. One expressly indicates that he was supplying temporarily as the church was searching for a permanent worship leader and pastor. His response to this question is lengthy but well thought out and undoubtedly great advice for novice and veteran leaders.

(I am a pastor, too, but I am referring here to our preaching or senior pastor.) It is he who sets the tone and direction of worship. His sermon and scripture focus determine the direction [of] our musical plans. (A pet peeve of mine is pastors who do not participate in music worship, just as it would be if the musicians leave after they [are] done, not participating in the sermon part of the worship.) A pastor who ignores the music and chooses instead to go over his sermon one more time is demonstrating for his people that they can pick and choose which parts of worship they want to participate in and which they can ignore—a dangerous lesson! A well-prepared senior pastor will be lead worshiper, not just a preacher only. Similarly, a music leader is a lead worshiper, not just

¹²⁷ Response from worship leader #19.

¹²⁸ Response from worship leader #27.

¹²⁹ Response from worship leader #10.

a musician who cares nothing about other parts of worship. We are, as [the Apostle] Paul pointed out, one body, not just independent parts.¹³⁰

Question 24: Building Pastoral Relationship

The next question in the survey queried the participants about their relationships with the pastors under which they serve. Working relationships in an office are complex for any profession, but working in ministry is challenging when relationships are the product. Six primary themes surfaced from the question: time, relationships and communication, similar interests, praying together and for each other, and love. Food was mentioned since these leaders serve in Georgia Baptist churches, but there is a weightier discussion.

One leader indicates that she serves as the worship leader to her spouse as the pastor, and her humor is evident in her response. “Well, I’m married to him.”¹³¹ While serving as a couple would appear easy, married couples might not enjoy ministry positions requiring constant service. Hence, the relationship must be built over time, just as a marital relationship must create similar experiences and conversations. The ministerial relationship between the pastor and worship leader must have the same. Twelve respondents (57%) answered the “time” for this question as a needed aspect of their pastoral relationship.

Leader #2 explains his need for time with the pastor to be prepared to lead. “This relationship is a must for me! My pastor is the one that God placed in the church to lead, guide, and foster. My role as a worship leader is to support him in every way possible! I listen to his sermons and try to use music to support what he is preaching. We meet to discuss and plan so...our congregation receives what God has in store for them.”¹³²

¹³⁰ Response from worship leader #3.

¹³¹ Response from worship leader #15.

¹³² Response from worship leader #2.

The next participant affirms and adds to the previous leader's statement.

There is no substitute for spending regular time with each other in formal planning, staff meetings, and relaxed, informal settings. Genuine mutual respect, clear [and] frequent communications [are required]. Prayer for each other. Keep [personal] confidence. Never deride one another to another but be consistently loyal and supportive. When necessary, with great caution and humility, admonish as "iron sharpens iron." This is rare, and yes, even risky, but a wise Pastor will welcome more than just ego-stroking "yes men."¹³³

Pastors and worship leaders must "spend time together,"¹³⁴ pray for each other, and communicate with one another.¹³⁵ Four leaders mention praying for one another is helpful in building a relationship with one's pastor. "It is vital to spend time in prayer together, seeking the Lord as partners in ministry. But it [is] also crucial that both the senior pastor and the worship pastor possess [great] humility and a willingness to be accountable to one another."¹³⁶ "Prayer and time"¹³⁷ mentioned by several leaders reveal the "common vision"¹³⁸ often provided by the senior pastor to the congregation in a corporate setting. This vision can only be crafted by knowledge of and time with the congregation's fellowship and through the Holy Spirit's leadership.

While shared interests are often helpful, as mentioned by Leaders #9 and #16, they are not always required, as the Holy Spirit gifts the unity of the Brethren. One leader discloses that he and the senior pastor "support each other on things that do [not] involve church. For example, our families go to games and lunch together."¹³⁹ Other leaders indicate that the pastoral ministers

¹³³ Response from worship leader #3.

¹³⁴ Response from worship leader #4.

¹³⁵ Caveat: Staff members of different genders must be careful to work together and not be tempted to provide fodder for the devil. Remain above reproach in communication, being wise in the relationship.

¹³⁶ Response from worship leader #10.

¹³⁷ Response from worship leader #26.

¹³⁸ Response from worship leader #29.

¹³⁹ Response from worship leader #16.

“spend time together both professionally and socially”¹⁴⁰ and “Our families are friends. I know that I have his full support because he has expressed that to me.”¹⁴¹ This communication within the relationship seems to be instrumental in the staff dynamics. Some leaders feel that transparency and honesty are imperative. “Spending time together, sharing visions and encouraging him, make sure to follow through with each responsibility, find ways to affirm him to others, show respect to him personally and with others,”¹⁴² while challenging staff schedules can provide the foundation for a lifelong friendship if the Lord moves either party to another assignment. Other leaders feel “Open and honest communication, defining and holding to expectations, asking questions when something is unknown, spending time together outside of ministry obligations one-on-one and by getting our families together casually when possible”¹⁴³ can provide the additional support needed to overcome personality differences within pastoral relationships.

Question 25: Preparation and Presentation of Worship

Preparing and presenting worship to the congregation has been mentioned previously as a discussion point. Still, the act of preparation for the leader is explained in the discussion from these entries. Five topic areas influence the debate from all submissions: prayer, meditation (combination of prayer and scripture study), personal preparation, musical preparations, rehearsal, and leading corporate worship from the “overflow” of private worship. The constructed response to this question includes individual preparation and paired with the pastor.

¹⁴⁰ Response from worship leader #14.

¹⁴¹ Response from worship leader #13.

¹⁴² Response from worship leader #18.

¹⁴³ Response from worship leader #19.

Any ministry must be grounded in prayer and communication for guidance from God, the Father, through the Holy Spirit. Five of the responses specifically shared, “Pray!” One of the participants used the words “prepare” and “present” as their keywords in their reply.

Prepare–Pray! Abide in Christ. Let worship planning be the overflow of your own personal worship. Talk with my pastor about the direction, theme, or focus for that service, and the “flow” he’d like us to follow. (He often leaves that up to me, which I am comfortable with, but am always open to his leadership.) Select music and other elements of worship that guide us through the progression or “drama” of worship. For instance, for a service in which our Pastor will preach on Isaiah 6:1-6, I may well want to open with songs of praise and adoration that help us to “see the Lord, high and lifted up,” focusing on His attributes, before moving into songs that help us see ourselves as sinners with unclean lips, in need of cleansing and restoration. Then, either before or after the sermon, songs that help us answer, “Here am I, send me.”¹⁴⁴

The same sentiments can be found in replies from Leaders #13, #26, and #27. Each comment utilizes synonyms of worship and communication. Leader #27 intentionally tries to “plan and pray with [the] pastor and then worship team. Rehearse until you are ready to perform–do [not] be afraid to put a song off until you [are] ready. Make sure your worship team understands the reason you chose one song over another.”¹⁴⁵ Leader #3 also concludes this entry by remarking:

Present–1. Pray! 2. Communicate with your teams. 3. Arrive early. 4. Thorough final preparations, whether musical warmups or technical checks. Do your best to leave nothing to chance or assumption. 5. Stay focused on what you [are] doing and why–do [not] let lesser things distract. (Train your people not to bring little concerns to you just before worship; later is better!) Be the leader. Set the tone. Lead your groups in focusing and prayer.¹⁴⁶

With prayer, meditation includes the communication with God aspect discussed in the previous section; however, study and comprehension are combined, as Leader #3 mentions. Another response formed by a leader is that more preparation is needed than simply musical rehearsal.

The leader comments,

¹⁴⁴ Response from worship leader #3.

¹⁴⁵ Response from worship leader #27.

¹⁴⁶ Response from worship leader #3.

I prepare, first and foremost, by praying and studying the Word (usually along with the Pastor's sermon notes). I consider numerous factors in selecting songs and planning sets. Are there new songs I [have] been wanting to introduce? How was the participation last time a song was used? How long ago was it used? Who sang lead? Are they available? What instrumentation is needed? What key?

After an initial worship set is selected, I play through it all individually (usually several times). This time is crucial, as it not only serves as a time of personal worship to the Lord, [but] it [is] also the time for me to spot potential issues and to plan roadmaps and transitions. Once set, I prep all the materials (sheet music, charts, recordings, etc.), put it all in Planning Center, and invite my team. As an interim, my opportunity to teach the congregation to lead a life of worship centers around a weekly column in the newsletter (print and online).¹⁴⁷

Six or seven worship leaders indicate that spiritual meditation and musical rehearsal are needed to prepare individually and as a ministry team. Often, the pastor's given sermon series titles, subheadings, and scripture texts from which his preaching may come to the worship leaders. In turn, the worship leaders pray over and select songs and possible readings for congregational and unique offerings to include in the services. Of crucial importance to every respondent is the necessity of "a consistent walk with Christ [which allows the musicians to]...lead from an overflow of that relationship."¹⁴⁸

One leader explains that he and the senior pastor "plan as a team. Our pastor has a theme, and we build the elements of the corporate service around that theme. We present our service as a journey from point A to point B, allowing nothing to distract from the end objective for the week."¹⁴⁹ Many needed themes require alignment to scripture since not all songs composed are theologically or doctrinally sound, matching the truth of God's Word. "Before introducing new

¹⁴⁷ Response from worship leader #10.

¹⁴⁸ Response from worship leader #12.

¹⁴⁹ Response from worship leader #14.

songs, I make sure they [are] theologically sound. I send out the order of worship to [the] praise band...each week so they can prepare. All is done in an attitude of prayer.”¹⁵⁰

Preparation time varies between ministries, regardless of the church’s worship ministry size. Some have a week or two for preparation, while others identify six to eight weeks for other arrangements.

Be aware of seasonal emphases; study [the] pastor’s sermon focus and scripture; prayerfully select music (congregational and presentational) and other worship elements that support the focus of sermon or sermon series; rehearse presentational choir music six to eight weeks before the Sunday to be presented; find special hymn treatments to provide energy and freshness to congregational singing...In the week or two before, prepare copies of instrumental parts (piano, organ, orchestra instruments, etc.) and provide to instrumentalists. Prepare appropriate brief words of introduction of congregational hymns and presentational music. Through my body language show personal energy and engagement. Be careful not to move around during music, and do not sway to music.¹⁵¹

Assumptions can be made for why the instruction not to move or sway can be problematic for all instrumentalists. Other leaders note: “I [would] like to do this quarterly, but honestly, it [is] an extremely good month if I [am] able to accomplish this a month [in] advance.”¹⁵²

Sometimes, song lyrics will not match the sermon illustrations or topics. One leader says, “If I can know a week or two what the Pastor is preaching, I will sing something that will fall in line. If not, I choose songs that magnify the Lord and what speaks to my heart knowing if it speaks to me[,] it should also to many in the congregation.”¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Response from worship leader #15.

¹⁵¹ Response from worship leader #18.

¹⁵² Response from worship leader #19.

¹⁵³ Response from worship leader #31.

Question 26: Church Emphasis on Worship

In the following question, respondents were asked to explain what is most important to their church's emphasis in worship. Eight respondents (38%) answered with some reference to God in this question. Most refer to their relationships with God as being stronger or deepened. Many want their congregations to have encounters with God through corporate worship. Some believe the most important note is that believers must “[worship] in spirit and truth.”¹⁵⁴ Most leaders surveyed note that measuring what is most important to the church’s emphasis on worship tends to be quite abstract. One leader states the corporate worship emphasis is “submission to the Lord [which is] edifying the spiritual walk of the Church as a whole.”¹⁵⁵ Another leader compares “what we are singing and why we are singing it. The songs we sing stick with us and are portable theology. Whatever you sing, you carry it in your heart and mind.”¹⁵⁶ One leader may caution while many desire to honor God in their worship, “there are others who desire to worship only according to their personal preferences for style, repertoire, and instrumentation.”¹⁵⁷ As skilled musicians, many leaders pursue the “chance to bring music that will glorify God and might lead others to Christ,”¹⁵⁸ which may also encourage worshipers to consider “the attitude of the heart. We seek quality in our preaching and music, but most of all, we seek authenticity so that our influence is positive.”¹⁵⁹

Ultimately, the engagement in worship is to commune with God, the Father. To accomplish a corporate experience of participating in the angel worship already in progress,

¹⁵⁴ Response from worship leader #4.

¹⁵⁵ Response from worship leader #8

¹⁵⁶ Response from worship leader #9.

¹⁵⁷ Response from worship leader #10.

¹⁵⁸ Response from worship leader #11.

¹⁵⁹ Response from worship leader #14.

Leader #31 poses these thoughts. “Did we experience God in a meaningful way? Did we lift up the Lord in praise? Did my life change? The word of God is primary because ‘faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.’”¹⁶⁰ True worship changes lives.

Question 27: Relationship of Worship to Praise, Discipleship, and Evangelism

The final question in the survey asked the leaders to explain the relationship of worship to praising God, discipleship, and evangelism. Eleven replies (52%) answered that worshipping God was the lynchpin of the matter. One leader shares the worship experiences that seem to mean the most by stating,

I love singing songs that bring God’s word to others. I feel that sometimes, music might reach someone where other parts of the service might not. Not including the spoken Word, that is. Even though I am the one leading the music, there have been times that singing the songs has touched me so much that I have had to stop singing because of lumps in my throat. I pray that some of the hymns, anthems, solos, or group singing we do will make them feel the same way.¹⁶¹

Many leaders share that the primary reason for the corporate assembly includes equipping and educating the Body of Christ. “Worship is discipleship and evangelism. Worship teaches; worship is witness.”¹⁶² “So important to exalt the name of Jesus together! To remember what He has done to save us! The gospel!”¹⁶³

One leader deeply understands how worship, discipleship, and evangelism are interrelated. “We do not separate evangelism from discipleship. To do so is a Scripture fallacy; Jesus did not separate the two. Neither should we. Jesus viewed evangelism as an important part of discipleship. Worship cannot exist without discipleship. Praising God is only one aspect of

¹⁶⁰ Response from worship leader #31.

¹⁶¹ Response from worship leader #11.

¹⁶² Response from worship leader #12.

¹⁶³ Response from worship leader #13.

worship. The key to worship lies in Romans 12:1–2.”¹⁶⁴ Remarkably, the following response in the survey completes the thought. “Worship should do all these things. It should praise God, our Father. It should disciple us and lead us into a deeper relationship with Christ, and it should evangelize the lost by telling the gospel story.”¹⁶⁵

Worship leaders surveyed see their jobs as musical and in preparation for the sermon, but the responsibility tends to be more complicated.

While the Bible is and should be our ultimate source of “theology,” most often, the church’s “body of congregational song” (hymnal or song sets of projected worship songs) becomes the “layman’s book of theology.” In large measure, the church’s theology and practice are shaped by its worship, especially in what it sings. This shapes every aspect of the life of the church, including praise, discipleship, and evangelism.¹⁶⁶

Worship, evangelism, and discipleship “are interdependent...Worship should fuel our discipleship as we grow in [the] knowledge of God and our ability to trust in Him, and this should spill over into our desire to share the goodness of God with others.”¹⁶⁷ Worship that honors God tends to reflect all the other aspects of the spiritual life. “Worship is the foundation for all other spiritual disciplines. It is our heartfelt response to God’s love for us as well as a means to teach sound doctrine through music.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Response from worship leader #14.

¹⁶⁵ Response from worship leader #15.

¹⁶⁶ Response from worship leader #18.

¹⁶⁷ Response from worship leader #19.

¹⁶⁸ Response from worship leader #27.

Chapter 5

Introduction

This case study aims to identify underlying reasons for the lack of undergraduate training in blended worship for worship leaders. Preference for music style in worship has often detracted from the scriptural basis of worship in the local church. This chapter discusses findings on the worship leader's educational influence on the congregation, how worship services are planned and organized, and how scripture influences biblical worship in the modern church. Also included is a summary of procedures, findings, and prior research that might be pertinent to the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations, an overview of the study's findings, and possible recommendations for future action.

Contained in this chapter are discussion points and future research possibilities to help answer the research questions:

(R1): What are the challenges to implementing the Bible's clear exhortation to "acceptable worship" and musical variety in worship, as employed through multiple musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches?

(R2): What musical challenges do worship leaders in Georgia face when implementing and executing worship plans involving congregational participation through worship?

The findings in chapter 4 tend to reflect the nature of the GBMB and the churches she supports. Many worship leaders who participated in this survey have completed secondary education and attended online seminary or residency courses. Those not completing undergraduate seminary training indicate they patterned their worship planning after those by whom they have been conducted in choirs or music ministries. Few church members have been taught the necessity of music selection through doctrinal, theological, philosophical, and

methodological means. Many congregation members express their preferences for familiar genres and songs foundational to their maturing experiences. While these preferences can explain the depth of one's spiritual maturity, few individuals comprehend the selection process of worship songs for service, nor do they realize the prayer and meditation preparation.

Summary

At the beginning of this project, the author considered that the education many undergraduate music majors received from college might not prepare them for leading worship ministry as described in the scriptures. In this study, the researcher hypothesized that the challenges for implementing the Bible's clear exhortation to musical variety in "acceptable" worship, as employed through blending musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches, can include frustrations with biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education.

RQ1 uses the terms "clear exhortation" and "acceptable worship," which infers a prescribed worship approach like the regulative principle. This was the researcher's original premise, believing that most worship leaders in GBMB churches were not college or seminary trained in worship leadership and, therefore, did not understand regulative practices of worship. However, the findings of the case study revealed that the majority of GBMB churches hold to a "free worship" pattern, which aligns more with the normative principle, asserting that items or actions not specifically prohibited by the Bible are considered "acceptable worship." While both principles have merit, this researcher maintains that blended worship may contain either or both principles and still be considered "acceptable worship."

The researcher also considered the second hypothesis that the challenges that worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist Churches when implementing and executing worship plans that involve congregational participation through worship include selecting lyrics that are sound

theologically, pairing music stylings that complement one another, and teaching the congregation to appreciate the various genres used in worship. The evidence of corporate lack of understanding may provide a worship study course for laypersons or undergraduate students better to understand the philosophy and methodology of worship planning.

At the time of this case study, two Baptist colleges in Georgia maintained a recently established worship study course for students enrolled in the music programs. This research study provides arguments for institutions to include in-depth training for future church musicians and burgeoning worship leaders. These secondary institutions provided a church music degree through a Master of Music program¹ and a Bachelor of Arts in Music² with a concentration in worship and church music. The latter secondary program includes three courses of instruction for selecting congregational songs and literature; however, this program is a recent addition to the degree offerings. To bridge the gap between these leaders and those already in the field, the GBMB Worship and Music Catalyst organized the next-generation leaders to meet and share ideas through various brainstorming sessions. These regional meetings are designed to equip worship leaders that may not have been able to receive training from formal educational institutions.

The most important results of this case study stem from the RQs and the Hypotheses. According to the findings, less than 1% of the approximately 3,500 GBMB-affiliated churches responded to the survey. Of that percentage, most respondents were trained to plan worship through their formal education. Hence, based on the study findings, there is no corroboration of the evidence of lack of training. Due to the survey questions not including other styles of music

¹ This program is found at Brewton-Parker College, Mount Vernon, Georgia. (GBMB supported)

² This program is found at Truett-McConnell University, Cleveland, Georgia. (GBMB supported)

such as rap, Black gospel, rhythm and blues, jazz, or any other genre besides traditional and contemporary, there was little indication that these styles are used in worship regularly.

The primary researcher determined the lack of biblical worship training in her secondary music education and, through worship leadership experiences, noted that congregational members may not comprehend the purpose of biblical references in corporate worship. The potential need for a worship course in the local church provides additional understanding for the study as many smaller churches employ worship leaders who cannot afford or schedule secondary education opportunities.

After selecting the Research Questions listed, the researcher winnowed advisor and reader faculty to accommodate the inquiries best as stated.

(R1): What are the challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to “acceptable worship” and musical variety in worship, as employed through multiple musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches?

(R2): What musical challenges do worship leaders in Georgia face when implementing and executing worship plans involving congregational participation through worship?

Resulting Hypothesis Statements were proposed:

(H1): Challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to musical variety in “acceptable” worship, as employed through blending musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches, can include frustrations with biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education.

(H2): Challenges that worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist Churches when implementing and executing worship plans that involve congregational participation through worship include selecting lyrics that are sound theologically, pairing music

stylings that complement one another, and teaching the congregation to appreciate the various genres used in worship, as well as appropriate their preferences in their personal worship time, not corporate gatherings.

Comprehension of the Core Concepts and definitions of terms discussed in the hypotheses were determined and inserted in the first chapter. Within chapter 2, theology and biblical worship were mentioned and reasoned, leading to the historical background of worship in the Old and New Testaments. The need for worship practices in church history provides the background developments of worship styles through the church's recent history and the development of the worship leaders employed.

In chapter 3, the Research Design and Questions were fully formed, and study participants were then determined. The survey questions were written and presented to the IRB of Liberty University for approval. Upon further review, the primary researcher was confident that offering an open-ended survey made available to all denominations of worship leaders may provide too broad of a scope for the study. Hence, limiting the survey's availability to those employed by GBMB-affiliated churches would allow for stewardship of time and responses.

Once the Review Board approved the study, availability was posted on social media and emailed to specific possible participants. All participants that completed the survey did so anonymously, as no identifiable information was included for the respondents. Initially, the survey was provided through Google Docs, but the URL associated with the survey was not stable, and alternate storage was needed. The researcher built the survey into MS Forms, the operating system used by Liberty University and its students. In this storage system, the survey was found to maintain URL stability, kept secure storage, and the survey was published.

The survey was left open for six weeks, with weekly reminders posted on social media for recruiting more responses. The survey link was closed at the end of the period, and MS Forms organized the responses into a CSV-formatted or spreadsheet presentation. The researcher then reviewed answers from the survey and sought to identify any collective meaning for the replies. Several other authors have provided practical methods to plan blended worship based on musical balance, thematic organization, song variety, enhancing elements, and proper education of the congregation of song and message purpose. Bob Sorge, Robert E. Webber, Will Whittaker, and Constance Cherry have written about properly blending worship. These authors have spent many hours studying and practicing the craft. Frank Page and Lavon Gray note,

The modern worship renewal [era] ushered in new skill requirements in the areas of contemporary Christian music and technology. Many worship pastors trained prior to 1990 do not have these skills due to breakdowns in seminary and Christian college education for worship pastors. Second, because of a desire to connect with culture, a growing number of churches intentionally target younger leaders to be the “face” of the worship service.³

As a result, many leaders seek individual training or choose to relocate to further invest in their education to become marketable as an employee, which complicates the ministry requirements for worship leaders. Many older ministers began moving to other professions or other pastoral positions. Decreased use of organs and acoustic pianos and increased use of digital keyboards and guitars support the advent of leaders who are limited in musical ability but desire to serve in leadership.

In the survey completed by participants online through MS Office Forms, various factors of worship ministry were investigated to explain the best possible answers for the hypotheses listed above. The researcher synthesized these answers and sorted them for collaborative

³ Frank S. Page, and L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014,) 142.

solutions that might explain why some churches may have more success in combining music styles. After the initial review, the researcher printed the survey results on a spreadsheet to complete the compilation of findings. Comparisons and contrasts of entries were considered, as were the size of church and worship arts member involvement. The educational background of each leader was observed individually. The researcher noted secondary, and seminary education provided the biblical-theological basis for worship education.

Comparisons of answers in the survey were made as the researcher noted similarities and differences through chapter 4. While answers given contain similar vocabulary from theological and doctrinal disciplines, researcher noted few commonalities in the biographical and socio-economical generalities of the worship leaders. It was pointed out that the intentionality of the worship leader in teaching the congregation how to demonstrate “acceptable worship” helped mature the assembly on the whole. While musical style preferences will always be expressed, maturing congregations are less concerned with expressing those opinions rather than experiencing the unity of worship services in which the presence of God through the Holy Spirit is evident.⁴

As raw data, this information may not seem impressive; however, considering the posed hypotheses and the challenges faced by leaders, it is understandable why worship leaders should be taught how to create worship services and combine varied styles of music in continuing education courses through local Christian colleges and GBMB local associations of churches. “Church music and worship education continues to lag years behind actual church practice, leaving many worship pastors [and leaders] with minimal theological training.”⁵ The case study

⁴ Calvin M. Johansson affirms this argument in his text, *Discipling Music Ministry*, which argues in several chapters that the maturing Believer seeks spiritual communion and worship, not musical style, nor genre.

⁵ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 20.

findings support the need for more worship leaders to acquire theological knowledge, philosophical explanations, and methodological processes to serve local churches through worship ministries. Preferential treatment of musical styles will often ostracize worshipers who desire “acceptable” biblical worship as defined in Romans 12:1. The worship education process for the congregation to present themselves as living offerings to God must become a priority for the worship leader. Providing logical or spiritual reasons for why songs are selected for the service and teaching the theology of songs will allow people who may not prefer the style to understand the lyrics and why the music edifies the Body of Christ or glorifies the Triune God. Moving worshipers away from individual worship during corporate gatherings will assist leaders in educating the congregation.

Limitations of Research

Variables of research limitations could be numerous; however, some discussed here may have a more far-reaching impact than those not fully discussed. Only worship leaders employed by Georgia Baptist Mission Board-affiliated churches were included in this research. Approximately 1% of Georgia Baptist churches in the state are included, as those were the number of replies received by the researcher. Other denominations may provide worship leadership training that mirrors the music education classes offered by the Baptist colleges in Georgia. The few responses still included leaders awarded degrees from Baptist colleges and seminary graduates.

Worship leaders tend to acquire spiritual or personal maturity far above their chronological age due to personal experiences and emotional intelligence through scripture study. These maturities often foster abstract abilities unfamiliar to those in the congregational or corporate worship services. Considering the secondary educational institutions, unknown degree

completion plans at the Georgia Baptist schools that are in the process have little bearing on this study. It is assumed that the budgetary and personnel limitations in music departments at the time of student enrollment will factor into the ability of the institution to provide additional course study. If the programs desire growth in the area of worship leader students, the eventual goal is to include coursework for the students in their degree plans. This unknown variable could affect music degree enrollments, since many modern worship leaders may not see the need for secondary education.

Another limitation of the case study may be the personal bias or prejudices of the for all genres and styles of music. Appreciation and preference affect the individual worshiper within corporate gatherings, and not all present in worship engage in the act of worship. This study did not apply music theory abilities or pedagogical methods of music theory to modulate keys or meters, nor did the survey inquire about those skills. Worship leaders often specialize in vocal or instrumental training, then concentrate on other areas. Usually, the publishers provide those within their compositions, or the accompanists must provide transitional material. Worship culture shifts were dismissed by those in colleges and seminaries, considering them “passing fads or trends. While churches adopted modern expressions of worship, educational institutions continued teaching traditional approaches [such as classical training, orchestral and choral degree offerings], often ignoring the changes [in modern worship patterns] taking place. A chasm developed between educators and local church practitioners.”⁶ As a result, the ability to develop intergenerational worship services for the entire church body was hindered, due the fact that educational training did not include worship patterns or processes.

⁶ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 72.

A final limitation is that this case study should have included more than 1% of the GBMB/JMI worship leaders. A more comprehensive data sampling extending farther than only Georgia Baptist Churches would have garnered more precise findings since some trained there may not have continued in the denomination but moved to other faith traditions. As a result of more respondents, there may have been a more exact correlation between training and blended worship. Some of the questions posed in the survey identified the educational backgrounds. Still, they did not provide the actual processes of worship planning, such as how often songs are repeated, how to teach unfamiliar songs, how to accomplish percussive songs with limited instrumentations, and utilizing key changes for transitions into other songs and genres. This researcher desired to provide reasons that worship leaders should include all types of worship music, not just the preference of those attending corporate gatherings.

Recommendations for Future Study and Research

Music style bias and preference may drive the need for secondary education for worship leaders. In the Georgia Baptist world of leaders, many value the education processes in the schools supported by the GBMB. However, findings could affect the practice of educational institutions as they value musical abilities and biblical knowledge. Worship leaders must intentionally educate and equip the congregation through biblical worship. This includes differentiating between corporate or congregational, private, and individual worship. In secondary education, potential worship leaders must be trained musically on biblical worship and how to teach church membership. The result is a multi-week course for college students preparing to become worship arts ministry leaders. This study is available in Appendices C, D, and E to those studying to lead worship ministry in their respective churches as leaders desired.

Summary

While “worship wars” have become less apparent in the music programs of secondary education, many larger churches have embraced the blended style of worship, mixing modern songs with updated arrangements of hymn tunes. These arrangements can be found in various contemporary Christian artists’ music formats. While some of these musicians’ educational processes may be ideal, biblical worship’s basis remains unchanged. All worship should be evaluated by the biblical truth it presents, which is God’s Word. Ensuring that theological and biblical foundations are secure, worship education is imperative for those leading worship in the local church. “Hymns and Modern Worship Songs are [not] mutually exclusive. So as long as we filter them according to theology instead of partiality, they can live in harmony and compatibility as worship allies instead of adversaries.”⁷

Worship study courses must be included in the degree programs offered in colleges and seminary schools. For those church musicians who, regardless of reason, cannot attend secondary education, worship study courses must be available to them to learn and teach in their respective fellowships. At the very least, worship education must be presented from the platform each time the corporate body or fellowship meets. Theological education can be appended by state organizational and associational meetings that provide training, such as Georgia Baptist SPARK events, associational activity, and break-out training sessions from the annual state Mission Board meetings.

“When Christians gather for worship, they declare God’s glory and remember, proclaim, and enact the biblical story of God’s ultimate rescuing of humanity through Jesus Christ.”⁸ Music

⁷ David M. Manner, *Better Sundays Begin on Mondays: 52 Exercises for Evaluating Weekly Worship* (Kindle Version, Nashville, TN: Abington Press, September 15, 2020).

⁸ Webber, *Planning Blended Worship*, 39.

style preferences in worship services promote disunity and disharmony within the congregation. Worship leaders must often balance the congregation's preferences with the spiritual needs of the same, as “Blended worship brings the traditional and contemporary together in creative ways.”⁹ The challenges to implementing the Bible’s clear exhortation to musical variety in “acceptable” worship, as employed through blending musical styles in Georgia Baptist churches, can include frustrations with biblical knowledge, congregational expectations, and worship music education. When the congregation fails to notice the lack of biblical truth in the music they desire to sing, the worship leaders must intentionally educate those involved in the corporate worship gathering. When the worship leader fails to know God’s Word, the flock can easily be led astray, be taught false doctrine, or fail to mature properly. When worship does not occur properly, failure in corporate worship affects all aspects of church growth.

“Style is never the order of first priority in planning;”¹⁰ however, worship leaders must be trained and educated to select theologically sound music offerings that provide corporate opportunities to celebrate and worship God and include the varied stylings that speak to the variegated members within the Body. Combining modern worship songs with heritage hymns provides the worshiper the fortuity in singing lyrics that speak to the Body individually and as a whole. Leaders should “Start with the content, work to the structure, and end with the choice of style.”¹¹

Challenges worship leaders face in Georgia Baptist Churches when implementing and executing worship plans that involve congregational participation through worship include selecting lyrics that are sound theologically, pairing music stylings that complement one another,

⁹ Webber, *Planning Blended Worship*, 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 62.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

and teaching the congregation to appreciate various genres used in worship, which then creates deference over preference. “Churches must develop intentional strategies to build consensus anchored by strong relationships, a theologically sound worship repertoire, and contextualization of our worship culture.”¹² With technological advances, online studies have “removed many obstacles that once made this type of education a challenge.”¹³ Secondary and seminary training grants the biblical and musical knowledge to lead blended worship so that all worshipers may “draw near [in worship] to God with a sincere heart” (Hebrews 11:22, NIV). “Somewhere, a balance exists between four stanzas of a Charles Wesley hymn and the latest Jesus-is-my-best friend worship song. For the sake of our churches, we need to find it!”¹⁴ The result of blended biblical worship is that the music used in corporate worship is never divisive, but always draws all into a congregational response to praising God for who He is and for what He has done to reconcile His creation back to Himself in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹² Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 106.

¹³ *Ibid*, 138.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

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Appendix A: Worship Ministry Survey–Angelia McLeroy

Topic: Seeking Biblical Clarity through Blended Worship in Georgia Baptist Churches

1. Do you give consent to include your responses in this study? Yes/No
2. Are you currently employed by a church affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Mission Board? (If no, please stop here and exit the survey.) Yes/No
3. As the primary worship leader or equivalent, are you currently full-time, part-time, or a volunteer in this ministry? (If no, please stop here and exit the survey.) Yes/No
4. What is your church congregation's approximate attendance/size? (short answer)
5. What is the approximate number of participants in your church's worship ministry? (Please include ensembles, choirs, accompanists, and instrumentalists.) (short answer)
6. Of the following, how would you describe your worship services? (multiple choice)
Contemporary, Blended-traditional and contemporary, Traditional, Liturgical, or Seeker
7. Number of corporate worship services in a week. (short answer)
8. Are your services different in their worship design and style? Explain. (Long answer)
9. What is the ethnic background of your congregation? (multiple choice)
Mostly Caucasian with less than 10% other ethnicities, Mostly non-Caucasian, Mostly African American, Mostly Asian, Other _____
10. What is the average age within your church's fellowship? (Select One)
Infants to age 30, Ages 30–50, Ages 51–75, Mostly over 75, Other _____
11. Of the following, how would you and your church rank the importance of worship in the everyday lives of your people? Essential, Very Important, Somewhat Important
12. What is the current organization of your church's instrumental ministry?

Piano/Organ only, Small Praise Band (vocals, guitar, keys, drums/cajon), Orchestra with piano/organ, Mixture of all (depending on needs in service), Other _____

13. When selecting songs for worship, what instrumentation do you utilize?

Piano/Organ only, Small Praise Band (Vocals, guitar, keys, drums/Cajon), Orchestra with piano/organ, Mixture of all, depending on needs in service, Other _____

14. What worship elements are used during church worship services? (Constructed response)

15. When you come to a new church position, how do you determine the congregation's spiritual maturity? How will you seek to grow it over time? (Constructed response)

16. Define your role as a worship leader in your church. (Constructed response)

17. Describe your formal worship education, including secondary education/degrees or training. (Constructed response)

18. Describe workshops and training seminars that you attend each year. Explain.
(Constructed response)

19. In one statement, explain your opinion about the essential idea a worship student should retain in preparing for a vocation as a worship leader. (Constructed response)

20. In your opinion, what role does the worship leader have as:

- a. a worshiper;
- b. theologian;
- c. disciple;
- d. professional;
- e. musician;
- f. pastor;
- g. artist;

- h. leader; and,
 - i. family person? (Long answer)
21. Between you and your pastor, who serves as the primary worship leader? Explain.
(Constructed response)
22. What role does the pastor have in leading worship each week? Explain. (Constructed response)
23. How do you build and develop your relationship with your pastor? (Constructed response)
24. Explain how you prepare and present worship to your people. (Together and individually.) (Constructed response)
25. Explain what is most important to the church's emphasis on worship. (Constructed response)
26. Explain the relationship of worship to praising God, discipleship, and evangelism.
(Constructed response)

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Approval**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 21, 2022

Angelia McLeroy

Thomas Seel

Re: IRB Exemption-IRB-FY21-22-1131 Seeking Biblical Clarity Through Blended Worship in Georgia Baptist Churches

Dear Angelia McLeroy, Thomas Seel,

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

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of

public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix C: Undergraduate Course Syllabus on Blended Worship

Transitions in Christian Worship: Syllabus

Instructor**Email**

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Rationale: The modern evangelical church is in crisis philosophically, methodologically, and theologically. Many trends influence the life and worship of the church and its community. Every worship leader must address changes in ministry that are focused on current events. Worship leaders must know, acknowledge, and manage these transition areas to best serve the congregation and community.

Module/Week 1, titled “What is Worship?” was selected for the students to comprehend the biblical principles behind “acceptable acts of worship” (as defined in John 4), which includes the purpose, patterns, and processes of evaluating and leading worship. This module will become the foundation for the remaining coursework, scaffolding all other assignments upon the student’s understanding of biblical worship.

Course Description

This course provides an exploratory overview of the current trends and transformations of culture, leadership, music, and worship and how these transitions influence the modern evangelistic church. Through this course, students will synthesize and apply the principles studied through weekly modules to a meaningful ministry application.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Compare acceptable and unacceptable worship.
- B. Explore current trends in worship.
- C. Evaluate the application of biblical and theological principles within worship practices.
- D. Assess the issues and principles affecting contemporary worship styles.
- E. Synthesize theological, philosophical, and methodological worship principles to address current ministerial transition issues.

Required Texts

MacArthur, John F., Jr. *Worship: The Ultimate Priority*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012). ISBN: 9780802402158.

Page, Frank S., and Lavon L. Gray. *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church*. (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014). ISBN: 9781596694071.

Sorge, Bob. *Exploring Worship: A Practical Guide to Praise and Worship*. (Canandaigua, NY: Oasis House, 1987). ISBN: 0962118516.

Webber, Robert E. *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998). ISBN: 9780687032235.

Whaley, Vernon M. *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God's Call*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009). ISBN: 9781418519582.

White, James Emery. *The Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012). ISBN: 9780801013874.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Current ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press). ISBN: 9780226430577.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignments/Exercises
Week 1	What is Worship?	Whaley, Intro-ch3, 21 Sorge, ch 1-7 Page&Gray, ch1,5-6	Course Requirements Checklist Class Introductions Personal Statement of Worship
Week 2	Methodological Transitions	Sorge, ch 8 -remainder Page&Gray, ch 2 Whaley, ch 4-11	Discussion Board 1
Week 3	Philosophical Transitions	Page&Gray, ch 7-9 MacArthur, Intro-ch 8	Discussion Board 2 Ministry Evaluation Project
Week 4	Theological Basis for Transitions	Webber, Intro–ch4 Page&Gray, rest of text White, ch 1-10	Discussion Board 3 4MAT Book Review: Page & Gray
Week 5	Artist/Minister-led Worship	Webber, ch 5-6 MacArthur, ch 9-15 Whaley, to end of text	4MAT Book Review: Whaley
Week 6	Theological, Philosophical, and Methodological Discussions: Part 1	Webber, remainder of text Page&Gray, ch 4 White, Ch 11-end	Annotated Bibliography for Capstone project
Week 7	Theological, Philosophical, and Methodological Discussions: Part 2	MacArthur, ch 4-5 Page&Gray, ch 4	4MAT Book Review: Webber Discussion Board 4
Week 8	Application of What We've Learned	Whaley, review ch 16-20	Summative/Capstone Project

NOTE: Each course module/week begins on Monday morning at 12:00 a.m. (ET) and ends on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. (ET). The final module/week ends **on Friday at 11:59 p.m. (ET)**.

Course Grading:

Course Requirements Checklist	10
4-MAT Book Reviews (3 each at 120)	360
Discussion Boards (4 at 50)	200
Personal Statement of Worship	70
Annotated Bibliography	70
Project–Ministry Eval.	100
Project–Summative	<u>200</u>
Total	1010

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
940-	920-	900-	860-	840-	820-	780-	760-	740-	700-	680-	679-
1010	939	919	899	859	839	819	779	759	739	699	and below

Course Assignments:

Textbook readings and lecture presentations

Course Requirements Checklist

After reading the Course Checklist and Student Expectations, the student will complete the related checklist found in Module/Week 1.

Discussion Board Forums (4)

Discussion boards are collaborative learning experiences. Therefore, the student must create a thread in response to the provided prompt for each forum. Each line must be at least 350-400 words and demonstrate course-related knowledge. At least three citations in the current Turabian format are required for each thread, and 2-3 biblical principles must be integrated. In addition to the line, the student must reply to at least two classmates' threads. Each reply must be 150-200 words and include at least 1 citation in the current Turabian format.

Thread Prompt: Reflecting on each week's Reading and Study material, write about at least two themes pertaining to the connection listed below. In particular, expound upon themes you may have never thought of before or disagree with. How do these themes change or affirm your perspective on the relationship between worship and the week's topic? What might you do differently in a worship service from what you previously did?

Reply Prompt: Review your classmates' threads and reply with constructive feedback or criticism. Do you agree or disagree with the viewpoints taken, and why?

Week 2/Discussion Board 1 Prompt: How does worship inform your interaction with others in the congregation and community?

Week 3/Discussion Board 2 Prompt: Explain your philosophy of worship regarding the congregation and community.

Week 5/Discussion Board 3 Prompt: Define the correlation between artist and minister.

Week 7/Discussion Board 4 Prompt: Explain how theology, philosophy, and methodology are involved in your daily ministry.

4-MAT Book Reviews:

The student will complete a review of 3 texts during the course. Each review will be completed using the 4-MAT review method. Each review must be at least 1,200 words. The student must use at least three footnotes from each book reviewed in the current Turabian format.

Personal Statement of Worship:

This paper will reveal the student's theology of worship. This paper must be at least 400-600 words and expound on the biblical basis, theological background, and doctrinal concepts of worship. The goal is to document one's comprehension currently so that understanding the coursework should fill any "holes." At least 2-3 citations from scholarly sources should be included, with two biblical references as applicable. Include perspectives on how worship applies to personal/private, family, and ministry opportunities.

Annotated Bibliography:

In preparation for the Final Project–Final Submission, the student will create a list of at least 10-12 references in the current Turabian format. At least five references must be from peer-reviewed and scholarly journals or books written in the last 12 years. At least three references must be from the provided bibliography. For each reference, a short rationale of between 50-125 words must be included, articulating why the reference is selected for the Project.

Ministry Evaluation Project:

This study will incorporate a self-evaluation of the various historical changes in worship in their place of ministry, an overview of their leadership style as it applies to the position, and a plan of action for addressing those changes and challenges in the church. This paper must be 8-10 pages, in the current Turabian format, and include documentation from 5-7 references.

Summative/Final Project:

The student will write a 16–18-page research paper about worship leadership patterns throughout history, emphasizing relationships and their influence on ministry. The paper will follow the current Turabian format and cite at least 8-10 scholarly resources. The page count does not include the title page, table of contents, bibliography, or appendices.

Policies:

Late Assignment Policy:

Course Assignments, including discussion boards, exams, and other graded assignments, should be submitted on time. If the student cannot complete an assignment on time, then s/he must contact the instructor immediately by email.

Assignments that are submitted after the due date without prior approval from the instructor will receive the following deductions:

1. Late assignments submitted within one week after the due date will receive up to a 10% deduction.
2. Assignments submitted more than one week after and less than two weeks late will receive up to 20% deduction.
3. Assignments submitted two weeks late or after the course's final date will not be accepted outside of exceptional circumstances (e.g., death in the family, significant personal health issues), which will be reviewed case-by-case basis by the instructor.

4. Group projects, including group discussion board threads and/or replies and assignments, will not be accepted after the due date outside of extraordinary circumstances (e.g., death in the family, significant personal health issues), which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the instructor.

Appendix D: Undergraduate Course Overviews and Learning Outcomes

Module/Week 1: What is Worship?

Overview: The whole of God's creation was calculated to worship God and glorify Him only. Since God created man specifically for a relationship with Him, wholeness and completeness can only be found in communion with God. This module will define biblical worship and provide foundations to construct a biblical theology and doctrine of worship.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Explore biblical worship as found in Scripture.
2. Construct a working worship theology document.
3. Analyze historical trends and patterns in worship theology, philosophy, and methodology.

Module/Week 2: Methodological Transitions

Overview: "Worship wars" continue in various evangelistic churches worldwide. Melding traditional with contemporary styles of music provides additional challenges for the worship leader. In this module, students will examine the methodological transitions in church music concerning conventional and modern worship genres.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Analyze transition trends in modern church ministry regarding various worship styles.
2. Contrast historical data concerning worship transitions.
3. Assess the ability of transition success for current church models compared to biblical patterns.

Module/Week 3: Philosophical Transitions

Overview: Theological truths inform one's philosophical perspective. However, leaders often are pressured to appease or placate the congregation instead of following biblical mandates and models to lead in worship. In this module, students will distinguish the purpose of philosophical ministry strategies.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Compare the benefits and liabilities of the Church's approach to generational worship.
2. Evaluate the benefits of multigenerational worship for the evangelical church.
3. Appraise philosophical approaches in current worship ministry.

Module/Week 4: Theological Basis for Transitions

Overview: Technology has become a crucial part of worship for many churches, regardless of worship style. Many worshipers sometimes object to sensory overload, while others seem unhindered. In this module, you will inventory the technological transitions in worship and apply a biblical perspective that maintains "balance and clarity when evaluating the needs of the congregational context."¹

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of technology in current worship avenues.
2. Analyze the societal influences of technology on current worship models for the express purpose of next-generational proselytization.

¹ John D. Kinchen, III., "Module/Week 3 – Where Method and Philosophy Meet," Accessed November 8, 2021, from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia: WRSP 840 B01, Module Overview.

Module/Week 5: Artist/Minister-led Worship

Overview: Many famous worship artists find themselves walking the tightrope between artistry and ministry, which has developed into the position of artist worship leader. In this module, students will explore this role, evaluate the various aspects, and define the attributes of the twenty-first century worship leader.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Appraise the role of the artist-worship leader in the Evangelical church.²
2. Explore the various features of considering this artist-driven position.

Module/Week 6: Theological, Philosophical, and Methodological Discussions: Part 1

Overview: Theology informs philosophy, which, in turn, designs methodology. In this module, you will discuss “the multifaceted skill sets of the worship leader and identify specific areas of worship ministry that these skills uniquely address.”³ You will also examine the worship leader’s changing role in the Evangelical church and the abilities required to address these transitions.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Analyze the changing skills in the worship leader area over the position's history.
2. Assess the transitional role of the twenty-first century worship leader

Module/Week 7: Theological, Philosophical, and Methodological Discussions: Part 2

Overview: Worship leaders need training in music, doctrine, leadership, and team management, all of which require time and effort from the leader. In this module, you will appraise the various

² John D. Kinchen, III., “Module/Week 4 – When Pragmatism Takes First Place,” Accessed November 15, 2021, from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia: WRSP 840 B01, Module Outcomes.

³ John D. Kinchen, III., “Module/Week 6 – Theology, Philosophy, and Methodology: Part I,” Accessed November 29, 2021, from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia: WRSP 840 B01, Module Overview.

practical training areas in worship leader preparation. “You will further discover the theologically sound, philosophically centered, and methodologically practical curriculum needs of the worship leader.”⁴

⁴ John D. Kinchen, III., “Module/Week 7 – Theology, Philosophy, and Methodology: Part II,” Accessed December 6, 2021, from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia: WRSP 840 B01, Module Overview.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Evaluate possible curricula to train the worship leader.
2. Propose areas of training for worship leaders in the current church.

Module/Week 8: Application of What We've Learned

Overview: Application of knowledge requires redelivery and synthesis of the acquired knowledge, from which you will distinguish worship leadership patterns throughout history. The practices emphasize relationships and their influence on ministry. In this module, you will synthesize the importance relationships have on ministry throughout history concerning the current church's theological, philosophical, and methodological transitions.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Differentiate current influences on worship leadership in comparison to influences in decades past.
2. Propose worship leader training curricula that best address current church model transitions.

Appendix E: What Is Worship? Lecture 1 from Course

As worship leaders, we choose to engage. As Believers, we are commanded to partake. It requires internal motivation, but what are we being drawn to do? In this lecture, we will discuss the meaning of worship and what it truly is and is not, to understand better what we are called to do and Whom we are called to worship after.

According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.), worship is defined as “reverence offered to a divine being” as well as the “act of expressing such reverence.” Noel Due gives his perspective: “God’s decision to create the universe is the effective cause of worship. He creates, and that which springs into being through his Word and Spirit as a result of his creative will, worship.”¹ John MacArthur says, “worship is any essential expression of service rendered unto God by a soul who loves and extols Him for who He is. Real worship, therefore, should be the full-time, nonstop activity of every believer, and the aim of the exercise ought to be to please God, not merely entertain the worshiper.”² As we seek to understand what exactly worship is to be, the origins of the word would be helpful.

The Hebrew word for worship is *shachah*, which means “to stoop or kneel in reverence,” and the Greek word for worship is *proskuneo*, meaning “to express deep respect or adoration.” To bow one’s self before another, specifically God, and express profound reverence or admiration. There is much more to worship than simply admiring someone or something. However, one must understand what worship is and is not.

¹ Noel Due, *Created for Worship* (Christian Focus Publications, Ltd.,: Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland, 2005), 35.

² John F. MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 10.

What worship is not: worship is not a style of music, for music is only a portion of worship. Worship is not a set of guidelines we utilize to conjure up the Spirit of God. Worship is not a program or routine set of actions that will merit God's favor or induce His presence.

In Elmer Towns' and Vernon Whaley's book, *Worship Through the Ages*, the writers define worship as stated,

[True worship] is not measured by the songs we sing; by the atmosphere, space, or environment we create in which to worship; by the number of Scriptures, we read; or by the technology we deem important for facilitating worship. Worship is not determined by our preference for praise band, pipe organ, orchestra, or acoustic instruments. It is not defined by vocal selections...or by a musician's instrumental skill. In fact, musical expressions may not be essential for biblical worship at all.³

So, worship is not a style nor a preference; it cannot be relegated to the service music, traditional or contemporary. Worship is not a one-way street but requires two parties. It is not for specific kinds of people, but it is for one particular group of people only.

What worship is: Worship is public and private. It is corporate and individual, but not simultaneously. It is "usually identified with certain public religious activities, such as going to church or more particularly singing hymns, saying prayers, listening to sermons, or participating in the Lord's Supper."⁴ Vernon Whaley defines worship as "our instinctive response in knowing God personally"⁵ and "when God is with us, [and] when He is present, worship is our immediate response."⁶

³ Elmer L. Towns, and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 3-4.

⁴ David E. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 16.

⁵ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 3.

⁶ Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 3.

Worship is the immediate response to God revealing Himself to His creation, individually or corporately. Communion with God is experienced and provided within worship, and a relationship with Him deepens. The desire to learn more about Him is fostered as He is known more. This relationship is cyclical and reciprocal; “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19, KJV).

Worship’s best definition came directly from Jesus. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, NIV). But how? How does one propose acting with all heart, soul, mind, and strength? To focus on all those areas is all-encompassing, life-changing, and certainly overwhelming! It requires more than lip service or a face-value commitment. Loving God in a way that requires stepping out of one’s comfort zone involves courage, trust, and obedience. It is foundational or “formational—shaping us as fully devoted followers.”⁷ It tends to be “transformational—changing us from old to new, dead to living.”⁸

One cannot remain in old habits when worshiping God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24, NIV). Worship changes lives from the inside out. “Worship is relational strengthening our bond with Christ...and with others.”⁹ After spending time with God, one’s demeanor and countenance appear differently. When encountering others, they will and should see a difference in the worshiper. Worship should be “missional demonstrated by our commitment to love our neighbor”¹⁰ and, in doing so, is “reproducible,” as others are taught and trained how to worship.

⁷ Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 4.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

As a result, “worship is measured by repentance”¹¹ because God cannot look on sin when it separates from Him. To restore communion with Him, one must confess sin, and God promises that “He is faithful and just to forgive our sins” (1 John 1:9, NKJV).

Having defined what worship is and what it is not, how does one engage in worship? What actions are considered biblical worship? In John 4, Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman at the well: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24, NIV). First, the Spirit He mentions in this passage is the Holy Spirit. To worship “in spirit,” worshipers must “yield to the Holy Spirit, [be] led by the Holy Spirit, and ... submit to the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.”¹² Through obedience and submission, the “fruit of the spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23, NIV) are cultivated, and the worshiper experiences growth. If properly tended, this fruit will demonstrate the Holy Spirit’s influence on the Christian. From guiding actions and controlling emotional responses to the feelings that become the fertile soil of desire—“all totally dedicated to honoring Jesus.”¹³

In addition to worshiping in spirit, one should also worship “in truth.” God’s Word, the Bible, is the Truth by which all things are measured. “Our public and private worship must be guided by God’s Word.”¹⁴ Any counsel from others should be sifted through and compared to God’s Word. Any decisions should be made through prayer and reading the Bible. To seek wisdom or truth from anyone who does not spend time in God’s Word is dangerous. Those who choose immature spiritual counsel risk disobedience by not worshiping “in truth.”

¹¹ Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

“Biblical worship encompasses our heart’s desire, our love for God, and our commitment to worship in spirit (our emotions) and in truth (our intellect).”¹⁵ Loving God with one’s whole heart involves emotions and affections fixed on Him. Loving God with the soul demonstrates the innermost being, the uniqueness of self as God created him. Loving God with one’s mind means that every thought, consideration, and rumination focuses on Him and His plan. Loving God with all strength requires physical actions to reflect His love and all efforts throughout every aspect of life.

As a result, God’s revelation of Himself causes worship to occur. Hence, we love and obey Him and are excited to spend time with Him. Serving Him is an outpouring of love for Him and an expression of worship. As we serve Him, our efforts reflect the goodness He is and with which He fills us.

Noel Due says, “worship is not a static event, but a dynamic one.”¹⁶ “Worship is often viewed as the way humans approach God.”¹⁷ However, worship is not just an activity to engage in daily during the week. It is a lifestyle and mindset of bringing glory to God and honoring Him as Creator, Savior, Lord, and King. It is a “life orientation...a divine and human action.”¹⁸ To rephrase Whaley’s definition: worship is an immediate response to God’s revelation of Himself to His creation. “We are born with the need to be seen and approved. And God wants to give us His divine approval...Our worship fulfills His plan for our lives.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Towns and Whaley, *Worship through the Ages*, 5.

¹⁶ Due, *Created for Worship*, 23.

¹⁷ Gerald L. Borchert, *Worship in the New Testament: Divine Mystery and Human Response* (St. Louis, IL: Chalice Press, 2008), 3.

¹⁸ Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 17-19.

¹⁹ Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 8.