

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Modern-Day Idol Worship at Life Changers Church: How It Was Identified and Replaced
with True Worship of God**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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May 2024

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This DMIN project ventures to establish and further a ministry design rooted in God's Word that instructs, equips, and enhances Christian lives. The project offers a structure by which God's Word can renew and transform people's minds. The ten-week project intervention utilized a weekly Bible class, interviews, questionnaires, and observations to collect information from seven participants at Life Changers Church. The purpose was to examine the problem of modern-day idol worship and foster motivation, commitment, and reverence for God by applying spiritual awareness through teaching from an intentionally designed worship handbook. This action-based research project endeavored to link the application gap in modern-day idol worship research by observing the progress and results of participants striving to become committed worshipers who revere God. The research results demonstrate usefulness to the investigator while considering applying the concepts within this research. The project disclosed that the congregant-pastor partnership combined with congregant-focused mind-renewing modes of worship that address idolatry and encourage Christians to become committed worshipers who revere God. The results indicate that pastors can impact and positively affect congregants by helping them recognize the modern-day distracting idols so they can combat and replace them with true worship of God.

Keywords: awareness, commitment, idol worship, modern-day idols, reverence, transparency, worship

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
LCC	<i>Life Changers Church</i>
Q	<i>Question</i>
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
AMP	<i>Amplified Bible</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

God cares about worship, and He instructs in His Word how people should worship. Biblically directed worship is essential. The motto for worship is to preach the Bible, sing the Bible, pray the Bible, and read the Bible. Christians must follow God's commands for how to worship Him. Since the beginning of time, God has commanded His creation to worship Him, starting with His angelic hosts. God desired willing worship, and He received it until Lucifer, His archangel, rebelled and decided he wanted to be like God, take His place on the throne, and receive the worship that only God deserves. Lucifer wanted to be the object of worship because of his pride. Lucifer/Satan was cast out of heaven, (Isa 14:12–15 King James Version), then he influenced Adam and Eve to disobey God's commands as he had, remove God from the throne in their hearts, and replace Him with the object of their fleshly desires. Satan's deception caused the fall of mankind, which ushered into the world the sin of idol worship (Gen 3:1–6).

How God's commands are followed indicates the believer's knowledge of who He is and how seriously they take Him. Following God's biblical instructions on worship indicates obedience and love for Him and provides the best way to know Him intimately. Not following God's commands for worship indicates disobedience to Him and hatred toward Him. When Christians take how God is to be worshiped into their own hands, it is counted as rebelliousness.

Not following God's commands for worship is dishonoring the true and living God and sets up the believer to worship some idol that they invent to worship instead of God.¹ Idol

¹ Ligon Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 31–32.

worship is breaking the covenant with God, rejecting God, and makes Him angry and jealous, which epitomizes how not to worship Him (Exod 32–34). Modern-day idol worship exists; it is a sin of the flesh, and it should be addressed. Modern-day idol worship should be taught so believers can identify it in their life and resist it (Gal 5:19–21). If Christians want to avoid disobedience to God, especially in idol worship, they should seek Scripture and teachings on the subject matter. Then, they can apply the principles that are pleasing to God, which will prepare them to enter the kingdom of heaven (Gal 5:19–21). It would also help them worship God the way He wants to be worshiped, which is in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24).

Ministry Context

Life Changers Intl. Ministries was established in 1998 in Shaker Heights, Ohio, by Dr. Keith Eric Ivy and the researcher Franzetta L. Ivy. Life Changers' first church service started in the home of Dr. Ivy and Franzetta. As the congregation grew, they moved into a storefront building in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Ivy believed that lives could only be changed by the power of God, which is why he was on a mission to evangelize and disciple new Christians so they could have a life-changing experience through worshiping God. Dr. Ivy relocated to Georgia in 2002 with his family and continued the ministry. Worship has always been important at Life Changers because the Bible instructs why worship is paramount to God. The Bible instructs who to worship, who should worship, how to worship, and who not to worship. It has always been important that the congregation at Life Changers is taught about worship and the importance of participating in worship as an act of obedience to God because it gives Him what He requires and deserves (Exod 20). At the beginning of the ministry and for many years, worship was taught and modeled as something done primarily through singing and music. Scriptures such as Psalm

100 and Psalm 150 were used as examples of worship. Also, King David was used as an example of a worshiper of God (2 Sam 15:32).

When the researcher pursued a higher education at Liberty University, she became aware of what true worship is. The researcher became aware of the depths and dimensions of how much God cares about how He is worshiped. Through studying at Liberty University, the researcher became aware of the dangers of modern-day idol worship, a lack of teaching on the topic, and how it hinders true worship of God (John 4:24). Life Changers is a non-denominational church, its roots are in the Baptist and Church of God in Christ traditions.

The social characteristics of the people involved in the research are predominately African Americans from children to senior citizens. The researcher's relationship with the congregation is as their pastor. The most predictable rituals that are central to the culture of the congregation are meeting for church on Sunday mornings and mid-week Bible teaching. The congregation partakes in the Lord's Table, baptism, and praise and worship songs that consist of some hymns and modern music. Tithes and offerings are collected, congregational prayer and Scripture reading are exercised before praise and worship singing, followed by church announcements. The sermon follows thereafter, then an altar call and benediction. Those rituals are liturgical worship.² Some activities contribute to shaping congregants and are persuasive as they relate to how congregants perceive themselves. There are activities like prayer groups, teaching summer Bible school for children, street reach ministry, prison ministry, and volunteering at homeless shelters. Also, congregants make donations and serve the community with their time. There are some representations that describe who individuals are, some things,

² Benjamin K. Forrest, Walter C. Kaiser, and Vernon M. Whaley, *Biblical Worship Theology for God's Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 65.

events, and people that convey a message linked to the ideals of the congregants. Those representations are the cross, the church, the Lord's Table, baptismal, and the resurrection service on Easter Sunday. There are also, Christmas plays, the singing and music portion of service, and sporting events. Some people linked to the ideals of the congregants are Jesus, Christian artists, famous pastors or bishops, politicians, secular artists, sports players, and celebrities.

Some routine habits that describe what the congregation believes are most important include praying, reading their Bible, working, singing, and gathering to hear the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Daily devotion at home, meditation, and repentance are important. Partaking in the Sacraments is important as well.

Also, spreading the gospel of Jesus is important. Relationship styles the congregation seems to value most include having prayer partners or prayer groups, Bible study groups, and encouraging each other to stay with Jesus. Congregants appreciate being invited to share their feelings and concerns. Congregants believe it is important to confess their faults to one another and grant forgiveness and grace when someone falls short of God's Word. Congregants treasure fellowshiping outside of the church, whether at a restaurant, their homes, movies, or some type of event. Showing love for one another is what congregants care about the most, loving their neighbor as themselves and treating them the way they would like to be treated. Mentoring someone in areas of need, challenging one another so they can discover and walk in God's purpose for their life, and utilizing their full potential are important to congregants. Spending quality time with their families and supporting them in their endeavors, whether in careers, sports, ministry, education, or the arts, are important to congregants. Taking the opportunity and experiencing fellowship with God, loving God, and worshiping God are cherished by

congregants. Congregants' relationship with God is founded on love and helps them nurture their relationships with others, which helps build a long, strong, loving, and happy spiritual relationship that is pleasing to God (John 13:34–35).

The beliefs and ideas that best describe what Life Changers congregants think they should represent as practicing members of Life Changers are to love God, serve God, and put Him first in their lives through Jesus Christ instead of their fleshly desires. Also, they believe they should worship God only. Congregants understand they should be loyal in church attendance and fellowship with other believers. They accept that they should be a witness for Christ wherever they go, and that they should study the Scriptures to live a lifestyle consistent with the principles of Jesus. Giving their tithes and giving cheerful offerings for the work of the church are important to congregants. They understand that they should serve their community and love others. Congregants recognize that having a consistent prayer life, praying for their pastor, and others are expected of them.

Significant biblical stories are profound truths to the Life Changers congregation. The congregation has heard those stories throughout their lives, and they have helped build their faith and caused them to trust and depend on God. The stories have caused them to serve and be a witness to God. They have brought them to repentance of their sins and caused them to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They have helped change their lives, which is why they worship God and strive to be obedient to His Word. Those stories give the congregation a sense of who God is, who they are, why they were created, and why things are the way they are.³

The congregation believes the profound truths of the Bible. They worship God and strive to be obedient to Him but there is a lack of consistency during church service, and liturgical

³ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 32.

worship seems to be ritualistic. When it's time for prayer, sometimes the prayer sounds rehearsed and not heartfelt by the person leading the prayer. Sometimes there is a Scripture reading, the reader reads without any enthusiasm or feeling, and it seems like they do not believe what they are reading based on their demeanor. Sometimes during praise and worship singing, it seems like it is more of a performance by certain individuals rather than intimate worship between God and the worshiper.

The worshipers sometimes seem to be in awe of a singer's vocal gift, how they sing the songs, and the response from the congregation instead of being in awe of God, the gift giver. During the service, some congregants are on their cell phones watching sports games, on social media, or taking selfies. They are preoccupied with other things instead of being attentive and participating in the worship service. Some congregants are always late for church or do not attend regularly. This makes it seem like church fellowship and spiritual edification is not a priority to them.

Problem Presented

The Bible instructs that God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is the only true and living God, and He alone is worthy of worship. Scripture instructs how God wants to be worshiped. The way God should be worshiped is specified in His written and revealed Word. Worship should be Scripture-filled and directed. Worship should be structured by the Bible. Idolatry is a fundamental problem of the heart. Biblical teaching on idolatry affects how the believer approaches worshipping God and shifts them in a direction to embrace the principles of God.⁴

⁴ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 68, 76.

There is a spiritual disconnect at Life Changers Church between God and the congregants. Those who lead worship service with prayer, Scripture reading, and praise and worship singing do not always create an atmosphere for an intimate visitation from God. They are supposed to lead the people into worship by spiritually plowing the hearts of the congregants to prepare them to receive the seeds of God's preached Word. Some of the congregants' approaches to worshipping God have been ritualistic and inconsistent. Their hearts have been infiltrated by modern-day idols. The idols that have infiltrated the congregant's hearts have distracted and hindered them from worshipping God the right way, in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24). Some congregants are self-absorbed, stuck in the traditions of the past, and they want to worship God the way they want to worship Him instead of offering Him acceptable worship according to Scripture (Rom 12:1–2). The congregants at Life Changers lack consistency in true worship and reverence for God, and they do not consistently reflect the image of Christ.

Based on conversations the researcher had with some of the congregants through pastoral counseling or just casual conversation revealed that congregants seem to lack consistency in their personal prayer life, Scripture reading, and intimate praise and worship singing to God. The congregant's lack of consistency seems to be caused by the distractions of work relationships, job-related issues, and family activities. Also, financial problems and personal relationship problems contribute to the lack of personal worship. Some congregants have self-image issues and are distracted and influenced by social media. They feel pressured to put their focus on other things or people instead of making God their focus. The congregants seem to be guided by what's going on in the world and have allowed some modern-day idols (self-will, pride, addictions, social media, video games, money, disobedience) to take their focus away from God and alternate God as the center of their life and worship. The problem is a lack

of teaching on modern-day idol worship at Life Changers Church, rendering a lack of committed worshipers who revere God.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to implement a worship handbook that motivates congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God. The worship handbook will be focused on instructions that are theologically and doctrinally grounded in Christian worship. The handbook will have instructions developed for the purpose of presenting Christians with Scripture and other biblically based sources. The handbook can be used in teachings of Bible studies at church, at home, or for personal study and meditation. The purpose of the handbook is to reveal what God requires as acceptable, true worship, and what God says is unacceptable worship. The worship handbook will help the believer discern whether their worship is biblically structured. The handbook will explain that Christians must remember God's commandments for worship in the past (Old and New Testaments) to worship well, not remembering in a negative way or longing, but with the interest of remembering, proclaiming, and understanding what makes God worthy of worship. Seeing God of the past is seeing Him with clarity, which may be difficult to grasp in the present and future. To worship, Christians must do as the Israelites did: They remembered and taught the past. "Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9 KJV). Jesus instructed His followers to remember Him during the celebration of the church's Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23–26). Teaching and remembering the past starts with teaching Scripture. The teaching and remembering should not just be a part of Sunday school, sermons, and Bible studies. If churches reduce teaching to only sermons and

classes without incorporating testimonials from congregants, a broad number of opportunities will not be experienced.⁵

Teaching should not be just ritualistic teaching (Deut 6:4–9). It should be a part of a Christian's daily life; it should come naturally, like breathing. Remembering and teaching should embody what acceptable and unacceptable worship was in Old and New Testament scriptures, and in the believer's worship history. The handbook will teach some worship principles from the Old and New Testaments about how all God's people should worship Him and about how He loves and delivers them (2 Chr 20:18–29; Acts 16:26–34), to show how God's people experienced the work and movement of God in their lives. The past has a lot to teach Christians today about true worship. The handbook will instruct the believer to remember how God was revealed in their life. The handbook will instruct Christians to set up memorials to remind them how God stepped into their lives and intervened so that they might have hope and confidence to believe He can and will do the same in the future. The memorials will assist the believer in worship, and, when offered as testimonies, they can also help the community of believers worship.⁶

Basic Assumptions

The researcher assumes the participants are willing to participate in a research study concerning the ministry that could help them grow spiritually. The participants will find the topic of the study interesting, important, and one that needs to be explored. The participants will agree that there is a problem related to the lack of teaching on the research topic and that they will want resources such as a worship handbook specific to confronting the research problem. The

⁵ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 78–79.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

participants will agree that there should be a greater commitment to true worship, reverence for God, and that there is a need to find solutions to the research problem. The participants will be committed to the research process until it is completed. The participants will give truthful feedback on the research analysis. The participants will be available when needed. The methodologies for collecting research data will be appropriate and sufficient to obtain the results needed to formulate solutions to the research problem.

The research data will be accurate and valid. The study will go according to plan and will be completed promptly. The study will render satisfactory and beneficial solutions to the research problem and fulfill the purpose of the DMIN action research project. The researcher assumes that the handbook will encourage the participants to search the Old and New Testaments for daily for stories about acceptable and unacceptable worship.

The participants will be encouraged by the stories that tell how God delivered His people because they had a lifestyle of worship. The handbook will prompt the participants to remember those stories, believing God will do the same for them. The handbook will help the participants identify unacceptable worship in their lives, repent, and worship God acceptably. The handbook will help the participants remember when God delivered them in their times of need, giving them hope that He will continue to provide, protect, and heal them. The handbook will encourage the participants to offer testimonials of God's faithfulness to His people in the scriptures. The participants will also give testimonials of God's faithfulness to them, so others will be provoked to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24).

Definitions

The definitions that follow are essential and related to worship practices at Life Changers Church and the proper conduct of this action research project. During this project, some of the

terms are used interchangeably to provide a clear understanding of what worship is and what it means at Life Changers Church. The key terms used in this project include biblical worship, commitment, covenant, idol worship, modern-day idols, reverence, and spiritual formation. They are significant to governing this research thesis project.

Biblical worship. Biblical worship is serving. It is serving God with the right attitude of love, humility, reverence, loyalty, and obedience. Also, God's commandment says to serve Him through other service relationships with justice and peace. Bowing before God is worship, according to the Bible which symbolizes acknowledgment of being a servant who is limited in knowledge and in power (Gen 24:48; 2 Chr 29:30).⁷ Worship is not merely an attitude; it is an action also. The Hebrew verb *hishtahawa* is translated as worship. *Haway* means to lay prostrate, which is the root behind *hishtahawa*. Another important word used to describe the act of worship is *abad*, a verb that means to make, to serve, and to do. The word the Bible uses to describe and emphasize worship is lively and define worship as serving and bowing down. Worship of God should be the goal in all the activities of someone's life. Worship is always executed by God's creation in response to the divine inventiveness of the supreme Creator. He created everything for them, starting in the Garden of Eden.⁸ Because God exists, worship exists, and humans were created in His image and likeness and for His glory.⁹

Commitment. This is unwavering fidelity. God expects exclusive worship. Loving God represents a covenant commitment identifiable by unwavering fidelity.

⁷ Avital Hazony Levi, "Worship: Bowing Down in the Service of God," *Religious Studies* 58, no. 3 (2022): 487–504.

⁸ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 31–32, 39, 44–45.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25–45.

God expects committed worshipers because of the things He has done and kept His covenant with His people.¹⁰ Daily reading of the Scriptures, daily devotionals, participation in weekly Bible studies, and a commitment to live out a lifestyle consistent with gospel teachings are hallmarks of a generation that saw itself as the people of the book.¹¹

Covenant. A contract or a binding is an arrangement between two or more parties. God freely made a covenant with humanity in the beginning under the condition of absolute obedience in which they would receive His blessings and not His punishment. The covenant and moral laws that were mediated through Moses at Mount Sinai to the people of Israel, which included the Ten Commandments, must be observed in the context of what preceded them. The covenantal God who created the earth and revealed Himself to Abraham, then to Moses. To understand the moral laws and covenants given to Abraham and Moses, Christians must always remember they naturally point forward to the coming of Christ.¹²

God redeemed His people so that they may worship Him the right way. Obedience corresponds with the worship of the true and living God and covenant-keeping.¹³

Idol worship. This is the worship of other gods. God forbids the worship of other gods in the Bible.¹⁴ Idolatry does not merely mean one thing. Idolatry means serving God in ways that are contrary to His commandments and written Word. Idolatry means adoration of images. Idol worship violates the first commandment. Idolatry is apostasy, abandoning God and Christian

¹⁰ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 100.

¹¹ Wendolyn Trozzo, "Towards Christian Education for Worship: Intentional Decoding for Connection and Participation," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 54, no. 1 (2020): 34–42.

¹² Brandon D. Crowe, *The Path of Faith: A Biblical Theology of Covenant and Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021) 3, 43, ProQuest E-book.

¹³ Crowe, *The Path of Faith*, 19, 45.

¹⁴ Levi, "Worship," 487–504.

virtues, substituting God and His Word for something else, whether internally in the heart and soul or externally. Idol worship is the worship of a creature. Idol worship leads people from God and the Christian faith and causes them to rely on and trust in others or one's works, strengths, and righteousness.¹⁵

Idol worship is not restricted to just humans; it is man-made systems and ideologies. It is wrong, and something that is warped.¹⁶ Idol worship may include worshiping angels, heavenly bodies, and demons with supernatural powers.¹⁷ Idolatry is religious ritualism, which is false worship and ritual hypocrisy.¹⁸ Will-worship is idolatry, which is worship in agreement with one's ideas; it is an act of self-worship and particularly the worship of one's will and wants.¹⁹

Modern-day idols. Modern-day idols are thoughts, loves, longings, desires, and expectations that humans worship in place of the true and living God. They trust and rely on them for identity and righteousness or okay-ness. Humans deify the outward appearance of anything that reflects their glory, worth, or beauty.²⁰ Those outward appearances are comprised of physique, homes, cars, people, ideas, things, consumerism, fame, celebrity, or money. Also, national pride, race, and weapons. These false idols and gods move and operate the political, economic, and cultural power. Humans bow down to their scintillating modern seductiveness. The strongest idol and competitor to God is self, self-righteous, self-love, self-worship, self-

¹⁵ Mina Soormally García, *Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire* (Chicago, IL: University Press of Colorado, 2019), 6, 11, 23–24, ProQuest E-book.

¹⁶ Dennis Okholm, *Learning Theology Through the Church's Worship: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 18, 119, ProQuest E-book.

¹⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Here Are Your Gods: Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times* (Albany, NY: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 11–14.

¹⁸ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 276.

¹⁹ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 46–47.

²⁰ Elyse M. Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 18, 83, ProQuest E-book.

reliance, and self-exaltation. These idols are loved more than God, they replace God, and they are loves that have gone wrong.²¹ Also, idols may be the boosting of human pride or the entertainment of seekers.²² People worshipped manmade images (in the Hebrew literature) that represented earthly materials. Crafted images born of human imaginations that are lifeless: they cannot see, hear, understand, or speak. They are gods and images of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. These idols are attributed divinity, power, and status by their worshipers because they do not have these things within themselves, and they are powerless (Ps 113:15–18).²³

Reverence. Reverence is sometimes synonymous with respect, reverence is a comprehension of human limitations that begins with the virtue of reverence and expands the scope to be in awe of what is believed to be beyond someone’s control, such as God, justice, nature, truth, and even death. Reverence is the virtue that suppresses human beings from attempting to act like gods. To fail to remember that one is only human and think that one can pretend to be like a god results in the opposite of reverence.²⁴

Spiritual formation. There are many definitions of spiritual formation, but for the sake of this thesis, spiritual formation for Christians is used. Spiritual formation, simply put, is the process of being changed to become more like Jesus. It is a gradual and ongoing process where personal change happens, and the believer grows spiritually. This change occurs because of the

²¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Here Are Your Gods: Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times* (Albany, NY: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 86, 116–118, 120, 124, 128, ProQuest E-book.

²² Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2019), 418, ProQuest E-book.

²³ Norman K. Swazo, *Destroying Idols: Revisioning the Meaning Of “God”* (Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 15–18.

²⁴ Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (New York, NY: University Press, Incorporated, 2014), 1, ProQuest E-book.

empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit leads the believer into transformation and conformity to the image of Christ. Spiritual formation and transformation are available to every Christian if they intentionally and honestly seek to be in the presence of God.²⁵

Limitations

Some limitations the researcher understands and is prepared for are that access to a specific population of the research study may not be granted or will only be available for a limited time. All or some of the participants may not be committed to completing the analysis. Some participants may not fully understand the research questions, which would prevent them from being transparent. Some participants may not agree that the research problem being addressed is valid. Some participants may not return research documents to the researcher on time or not at all, which will hinder the research findings. Some or all of the participants may not give truthful feedback, even though they will be anonymous in the research study findings to eliminate the risk of being viewed as spiritually immature or not being committed to God or the church. Some or all the participants may feel unwarranted pressure to go above and beyond what is asked of them, which may cause undue stress from the research analysis. The stress could cause a lack of enthusiasm for the research study. The researcher may not be able to access preferred documents that would aid the research study and strengthen the research outcome. The research methodology may not render accurate statistics and data needed to help the research project proposal outcome be successful and useful.

Delimitations

²⁵ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation Is... How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018), 12.

To accomplish the objective of this research project, the researcher will include participants ranging from teenagers to senior citizens. The researcher will not include children under the age of thirteen in the study because of a lack of attention span, limited life experience, limited worship experience, and for convenience. The researcher will include males and females as participants in the research project instead of one gender because the worship problem extends to males and females. The researcher will include open-ended response questionnaires and interviews for qualitative and strong data that will help obtain more helpful and profound feedback. The researcher will exclude surveys like the Likert scale responses because they may yield shallow and weak data unhelpful for this research project. The researcher will use the longitudinal research survey to observe and repeatedly measure the development or spiritual growth of the participants over some time throughout the action research intervention. The researcher will exclude the cross-sectional research survey because it yields results for only one moment in time, not considering before-and-after results.²⁶

Thesis Statement

People were created to worship God, but due to the fall of mankind, they will be challenged to worship God by worshipping what they deem most important and highly revere in their lives. If someone goes to a professional football game, a political rally, or a rock concert, in fundamental primal ways, worship is happening. Worship is foundational to who people are.²⁷

Christians are to revere and worship God. He intended for His creation to worship only Him and not any form of idol. He alone is worthy to place as most important above all else

²⁶ Jos W. R. Twisk, *Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis for Epidemiology: A Practical Guide* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1, ProQuest E-book.

²⁷ Manuel Luz, *Honest Worship: From False Self to True Praise* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 16, ProQuest E-book.

(Exod 34:14). People will act on what they have been taught and what they believe. The way the Christian mind views worship must be shaped by Scripture. When someone's mind is shaped by Scripture, their actions will reflect what they are taught and what they believe. They will be able to resist worldly influences. They will have the commitment to God and reverence for God to present themselves as acceptable worship only to God (Rom 12:1–2). The foundation for worship is provided by the scriptures. All Christian worship, be it praise, devotional time, or acts of service to others, should be founded on the believer's meditation on Scripture. Only worship that comes from the deep impact and penetration of Scripture will begin to mirror worship defined by the Bible.²⁸

Christians must be in the right relationship with God, and being in the right relationship with God entails worshiping God the right way. Worshiping God the right way comes from knowing what He has done and knowing Him. Knowing God results in teaching others who He is. Judges 2:12–13 teaches idolatry was the cause of the Israelite's oppression. God was forsaken and they worshiped other gods. Although contemporary Christians hold worship as primarily an action, in Judges, the author links it mostly with reverence toward God (*Yahweh*), which results in lively covenant fidelity. Judges teach that if the people of God revere Him, they will resist idolatry and receive God's blessing by rightly praising Him, loving Him, and worshiping Him. Loving God represents a covenant commitment to Him signifying unfaltering fidelity. God deserves and expects to be worshiped alone.²⁹

People are what they worship. If they worship a man-made idol or someone other than God, they will become like them, spiritually lifeless or weak. Their flesh will be in control, and

²⁸ Forrest, Kaiser, Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

they will manifest the fleshly attributes of what they worship (Gal 5:19–21). If people worship God, they will have life because He is the creator of all; life comes from God (John 10:10). Worshiping God causes believers to bear the fruit of the Spirit, indicating they are in Christ (Gal 5:22–26). God wants obedience and trust. If Christians love Him, they will trust and obey only Him (John 14:15). Trusting and obeying God is essential to worshiping Him.³⁰ Christians should be taught to serve and worship God alone, with awe and reverence (Heb 12:28). If Life Changers Church incorporates a worship handbook explaining modern-day idol worship and true biblical worship, then LCC will foster committed worshipers who revere God.

³⁰ Forrest, Kaiser, Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 93–95.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

God is the only true and living God. This is revealed in His written Word, and He is worthy of praise and worship (Rev 4:11). Christians should respond in awe of God's power and majesty and bow down and worship Him.¹ God cares and is serious about how He is worshiped. He wants reverence, commitment, and obedience from His people.² God's instructions for acceptable and unacceptable worship are found in Scripture.³ God's regulative principles or governing instructions (Rom 7:22; 1 John 5:2–3; John 4:23–24) should be taught regularly to foster obedience to Him. Those who love Him, obey Him; and those who hate Him, disobey Him. Idolatry is an enemy of true worship of God; it is worshiping someone or something else other than God that may or may not have a visual form.⁴

Idol worship distorts the mind and invalidates God's Word, and this causes disobedience (2 Cor 10:4–5). Idol worship is breaking the covenant with God, is a betrayal of God, and is considered spiritual adultery. Christians should allow Scripture to shape their minds and worship so they can worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). If Scripture shapes the minds of Christians and their worship, they will believe it, become transformed, and reflect God (Rom 12:1–2). Christians will also have the power to resist idol worship (Eph 6:10–11).

¹ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 46.

² Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 30–31.

³ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 52.

⁴ Paul E. Engle, *When God Draws Near: Exploring Worship from Seven Summits* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 81, ProQuest E-book.

Literature Review

Manuel Luz writes that humans were created to worship something; worship is ingrained in their souls.⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright declares that God’s people are required to invite people from every nation to worship the one, true, and living God who is the Creator and Redeemer. Along with all creation, people are to give praise and glory to this one God.⁶ The literature review covers the topic of worship, what is worship, who to worship, why someone worships, who not to worship (idols), and how to worship according to Scripture. Worship is covered from a Christian perspective.

Origins of Biblical Worship

Worship is to revere and honor God; to acknowledge Him as worthy of praise.⁷ “God is worthy of worship.”⁸ The word majesty means greatness in Latin. To ascribe majesty to someone is to confess there is greatness in that person and voice reverence for it. When majesty is applied to God, it is an invitation to worship. He is great. He should be adored and worshiped because He is worthy of praise.⁹ Worship is personal, and Christians come to know their personal God. Worship is not an attitude; it is an act. The Bible defines worship as bowing down to serve.

Worship is responsive. In the beginning, Adam and Eve had roles of activity such as cultivating, having children, practicing dominion, and obeying. Everything Adam and Eve did that God told them to do was in response to His prompt divine revelation. God’s active work in

⁵ Luz, *Honest Worship*, 16.

⁶ Wright, *Here Are Your Gods*, 2.

⁷ Henry T. Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God Knowing & Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2021), 27, Pro Quest E-Book.

⁸ K. H. A. Esmail, *God: A Brief Philosophical Introduction II* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Art and Science Inc., 2019), 10, ProQuest E-book.

⁹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 82–83, ProQuest E-book.

creation inspired the psalmist of Israel to worship Him repeatedly (Ps 33). The majesty revealed in God's creative act should inspire worldwide worship. That worship should be rooted in God's omnipotence, nature, and worth.¹⁰

In the mysterious story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3–5), Abel's worship offering of the first of his flock was acceptable to God, but Cain's worship offering of the fruit of the earth was not; it was deficient worship.¹¹ In the Bible, there are many accounts of how humanity was involved in worship and the specifications on how worship should be carried out by the people who served and called on the name YHWH. Worship in the Old Testament through sacrifice was communal and an act of worship that was most visible. Above all, it was a recognition of sovereignty, thanksgiving, covenant, and restoring relationships through sacrifices for atonement. In response to God's divine creation, worship through offerings or sacrifices definitively expressed and established the awe, majesty, divinity, and power of God. The offering of a sacrifice, whether a living animal or fruit from the earth, was worship to YHWH; it represented the offering of oneself to God. What inaugurated the offering of worship often involved the killing of an animal, a life that was offered in the place of the worshiper. The sacrifice was sliced, laid on the altar, and burned. The smoke would go up to God as a pleasing aroma.¹²

Noah built an altar to God in response to Him saving his life, his family, and the animals in the flood (Gen 8:20–22). Abraham built an altar to God (Gen 12:7–8). Along with the offering of worship by using altars, worship through singing God's praises, and the offering of thanksgiving through prayer and instruments shaped a part of worship in the Old Testament.

¹⁰ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 43–44, 46.

¹¹ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 13.

¹² Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 42, 46, 60.

Praise is proclaimed, declared, and told, which is represented throughout the Psalms. The Psalms instruct how, where, and why to praise.¹³

God is consistent, real, unchanging, and present. He is the only one worthy of adoration, thanksgiving, praise, and worship. The only reasonable response is to worship and serve Him now and for eternity.¹⁴ Worship has a rhythm, and it is that God reveals His glory and in return, worshipers respond by giving Him glory.¹⁵ Worship is in response to the saving acts of God: cosmic, personal, and historical.¹⁶ Everything a person does during worship is in response to God's divine presence and self-revelation.¹⁷ Worship is a response to human desires and needs. In this perspective, the human being is regarded as a praying animal or a homo liturgicus.¹⁸ To be human is to be a practicing or liturgical animal, a being whose deep affections are shaped by their worship practices which form habits of desire.¹⁹

God initiates the worship gathering. Moses was summoned by God to meet on a mountaintop and charged to facilitate the meeting between the people and their God. God set the rules, the time, the place, and what the people were to do when they gathered. The gathering is for Sunday service by divine invitation, a meeting, an encounter, and an experience with God.²⁰

¹³ Forrest, Kaier, Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 42, 180–181.

¹⁴ Mike Harland, *Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War!* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 4.

¹⁵ Engle, *When God Draws Near*, 71.

¹⁶ David Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing: Formation through Contemporary Worship Music* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdman's Publishing, 2021), 25.

¹⁷ Rory Noland, *Transforming Worship: Planning and Leading Sunday Services as if Spiritual Formation Mattered* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 23.

¹⁸ Pieter Vos, *Liturgy and Ethics: New Contributions from Reformed Perspective*, ed. Pieter Vos. Leiden (The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 5.

¹⁹ James K. A. Smith, *You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 23, 25.

²⁰ Noland, *Transforming Worship*, 22.

Serious voices in the worship debate suggest the primary reason for gathering is not for worship. The gathering is for fellowship, to hear preaching, studying the Bible, praying together, and the like. Worship is to be done at home, in vocation, and in communities. This view of the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament corporate worship says worship is in all of life.²¹ Israel's feasts were holy assemblies teaching what the gathering of the community and the holiness characteristics of worship were all about. Those times for the Israelites were weekly observances of the Sabbath and other feasts. Those feasts continued to the New Testament (Heb 10:25; Acts 2:42). Christians are God's holy people like the Israelites; God declared them holy by His mercy and grace (2 Cor 7:1).²²

God's people worship in many ways when they gather, and they should never forget, at the heart of their community is worship. Corporate worship is important. Humans were made to worship as a community with other worshipers. What matters to God is corporate worship. It is God meeting with the family. It is a community of people gathering to seek God's face.²³

There is a value to corporate worship. Corporate worship provides a different way of coming to know God as opposed to individual worship. Worshiping with others brings out sides of friends that could not ordinarily be brought out by family or friends. During corporate worship, someone can participate with other members and observe how they engage with God and experience His presence. By doing so, they bring out features of God that they would not usually be able to experience themselves. Corporate worship helps congregants' worship to be shaped by others, which offers an opportunity to expand their knowledge of who God is and replace any biases they may have. Corporate worship plays a role in a person's spiritual life.

²¹ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 52.

²² Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 77, 78.

²³ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 71.

Worshiping God alongside a congregant they know to be experiencing guilt, for instance, will shed light on aspects of God’s mercy and grace. While engaging with God, it is possible to see that someone else is engaging with God in an entirely different way than they are, so they recognize features of God that were not available to them alone. An individual’s second-personal knowledge of God is important in certain ways because it is connected to the community. This conclusion would not be surprising to many theologians because Scripture marks an important emphasis to the community regarding correctly relating to God (Ps 96:1–13).²⁴

The worshiper’s nourishment does not derive from just merely absorbing but must also form through patterns of participation in a particular type of community.²⁵ God’s Word must supply the patterns, principles, and content of true worship. Worshiping God of the Bible is the aim, as He reveals Himself. No one can worship Him as they ought unless they know Him as He is. No one can know Him as He is but to the extent, He has revealed Himself to humans in His Word. The only way to worship God the right way is according to His written self-revelation. God makes it clear throughout the Bible that He cares about how He is worshiped.²⁶ God gave Moses the covenant in the form of engraved tablets along with the pattern for covenant worship. God’s dwelling place was to be constructed according to the blueprint given to Moses on the mountain (Exod 25:9, 40).²⁷

The Bible teaches in the Old Testament and details tabernacle worship in Exodus 25–31, 35–40 and Leviticus. Exodus 25 offers at least three aspects of how God wanted His people to worship Him, which He insists upon. First, Israel’s worship should be heartfelt with gratitude for

²⁴ Joshua Cockayne, David Efird, and The Society of Christian Philosophers, “Common Worship,” *Faith and Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (2018): 299–325.

²⁵ Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing*, 2.

²⁶ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 11, 72, 76, 18.

²⁷ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 52.

God's grace. Second, it should be true worship, which is the goal of the covenant: spiritual communion with the true and living God. The people were to remember these ideas as they constructed and came to the tabernacle. The heart and aim of the covenant were "I will be Your God and you will be my people." This was also the aim of worship. Third, God's instructions for worship are to be carefully ordered. God demanded the tabernacle and everything in it be made after a specific pattern. It was God's plan, not the creativity or artistry of the people who built it. God determined how the place of worship would be, where the priests would serve Him, and where the people would meet Him in worship.²⁸

Central to a covenantal relationship is worship. It mostly evolved as the moment for covenant remembrance and reenactment.²⁹ God required an attitude of reverence from the heart, God required true worship, which was worship given exclusively to the true God and not to worship the wrong God. God gave specific terms of the covenant He made with His people. If they fully obey Him and keep His covenant, they will be His treasured possession out of all the nations (Exod 19:5). God's people needed to be taught His laws, as there were required instructions on how to construct the tabernacle, and they would travel with a portable tent to worship locations that were divinely appointed by God. It was a strategic time for God to meet with His people.³⁰

The enemy of God-centered worship is idolatry, and worshiping or serving something that has a visible form is idolatry. God teaches His people that they may not worship Him or think about Him according to their human designs or categories.³¹ The Word of God must govern

²⁸ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 20–21.

²⁹ Vos, *Liturgy and Ethics*, 29.

³⁰ Engle, *When God Draws Near*, 38, 41, 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

His people's understanding of Him as well as govern their worship. God's people are not to make images of other gods, or of God. "You shall not make for yourself an idol or any likeness of what is in heaven above or earth beneath or in the water under the earth" (Exod 20:4 KJV).³²

Idolatrous images distort the truth about God in the minds of people.³³ People are misled by idolatrous images; they communicate ideas that are false about God and distort their thinking about Him. They plant fallacies in the mind about God's character and will.³⁴

People are idolatrous in their thinking and their worshiping when they know what the Bible says about God but like to think of God as something other than who the Bible says He is. The Bible, not their imaginations, innovations, opinions, experiences, and representations should determine how God is worshiped.³⁵ People who imagine God the way they want Him to be invalidate what the Bible teaches about Him.³⁶ Worship should focus on the spiritual, not any physical visual images. People choose other gods because they have been distorted by a lie. There is a false belief system at the foundation of their personality. Their false belief system is concentrated on an idol. They believe that something other than God can give them happiness and a life that only God can give. "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (Rom 1:25 KJV).³⁷

The result of idolatry is a disorder in all fundamental relationships. Idolatry is a life lived in an upside-down world that contradicts and confuses God's created order.³⁸ God is jealous

³² Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship?*, 25.

³³ Packer, *Knowing God*, 47.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 29.

³⁶ Packer, *Knowing God*, 47.

³⁷ Engle, *When God Draws Near*, 50, 82.

³⁸ Wright, *Here Are Your Gods*, 12.

about the how and the whom of worship, and His people should be beyond careful about it. Following His regulative principles is the best way to do that. God's seriousness concerning worship was demonstrated in His threats against diverging from His Word. God is jealous, and He refuses to share His worship or glory with anyone or anything else. Exodus 20:5–6 says God is a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers, the children, to the third and fourth generations to those who hate Him, and showing love to those who love Him and keep His commandments.³⁹

God told Moses He is the Lord whose name is jealous. God declares Himself as a jealous God and He will punish not just worshipers of images, but everyone who hates Him because they ignore His commandments. God's jealousy drives Him to bring judgment and destroy the unfaithful among His people who indulge in sin and idolatry.⁴⁰

For fear of receiving the jealous wrath of the true and living God, idolatry must be avoided. To understand the character of God is to know that he is a jealous God who offers the bond of marriage as the metaphor for the covenant between the people and their God. This emphasizes the powerful, intensive, punishing nature of the divine response to the betrayal and manner of unacceptable worship of Him.⁴¹

In other words, God warned His people that if they committed spiritual adultery in their worship, He would respond like the most menacing, maltreated husband they have ever known.⁴²

God made it clear if betrayed by idolatry, which is spiritual adultery, He would deal with them like an angry, abandoned spouse. Worshiping idols and having vulnerable relationships

³⁹ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 24, 30.

⁴⁰ Packer, *Knowing God*, 49, 168, 172.

⁴¹ Wright, *Here Are Your Gods*, 31, 61.

⁴² Duncan, *Does God Care*, 31, 37.

with idolaters who were non-Israelites established unfaithfulness and disobedience, which God viewed as spiritual adultery, prompting jealousy and vengeance from Him.⁴³

In Hosea, Yahweh (God) was the jilted husband who fiercely burned with anger against Israel and destroyed them. They committed spiritual adultery by offering worship to false gods. They had covenant disloyalty. On the alters they built, they offered sacrificial worship to Yahweh and, at the same time, offered sacrificial worship to Baal and other false gods (Hos 8:11–13). Worshiping Baal represented spiritual prostitution as well.⁴⁴

There was always hope for Israel; if they repented of their idolatry, God would turn His anger away from them and bless them (Hos 14:1, 3–4). Also, Jesus would fulfill Hosea's prophesy, forgive, and redeem His repentant people because of His love and compassion (Hos 3:5). There are two ways to commit idolatry: worshiping God the wrong way or worshiping something other than God. Christians cannot take worship into their own hands, which is what the Israelites did in Exodus. When Aaron made a golden calf at the request of the people, the people were not seeking a replacement of God but a representation of Moses, the mediator, who was detained. They chose the golden calf as a representation of God. It was a violation of the second commandment. The people wanted to worship God and the idol, which was pluralism in action. They wanted to worship something alongside God or in addition to Him, which was idolatry.⁴⁵

The people were impatient. They chose another mediator. They wanted to worship God and something else. They wanted to picture God as they wanted Him to be, and they did not want to worship God the way He commanded them to worship. It was false worship, and false worship

⁴³ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 31, 37.

⁴⁴ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 101–2, 275.

⁴⁵ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 29, 32–35.

leads to immorality and false living. Israelites worshiped the wrong way; it was the same way the Egyptians worshiped. They had the altar, the statue, the festival, and the priest. It was a well-ordered cult.⁴⁶

Moses was a mediator chosen by God and invited to enter the clouds to meet the Lord on a mountain. Aaron, his sons, and seventy elders were allowed to go only halfway up the mountain.⁴⁷ Aaron made a golden calf; it was intended as a visible symbol of the mighty God, Jehovah, who had delivered Israel out of bondage in Egypt. The image was thought to honor Jehovah as a suitable symbol of His great strength. The symbol offended Him. Looking at the symbol, the bull did not represent the righteousness, moral character, patience, and goodness of God. Jehovah's glory was hidden by Aaron's image. When Aaron created the golden calf, it caused Israelites to think of him as someone who could be worshiped acceptably by uncontrolled corruption.⁴⁸

God prohibited Israelites from worshiping other gods. In the Bible, there is no equivalent forbidding the worshiping of a human. Bowing before God is translated as worship in the King James Bible. Any expression that describes the relationship between humans and God in the Bible is identified as a human relationship. People bow to God comparable to bowing to kings.⁴⁹

The people departed from God's commands, which was a departure from Him. The people broke the covenant, God punished them, they repented of their sin, and renewed their covenant.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 34.

⁴⁷ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 52.

⁴⁸ Packer, *Knowing God*, 46–47.

⁴⁹ Levi, "Worship," 487–504.

⁵⁰ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 37.

New Covenant Worship

There is an intentional contrast between New Covenant worship and Old Testament worship in the book of Hebrews. Jesus, the Son of God, is the object and center of New Covenant worship. Old Testament worship was centered on services administered by the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices. Jesus is worthy to be worshiped (Heb 1:6) because He has divine status (Heb 1:8). For the salvation of mankind, He was willing to become a human being (Heb 1:14–15). The book of Hebrews points out that the final revelation from God is in His Son (Heb 1:2) and that Jesus is superior to Abraham, Moses, angels, Aaron, all biblical heroes, and the Levitical high priests at the tabernacle. He is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus ushered a New Covenant into the world, and it is superior to the covenant that was made at Sinai between God and Israel.⁵¹

Jesus characterized Himself and was depicted as the inheritor who met the requirements of the design of a covenantal relationship with God that goes back to Abraham. Jesus was a skillful interpreter and proponent of the law; He did not reject the law; He met and transcended the law's requirements. Jeremiah 31:31–34 prophesied the promise of a New Covenant, and Jesus claimed that He was establishing a New Covenant.⁵²

Early Christians became devoted to Jesus because of His claims of deity, things He had done before and after His death and resurrection, and because the Holy Spirit had given the followers of Jesus experiences and insights into what Jewish scripture meant. The pagan and Jewish environments that surrounded the followers of Jesus forced them to make clear what their worship practices were concerning God and Jesus. Because of the revelations given to them by

⁵¹ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 455.

⁵² Michael Jensen, *Reformation Anglican Worship, (The Reformation Anglicanism Essential Library, Volume 4): Experiencing Grace, Expressing Gratitude* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 27, ProQuest E-book.

God about Jesus, their exclusive worship of God included reference to Jesus as also being worthy of worship.⁵³

At the center of the New Testament gospel is the proclamation “Jesus is Lord,” an announcement of reverence that attributed authority to Him that only someone divine deserves (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3).⁵⁴

Jesus’s death was declared a sacrifice that was superior to the sacrifices that were offered by Levitical priests. His ascension and place at the right hand of God were superior to the never-ending service in the tabernacle by the priests. The shed blood of Jesus on the cross was more effective for the purification of sinners than all other blood sacrifices of animals at the temple. He is the Son of God, the perfecter and founder of the Christian faith, the High Priest, and the mediator of the New Covenant.⁵⁵

Hebrews displayed Jesus not as a theoretical mediator but as a particular individual and historical person who was wholly incarnate man. Jesus was also presented as the mediator who was compassionate toward His brothers because He Himself experienced suffering, temptation, and even death. The purpose of Hebrews was to offer Jesus as the superior mediator. The peak of Jesus’s mediatorship is in heavenly intercession. In Hebrews, intercession indicates Christ’s main function in heaven is as a High Priest. Because He is Godman, His intercession is effective because He prays for the forgiveness of sins for believers. Also, He helps Christians get through trials and temptation. Jesus is positioned between humanity and God. He created and granted access to God for sinful women and men based on His sacrificial death. His mediatorial or substitutionary suffering has also empowered Him to help those who wrestle with temptation

⁵³ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 456.

⁵⁴ Jensen, *Reformation*, 27.

⁵⁵ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 457.

(Heb 2:18). Jesus is available to provide anyone who experiences suffering and temptation with the means they need to combat their specific temptation that could possibly cause them to stray away from their faith.⁵⁶

Jesus's suffering on the cross ushered in the restoration of the covenant relationship between the people and their God (Isa 42:4, 6; 49:5–6). This suffering in some ways was a necessity for getting to the place and posture of restoration. What Jesus did for many in the passages of the Lord's Supper is linked with the covenant, which is comparable to the Suffering Servant, who will be a covenant for God's people (Isa 49:8).⁵⁷

While suffering and death are no doubt a crucial part of Jesus's redeeming work, it is His temptation that certified Him to be the compassionate High Priest (Matt 4:1–11).⁵⁸ At the Last Supper, Jesus made clear the connection between His sacrificial death and the idea of a New Covenant (Heb 9:14–15) directed to what worship will mean from that day forward. Jesus indicated that He would make true worship of God possible by way of His atoning blood, and that He would as a result be the focus of the reverence by the people of the New Covenant.⁵⁹

Jesus is the Lamb of God who became the glorious and living icon. He is the truth and the life. The Gospel of John highlights that Jesus is the Lamb of God, is the covenantal Lamb and the Passover Lamb who was sacrificed. He is also the Suffering Servant-Son. The Book of Revelation underscores that He is now the illustrious Lamb who reigns sovereign over the new earth and the new heavens. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus was appointed 'the Lamb' twenty-

⁵⁶ Abeneazer G. Urga, *Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews: The Background and Nature of Jesus' Heavenly Intercession in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 7, 9, 16.

⁵⁷ Stanley E. Porter, *Sacred Tradition in the New Testament: Tracing Old Testament Themes in the Gospels and Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 84, 89, ProQuest E-book.

⁵⁸ Johannes Grossl and Klaus von Stosch, eds., *Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ's Divine and Human Will* (Milton, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 2023), 66, ProQuest E-book.

⁵⁹ Jensen, *Reformation*, 27.

eight times. He is the slain Lamb, and He now reigns with all glory. Everyone bows down to worship Him. He is the one who brought salvation to the world, and He embodies all might and power. The bride of the Lamb is the church. Jesus and the Father are the new Temple. They are the light in the new Jerusalem. The river of life flows from their throne (Rev 5:6).⁶⁰

True Worship in Jesus

Jesus prophesied that He would be the new temple and that God's people would soon realize their hope would be in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The new location for an encounter with God was in Jesus (John 1:14). Jesus was the source of renewal and restoration for Israel and all people of the earth. Being involved with God is mediated by the person of Jesus Christ for human beings.

Jesus is the way by which people should come to worship God. He is also the truth and the life (John 14:6). Christians must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).⁶¹ Christian worship is through, in, with, and by Jesus Christ. Christians are accepted by God, not because they have offered worthy worship, notwithstanding their unworthiness, but because He has provided what He demands, which is His grace. He provided worship, a sacrifice, a way, a forerunner in Jesus Christ, the representative, and leader. This is the heart and soul of all true Christian worship.⁶² While proclaiming that God's grace is adequate to compensate for Christian

⁶⁰ Thomas G. Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus: vol. 2, A Theological Interpretation of the Gospel of John: Prologue and the Book of Signs*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 64.

⁶¹ Jensen, *Reformation*, 27.

⁶² Ron Man, "Jesus, Our True Worship Leader." *Artistic Theologian* 2 (2013): 4–16.

sins and limitations regarding worship, Christians comply with the Holy Spirit and work to offer true worship.⁶³

Jesus stressed that an hour would come when worshiping God would not be in a place for true believers. It will not be a geographical place but ecclesial. The place of worship will be wherever people gather in Jesus's name (Matt 18:20). Jesus fulfilled the tabernacle/temple and opened the way into the presence of God through His death and resurrection and the gift of His Holy Spirit. To be true worshipers, Christians must respond to the presence of God with reverence and joy and must learn to worship at the feet of Jesus Christ. True worship is a response to the truth of Scripture, as it is accomplished in Jesus. That truth should set the worship agenda by using the words of Scripture to motivate and shape praise.⁶⁴

Jesus's words in John 4:21–24 confirmed what the Old Testament's teaching on the essential importance of the tabernacle/ temple worship had been accurately understood by Israel. Any withdrawal from it would assume departure from God's commands and revelation that would lead any worshiper, no matter how genuine they are, into uncertainty about God. Israel knew their God because they worshiped Him on the authority of His revelation; but the Samaritans did not worship as maintained by God's revelation; they did not know their God. For that reason, there's a New Covenant precedent of the precept: how one worships determines what one becomes. Jesus later said that worship must be in truth. True worship was unattainable for the Samaritans and for Christians if they conceive their own worship.⁶⁵

⁶³ Sam Hamstra Jr., *What's Love Got to Do with It?: How the Heart of God Shapes Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 140, ProQuest E-book.

⁶⁴ John Risbridger, *The Message of Worship* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 78, 84, ProQuest E-book.

⁶⁵ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 24.

The image of God within humans has been disturbed and distorted by sin. Left to themselves, they fail to fulfill their purpose of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. In response to the human condition, God recreated humans for worship through the saving power of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts Christians of their sin, helps them pursue an intimate encounter with God, and leads them into truth (John 16:5–15). The Spirit brings light into their dark lives so they might see God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). The Holy Spirit encourages their drained hearts, quenches, and soothes their desperate souls.⁶⁶

The Root of Modern-Day Idol Worship and Its Effects

The root of idol worship and all the sins of the flesh stem from the devil because of his cunning skills and arrogant desires to be equal with God and the object of worship (Isa 14:12).⁶⁷ Eight demonic thoughts stem from Satan: gluttony, greed, vainglory, pride, anger, fornication, sadness, and acedia. Since the beginning, Satan has tried to influence people and even Jesus to bow down and worship something else or him (Matt 4:1–10). To do so results in moral failure, idolatry, and sin.⁶⁸

The devil has lied since the foundation of the world. He informed Eve that if she ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she would not surely die even though God said that she would die (Gen 3:4). To mislead Eve, the devil ascribed false motivations to God by saying, “For God knows if you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5 KJV). The devil explained to her that God said these words out of safeguarding

⁶⁶ Hamstra, *What’s Love Got to Do with It*, 28.

⁶⁷ Tucker S. Ferda, “God of the Nations: Daniel, Satan, and the Temptation of Jesus in Luke.” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 110, no. 1 (2019): 1–20.

⁶⁸ Benjamin E. Heidgerken and Paul M. Blowers, *Salvation Through Temptation: Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas on Christ’s Victory over the Devil* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 40–41, ProQuest E-book.

jealousy so that He would not have any divine competition, which is why Adam and Eve were forbidden from eating from the tree. By deceiving Eve and causing her to be suspicious of the intentions of God, the devil became a murderer and, as God truthfully proclaimed, Adam and Eve eventually died. The devil, as always, is the jealous one because God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness and gave them dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26–31). Death entered the world through the devil’s envy. For this reason, the nature of the devil is a murdering liar (John 8:44).⁶⁹

In Genesis 3, the devil used the serpent, who was cunning and more subtle than any beast of the field, to tempt Eve into being disobedient to God’s command by contradicting that she would die. He asserted, instead, that her eyes would be opened, that she would know good and evil, and as a result, she would become as the gods herself. Eve ate the forbidden fruit and then mimicked the serpent by tempting Adam to disobey God’s commandment. Adam ate the fruit, and instead of them experiencing extreme happiness or divine privilege, their new knowledge brought fear and shame. They did not die immediately, but their punishment was severe. They were forever banished from the Garden in Eden where life was easy. Eve’s punishment was to have great sorrow, pain, and suffering in childbirth. She would have to submit to her husband’s rule over her. Outside of Eden, Adam would have to work by the sweat of his brow with soil that was cursed with thistles and thorns. First, there were God’s commands, then temptation, then the consequences of shame, fear, unending exile, suffering, loss, sorrow, longing, and labor. The descendants (humans) of Adam and Eve inherited their moral characteristics, and the darker side of the human condition is a result of transgression. The common state of the human life that is experienced is, in part, the wages of sin (Rom 6:23). The original sin in Genesis 3 was a lust for

⁶⁹ Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus*, 305–306.

knowledge, known as *libido sciendi*. The new knowledge they gained made them more godlike in their abilities, but they were isolated from the rest of God's perfect creation. What they gained brought much loss and longing for their former state of bliss.⁷⁰

Orthodox Christian thought recognizes pride as the first sin. When Lucifer refused to accept his given position in the cosmic hierarchy, he rebelled and led a failed coup against God's divine rule, causing the fall of man. Humility is the antidote to pride. In Christian thought, humility is the essential virtue. Aquinas believed that at the core of humility was recognizing and accepting the human place in the universe. The word humility stems from the Latin word *humilis*, which means on the ground or from *humus* (earth). Humble people recognize and accept their inferior status in the universe order and the expansive gap between God and themselves. In Christian belief, they are not just from the earth; because of the fall, their nature is corrupted by sin. It is suggested by some Christian thinkers that humble people who recognize their true nature, see themselves as imperfect. Bernard of Clairvaux defines humility as the virtue that allows humans to understand their unworthiness because they know the true essence of themselves. Humility is crucial because of its link to obedience because of man's corrupted nature. God knows what is best for His creation, but their sinful nature leads them away from obeying God's commands.

Humility produces obedience, which leads to genuine happiness and actions that are morally right. Augustine declared that obedience is the guardian and mother of all the virtues in a rational-thinking creature. Christian thinkers position humility at the root of human happiness and goodness.⁷¹

⁷⁰ David Bosworth, "In the Beginning: Adam and Eve Reconsidered," *Raritan* 39, no. 2 (2019): 74, 95, 176.

⁷¹ Jennifer Cole Wright, ed., *Humility* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2019), 42–43, ProQuest E-book.

Jewish teachings infer that many people may think the opposite of humility is arrogance. The rabbis of the Talmud compare the extreme demonstration of egotism to idol worship, which is one of the chief sins of Judaism. The belief is that when someone puts themselves at the center of their own life, which an arrogant person does, they inhabit the space reserved for God. Consequently, the person indulges in worshipping idols instead of the true God. In other words, an arrogant person essentially desires to replace God on the throne of superiority. Because of the innate 'centeredness' of one's own perspective, humans are aware of the gravitational pull of their own needs, interests, desires, goals, beliefs, and values more continuously, and urgently, than they are aware of others' needs. Although they may choose sometimes to resist or ignore the pull, it also has the possibility to evolve into self-absorption, which is called self-involvement or self-worship. As a result, humans can suffer from entitlement issues. They prioritize and favor their own wants, expend energy, and put enormous thought, resources, and time trying to fulfill those needs, interests, desires, goals, beliefs, and values. They do all that, even if they do not mean to. It is their sin nature.⁷²

The recognition and acceptance of humans' collective limitations and their similar insignificance produces humility, which creates opposition to excessive pride and arrogance and protects them against envy, jealousy, and feelings of entitlement, which make them feel like they deserve something more than others. Humility promotes open-mindedness and feelings of forgiveness, respect, gratitude, and appreciation for others, since humans recognize their fates as tied up together (Col 3:14).⁷³

⁷² Wright, *Humility*, 33, 147.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Christians gather weekly as a fragmented people, their spiritual awareness weakened by sin. Even though they have been reborn by the Holy Spirit, they frequently hear what they prefer to hear and see what they prefer to see. In addition to that, the unfortunate truth is that their closed minds, cold hearts, and stubborn wills too often obstruct the work of the Spirit in their lives. Paul describes this obstruction as “grieving the Spirit” (Eph 4:30 KJV).⁷⁴

The Holy Spirit helps Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23) but when believers obstruct Him, they succumb to the deeds or sins of the flesh which are idolatry, selfish ambition, sexual immorality, debauchery, witchcraft, envy, jealousy, impurity, hatred, orgies, drunkenness, discord, fits of rage, dissensions, and factions. Paul lists some sins of the flesh in Galatians 5 so that anyone can easily perceive and identify what kinds of behavior are innately wrong from a moral viewpoint. The most deadened sinners know naturally what sinful deeds stand against society and God. Even if they become psychopathic by explaining away their sins against others, they are extremely aware of when they have been done wrong by others. The purpose of his list was for Christians to identify behavior that God disapproves of and is unsuitable for His people. Paul’s list specifies sins involving worship, sexual sins, and social sins relating to relationships.⁷⁵

The Spirit builds and shapes the community, and the flesh garners discord. In the contemporary myth of the modern-day isolated person, most of the works of the flesh are evident primarily by their propensity to cause idolatry, division, strife, jealousy, quarrels, anger, enmities, quarrels, dissensions, impurity, fornication, drunkenness, and carousing. They cause harm to

⁷⁴ Hamstra, *What’s Love Got to Do with It*, 28.

⁷⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Galatians Verse by Verse* (Ashland, TN: Lexham Press, 2017), 121–22, ProQuest E-book.

individuals, fracture relationships, break trust, and injure the body of Christ in all denominations as they did in the Galatian churches.⁷⁶

Paul ends his list with a grave warning to the Galatians, He warned that Christians who live their lives in the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. He also wrote in 1 Cor 6:9–10 that neither idolater nor the sexually immoral will inherit the kingdom of God, and in Ephesians 5:5 no impure, immoral, or greedy person has any inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ Jesus.⁷⁷

Those who walk in the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God, not because those things are unforgivable; they are forgivable, but because these things are an indication that they are not in Christ Jesus. Those who are in Christ crucify their flesh and are led by the Spirit through faith.⁷⁸

Jesus, the True Worshiper

Jesus was a true worshiper. Jesus was committed to God and worshiped Him exclusively. He set the example of how to worship God and combat the devil when tempted by sin. In Matthew 4:1–11, the devil encountered Jesus in the wilderness, and he tempted Him three times. First, he tempted Him with gluttony, then pride, and then with greed. The third time, he showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor. The devil finally got to what he was after: He claimed he would give Jesus all the kingdoms and their glory if He would fall/bow down and worship him. Jesus told him to go away and quoted Scripture saying, “Get thee hence, Satan; for

⁷⁶ David L. Bartlett, “Fruits of the Spirit in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *Journal for Preachers* 39, no. 4 (2016): 7–11.

⁷⁷ Osborne, *Galatians*, 23.

⁷⁸ Judith Stack-Nelson, “The Spirit and Justification: Experience, ‘Childship’ (Υιοθεσία), Participation, and Faith in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *Biblical Research* 63 (2018): 44–52.

it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt 4:10). Satan left Him and angels came and ministered to Him.⁷⁹

Jesus overcame the attack of the devil by adhering to the Word of God at every temptation.⁸⁰ The best place to find God’s preference for how He desires to be worshiped is in His written Word.⁸¹ Jesus’s exploits of submission to God, and His refusal of submission to the devil, are presented to Christians to inaugurate His credentials as the true worshiper. True worship involves homage and reverential acts of submission in the presence of the divine ruler in reaction to His merciful revelation of who He is and in observing His revealed will. Jesus was the faultless representation of submission to God’s will.⁸²

Christ had to be willing to expose Himself to the devil’s attack, “that He allowed Himself to be tempted was due to His own will.”⁸³ Jesus’s submission under His Father’s will was a result of God’s merciful preservation, divine grace, praying, and traveling⁸⁴

Humility and surrender are acts of true worship, where Christians give control of their lives to God.⁸⁵ It is reasonable to feel the gravitational pull of temptations without being in a state of sin. Jesus was not in a state of sin in the garden of Gethsemane experience nor were Adam and

⁷⁹ Jensen, *Reformation*, 27.

⁸⁰ Jon Nielson, *Matthew: Making Disciples for the Nations, Volume 1 (Chapters 1–13)* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2020), 20, ProQuest E-book.

⁸¹ Hamstra Jr., *What’s Love Got to Do with It*, 6.

⁸² Daniel I. Block, “True Worship: It Turns Out the Bible’s Idea of Worship is Mostly About Posture, Not Music or Praise,” *Christianity Today* 63, no. 4 (2019): 44–48.

⁸³ Heidgerken and Blowers, *Salvation Through Temptation*, 277–280.

⁸⁴ Grossl and von Stosch, eds., *Impeccability and Temptation*, 80–81.

⁸⁵ Luz, *Honest Worship*, 116.

Eve in the garden of Eden. Jesus had been tempted in every way, just as believers have, but He did not sin (Heb 4:14–16).⁸⁶

Forces opposed to God’s will for the Christian’s life are good; they serve God’s ultimate plan for humanity. Opposition is good for believers because they can overcome them (Jas 1:2–4).⁸⁷ Jesus struggled with the temptation to depart from God’s plan in the garden of Gethsemane but regained obedience through prayer.⁸⁸

As the Incarnate Word, Jesus manifested His glory as the light who gave everlasting life through His faithful obedience to God His Father, specifically through His death on the cross. Jesus emphasized His obedience to God’s will and doing what His Father did. He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34 KJV). His obedience was evident by God sending His only begotten Son into the world to become the incarnate man. Jesus displayed obedience by being willing to become a man. Jesus stated on many occasions that He was the obedient Son of His Father and only says what His Father has instructed Him to say. He only does His Father’s works. In that context, the Father is superior to all, even greater than His Son. In all that He did, Jesus did everything freely of His own will. Although Jesus’s crucifixion seems to be something that He passively submitted to as a helpless victim, He freely offered mankind’s salvation. Through love, that free obedience is what made Jesus the good shepherd; it is what made Jesus who He is. He is YHWH-Saves.⁸⁹

The devil tempted Jesus with what was legitimately His, and He later received it, not from Satan’s hand but from obedience to God. Jesus’ rejection of the devil’s proposal and His

⁸⁶ Oliver D. Crisp, “Tempted in Every Way?: Making Sense of Jesus’ Humanity in Light of Fleshly Temptations,” *Christianity Today* 63, no. 9 (November 2019): 72–75.

⁸⁷ Heidgerken and Blowers, *Salvation Through Temptation*, 35–36.

⁸⁸ Grossl and von Stock, *Impeccability and Temptation*, 63.

⁸⁹ Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus*, 16, 86, 347, 350.

quoting of the scripture in Matthew 4:10 is a pattern of the posture Christians are called to undertake, which is to oppose idolatry and worship God exclusively.⁹⁰

Theological Foundations

Every sin is idolatry. It is an implied adoration for Satan.⁹¹ Primal sin predated the original sin of Adam and Eve by fallen angels. Satan and his angels chose to oppose God. Origins of evil were a result of their free choice.⁹² Pride was the first sin, the beginning of sin (Ps 10:4). It is a craving for underserved exaltation.⁹³

Pride is the root from which envy, sloth, avarice, anger, lust, and gluttony stem. They are the seven deadly sins.⁹⁴ Satan's sin was pride. Before he sinned, God called him perfect in all his ways. He created him with wisdom, beauty, and wealth. He had the exalted privilege of a cherub who guarded Eden and God's throne.⁹⁵

Lucifer was an angelic being who rebelled against God in heaven and became Satan. Lucifer was anointed, he was the highest being God had created, and he was given the position to lead all the angelic hosts in the service and worship of Yahweh. Lucifer was created with a choice to worship God. God did not want to force Lucifer to worship Him. He wanted willing worship. Although he was in the presence of God regularly, he chose to oppose God and tried to seize His authority and rule so he could be the object of worship, which is idolatry. Lucifer's

⁹⁰ Ferda, "God of the Nations," 1–20.

⁹¹ Mark Jones and Rosaria Butterfield, *Knowing Sin: Seeing a Neglected Doctrine Through the Eyes of the Puritans* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2022), 29, ProQuest E-book.

⁹² Gregory Mellema, *Sin* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 8, ProQuest E-book.

⁹³ Loren Haarsma, *When Did Sin Begin?: Human Evolution and the Doctrine of Original Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 128, ProQuest E-book.

⁹⁴ Mellema, *Sin*, 38–39.

⁹⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 922–923.

rebellion caused him to be expelled from heaven and cast down to earth along with the angels who joined him, and they will later be cast into hell (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10). People who choose to rebel against God by refusing to accept God's way of salvation in Jesus Christ will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9–10).⁹⁶

In Lucifer's heart, he wanted to be like God. He wanted to be exalted above God (Isa 14:12–15). His beauty, anointing, talents, position of prestige, and power caused him to become evil, violent, corrupt, and sinful in his heart (Ezek 28:15–18). At the beginning, God intended for His creation, Adam and Eve, to be like Him, not equal to Him, sharing in His ruling and reigning over His world. Instead, Satan tempted them to try to take God's place, totally removing Him from the throne.⁹⁷ Satan drew Adam and Eve, humanity's first parents, away from God into sin. Eve was drawn away with lust, and Satan tempted them with the same sin that ruined him, a desire to be like God. Adam's sin was disobedience. Satan gave them false hope of gaining an advantage by way of sin (Gen 3:1–6). The sin of humanity's fallen nature is pride. All spiritual pride comes from the devil. Humility opposes pride.⁹⁸

God resists the proud, gives more grace to the humble, and He lifts them up (Jas 4:6, 10). Humility is the quality or state of being humble, freedom from arrogance and pride, and an act of courtesy and submission. It is knowing there is something bigger than oneself like God, community, environment, cosmos, and culture.⁹⁹

The virtue of humility contains the necessary seeds for mind renewal and conforming one's soul into the image of Christ, but Friedrich Nietzsche believed humility is the morality of a

⁹⁶ Tony Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 748–49.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁸ Mellema, *Sin*, 39.

⁹⁹ Salman Akhtar, "Humility," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 78, no. 1 (2018): 1–27,

slave. It undermines the natural power of humanity's will to dominate. Nietzsche believed Christian humility shapes people into slaves to the powerful.¹⁰⁰

Contrary to Nietzsche's beliefs, humility is an appropriate relationship to God (Ps 138:6). It requires loving kindness, doing justice, and walking humbly with God (Mic 6:8). Those who are humble will inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3–4).¹⁰¹

Satan tempted Jesus with gluttony, pride, and greed. He told Him if He would fall/bow down and worship him, he would give Him all the kingdoms and their glory. Jesus knew God's requirements for worship. He resisted him, and he fled from Jesus (Matt 4:1–11). Jesus opposed pride with humility so God could exalt Him (Luke 14:11). Satan tempts Christians with pride and with the same sins he tempted Jesus with but, if Christians resist the devil's temptations, he will flee (Jas 4:4–7). Christians must expect Jesus, the High Priest who feels for and understand those who are tempted with sin (Heb 4:14), to comfort them and give them relief (John 14:16).¹⁰²

Jesus exhibited obedience to God out of love instead of believing Satan's lies and committing idolatry. He knew all authority belonged to God. He exerted power over the devil with the Word of God. He was victorious over sin and exalted by God (Phil 2:8–11).¹⁰³

Exodus 20:1–6 explains God's requirements for worship. God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, He made a covenant with them through the Ten Commandments. They were to worship Him alone, and He would bless them. They were not to bow down and worship any other gods or make any graven images which are idols for themselves. This would be worshipping

¹⁰⁰ C. C. Pecknold and Joseph J. McInerney, "Foreword," in *the Greatness of Humility: St Augustine on Moral Excellence*, 1st ed., vii–ix. (London, England: The Lutterworth Press, 2016).

¹⁰¹ James Kellenberger "Humility," *American Philosophical Quarterly (Oxford)* 47, no. 4 (2010): 321–36.

¹⁰² Thomas Nelson, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 6, 647, 761–62, 862–63.

¹⁰³ Robert J. Spitzer, *Christ Versus Satan in Our Daily Lives: The Cosmic Struggle Between Good and Evil* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2020), 62, ProQuest E-book.

God the wrong way, attempting to formulate a visual depiction of the invisible God. Those images not only included images of things in heaven and on earth but mortal humans (Rom 1:23). If one thinks of a person as their central source for things and contentment, that person is an idol of their making. Some idols are not physical, they can be greed, lust, evil desires, sexual immorality, and impurity. Worshiping those things is called idolatry. Those things influence a person's life and, when sought after to satisfy the person's desires, they will many times sacrifice and do anything to serve their idol.¹⁰⁴

Idolatry is when humans substitute other things for God. Their identity is defined by that substitution, which is their object of worship. The effect of idolatry in Scripture is that idol worshipers are remade in the image of their idol. Since Israel's living God is innately the root of life, then any other idol humans may exchange God for is theologically a lifeless object. Thus, idol worshipers become lifeless like their idols, and they basically surrender their humanity (Rev 9:20).¹⁰⁵

God's commandment's main demand is love. Without it, outward obedience is hypocrisy. He is the only object of worship. Worshiping creatures, believing in any superstitions, making any images, and any form of pictures of the Deity, or worshiping God with human inventions was forbidden. Anything less than perfect love, worship, gratitude, or reverence broke the commandment.¹⁰⁶

God's commandments meant His people shall not desire other gods to Him. He would not give His glory to a substitute. No images could be made with the intention to worship them. This

¹⁰⁴ Tony Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 126–27.

¹⁰⁵ Aaron Sherwood, *Romans: A Structural, Thematic, and Exegetical Commentary*, 1st ed. (Ashland, TN: Lexham Press, 2020), 63.

¹⁰⁶ Nelson, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, 101.

commandment was meant to avoid immoral substitutes like the idols of Canaan. Those idols would steal their hearts from the true worship of God (Deut 5:7–9).¹⁰⁷

To worship is, to some extent, to feel love, respect, and gratitude. It may best be described as intricate or different attitudes that include passionate and committed reverence. Christians cannot worship that which they do not supremely revere. Mostly, to worship is to exalt, love, and honor, possibly without question, to feel undeserving while face to face with awe-inspiring, preeminence, and greatness. Reasonably, worship is a form of love (Ps 33:8).¹⁰⁸

Jesus is the only representation of the invisible God to be worshiped (John 14:6, 9). Christians should only worship God through Jesus alone, not by any idol.¹⁰⁹ Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and the only image of the invisible God on earth and in heaven from the beginning of time and for eternity who is worthy of worship (Phil 2:5–11).¹¹⁰

God’s saving promises have not been fulfilled because humans have kept the law, because humans fall short of God’s glory. Humans have repeated the sin of Adam throughout history. Nevertheless, through the death of Jesus Christ, God has fulfilled His saving promises (Rom 3:21–26). For those who place their faith in Jesus, God’s saving righteousness is accessible to them.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *Genesis ~ Leviticus*, vol. 1, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, ed. David E. Garland and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 575.

¹⁰⁸ Aaron Smuts, “The Power to Make Others Worship,” *Religious Studies* 48, no. 2 (2012): 221–37.

¹⁰⁹ Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 126–27.

¹¹⁰ John Hunt, *Parallel Commentary on the New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 686, 688.

¹¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 197, ProQuest E-book.

Worship of God will eventually lead to serving Him as it relates to obeying his commandments as laws of faith. The way Christians serve God is through obedience, which originates from faith in God's promises (2 Cor 1:19–20).¹¹²

Jesus laid the foundation of what true and acceptable worship would become through the New Covenant. He taught that after His death, resurrection, and ascension to His Father, worshipers will not be distinguished by a location or specific shrine. Worshipers will worship the Father by way of Jesus. The contrast between true worshipers and false worshipers founded on a location was replaced.

True worshipers are those who worship God from the heart through His Son Jesus. God is a Spirit and invisible (Col 1:15), not a physical being like man. Humans could never understand the invisible God unless He revealed Himself the way He did through Scripture and the Virgin Birth of Christ, who was God manifested in the flesh. Jesus made it clear that worshipping in spirit and truth was completely necessary. Jesus referred to the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit, so they must worship inwardly, with the heart, and with the proper attitude. That new way of worshipping contrasted with the old way, which was outward conformity to a place and religious rituals (John 4:23–24).¹¹³ Today, most exegetes concur that in declaring worship in spirit and truth, Jesus is not contrasting internal worship with external worship. His statement does not have anything to do with worshipping God from the depths of one's own spirit; the Spirit is the Spirit of God, not man's spirit, as John 4:24 makes clear, "God is Spirit."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Scott J Hafermann, *2 Corinthians: The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 1297.

¹¹³ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1364.

¹¹⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 273, ProQuest E-book.

Worshiping God in a biblically accurate manner is worshiping Him through Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6). Christians must not be conformed to the world's system which replaces God and leaves Him out. True worship can only come from the believer who has surrendered their life to God. Christians must worship God with their life. When God has the believer's complete life, He renews their mind and integrates their thoughts into an agreement with His thoughts (Phil 2:5) to bring His plans into their lives and transform them to reflect His image. Only then will the believer's life of worship be good, pleasing, and in His perfect will (Rom 12:1–2). When the Holy Spirit works through the life of the Christian, spiritual transformation takes place, and they reflect and resemble Jesus in their attitudes, actions, and character who is the image of God (Col 1:15).¹¹⁵ Considering the idea in Colossians 3:10, it is logical that the church is also called to perform the task of being the image of God through its declaration of the gospel in words and in deeds. Christians should accept the dignity of being a vessel of divine revelation through whom God, who is invisible, can be revealed.¹¹⁶

The biggest challenge for all churches is to sustain the integrity of commitment to belonging to Jesus Christ instead of to the world. Although congregations are tempted to be what the world wants them to be, they must remain the church (Matt 16:16–18).¹¹⁷ Because of God's tender mercies and not His wrath, and because Jesus sacrificed His life for the believer, they should be excited, willing, and committed to serving Him by presenting their lives as a living sacrifice, dead to sin. They should not neglect God's will for their own will, which is according to their taste. When the trials and tribulations come, the believer's actions will be good and

¹¹⁵ Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 1049, 1136, 1183.

¹¹⁶ David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012; 2016), 109.

¹¹⁷ Michael Kinnamon and Jan Linn, *Disciples: Who We Are and What Holds us Together* (Ashland, TN: Christian Board of Publication, 2019), 109, ProQuest E-book.

acceptable to God because they will have allowed the Holy Spirit to transform and perfect their nature, so they will understand God's perfect will for their lives (Rom 12:1–2).¹¹⁸ God's action through Jesus leads to the transformation of human consciousness. Jesus came to bring knowledge of the true and living God (1 John 5:20).¹¹⁹

Theoretical Foundations

Worship is meeting God with reverence and awe of His greatness.¹²⁰ Worship is “a communal experience that combines classic spiritual practices with a formative encounter with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.”¹²¹ Worship is, “a reverential human act of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to His gracious revelation of Himself and in accord with His will” and as, “An appropriate response to the revelation of the holy God of glory.”¹²²

In the Bible, there are many passages where God teaches His people to worship Him in a certain way, in a particular place, with specific substances and objects. Christians overlook the literal and specific nature of these directives at their peril. When worship takes the shape of spectatorship, and sacred substances and places are diminished to metaphors, then they are likely to become religious practice hanging by a thread of intention, habit, and enjoyment. The assurance of the incarnation is the joining of flesh and spirit, human and divine, earth and heaven. This is the validity of what Christians are as God's creation, body, and soul at the same

¹¹⁸ Hunt, *Parallel Commentary*, 515.

¹¹⁹ John Painter and Scott McKnight, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Epistles of John and Jude* (Chicago, IL: Eerdmans, 2021), 37, ProQuest E-book.

¹²⁰ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 88.

¹²¹ Noland, *Transforming Worship*, 11.

¹²² Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 19–20.

time. To have souls that are healthy and safe, Christians need to meet God in the flesh, as humans. That is how they are created.¹²³

God wants His human creation to yearn for Him and reach out to Him. He wants His creation to acknowledge that they need Him. He wants mankind to choose Him over everyone and everything else and put Him first. God wants His creation to seek Him as passionately as He seeks them (John 4:23–24). God desires that His human creation acknowledges that He is a good God, a merciful God, and a loving God. As a result of His goodness, God wants His creation to reciprocate that love by giving Him what He deserves, which is their praise, honor, worship, and a daily lifestyle of serving Him. When God reveals His divine presence to His human creation, He may receive a welcoming, humble, willing person who seeks to please Him because of who He is. Although God is the divine Creator of every living thing, He is loving, kind, merciful, and a good father. When He reveals Himself, He could receive a cold-hearted and prideful human response that rejects His love or His existence. A response of rejecting God is an indication of someone’s lack of value and reverence for Him because of their extreme arrogance and self-sustaining mortal beliefs and efforts.¹²⁴

When humans are presented with evidence of a divine self-existent power, they are directly impacted in their mind, body, and soul, they innately and fully understand the information. Humans have free will to accept and revere or reject the evidence of a good and loving divine self-existent power. An accepting response would be to participate in all the good God desires to give them willingly. Scripture offers a correct response for humans to God who

¹²³ Samira Kawash, “Incarnate Worship,” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 324 (2022): 1–6.

¹²⁴ Paul K. Moser, “Responsive Phenomenology of God: On Varying Divine Evidence,” *Expository Times* 132, no. 10 (2021): 426–35.

seeks to have fellowship with them, “O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in Him” (Ps 34:8). By taking refuge in God and His divine love and goodness is mankind’s free will choosing to humble and submit their mortal lives to an immortal God, desiring that His will be done in their lives (Luke 22:42; Matt 6:9–10).¹²⁵

There are three worship models that undergird the researcher’s work. The definitions by the authors of the worship models represent the principles that guide the models. The researcher will examine and discuss the models related to the topic.

Reforming Worship Model

The reforming worship model teaches the who, what, where, when, and how of corporate worship. It encompasses worship principles regulated by Scripture. It is a commitment to scriptural principles of worship. It requires the substance of corporate worship to be permeated with Scripture and theology. It benefits the service of God, reverent, and nurtures Christian discipleship. The regulative principles of the model are preaching, reading, singing, praying, and seeing the Bible. The model is manageable. There are no predictable prayers, no complicated rituals, and New Covenant principles shape the worship.¹²⁶ There is no fixed approach in the model; there is flexibility. There can be different worship orders. There can be little or more current styles of music and a substantial amount of diversity. There should be caution with the worship order to make sure the Holy Spirit is guiding the service instead of the service being governed by the worship leader’s self-will (John 14:26). It is reverent, spiritually impassioned, easily adaptable to any culture, and biblical. The Christian church has been worshiping the

¹²⁵ Moser, “Responsive Phenomenology,” 426–35.

¹²⁶ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 71, 77, 82, 84, 87.

reformed way for centuries. The model stems from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation of the Reformed branch.¹²⁷

Theological Worship Model

The theological worship model is based on the worship principle that theology is worship and worship should be theological. Biblical worship is theology. This model is from the standpoint of teaching Christians what the biblical standard of worship was in the Old Testament. The model gives a framework of how the Israelites engaged with God. The model gives principles to govern the study of worship. It provides various themes of worship to describe how and why God desires His people to worship Him. The model provides key concepts and themes on worship and their meanings from the Old Testament to the New Testament for a better understanding of what worship is and how it applies today. The use of the model is for preaching, teaching, and putting into practice the biblical-theological approaches.¹²⁸

Clearly, worship leaders cannot solely address the questions that congregants have, but they must realize that the people in their churches, for the most part, are not studying their Bibles on their own much. Also, most of them do not take advantage of the spiritual and educational resources available to them from their church. For many, they learn about God in corporate worship only. Even though it is unfair for the weekly service to bear the load of instruction, at the same time, leaders need to realize that gathered worship is often the beginning, not the classroom where God's Word forms the believer's theology. To learn theology is not just a strong exercise

¹²⁷ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 11, 87.

¹²⁸ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 19–20, 24.

of memorizing facts. It is a coordinated way of being known by God and knowing God. Worship is the setting where fundamental theology takes place and where congregants are theologized.¹²⁹

God has already defined how a person prospers (3 John 1:24; Jer 29:11), how He is to be worshiped (John 4:23–24), and the local church's purpose (Eph 4:11–16). Christians gather at local churches and all facets of that worship are spiritual consistent with the basic needs for worship. For example, worship must be in spirit and truth and that means God, He is Spirit, and that is the truth. He expects His worshipers to be spiritual. There is but one rulebook, and it is God's Word. Worshiping God in truth is being obedient to Him and the equivalent is showing God that they love Him (John 14, 15). The nature of the Lord's Supper (a memorial, a remembrance), singing (scripturally sound songs, melody in one's heart), giving (as resolved in one's heart), prayer (from those in the spirit through Jesus), and building up of the body through edification (suitable topics/scripture that aids the church's commission). They all detail worship in truth. The fundamental reasons for the Christian's beliefs should be that they are on the road to heaven and are in this world pleasing God and worshipping God.¹³⁰ The model is to help Christian's worship in the right direction and is directed at Christians who want to worship acceptably and in alignment with Scripture.¹³¹

Transforming Worship Model

The transforming worship model is a shared experience that integrates typical spiritual practices to encounter God through Christ enabled by the Holy Spirit. It is something done with others in cooperation with the people of God. The activities are designed for people to

¹²⁹ Zac M. Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 69.

¹³⁰ John Gill, *God* (Chicago, IL: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2020), 185, 192, 194–95, ProQuest E-book.

¹³¹ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 20.

participate, instead of watching others experience the worship practices. Transforming worship is founded on customary Christian disciplines such as Scripture reading, prayer, the Lord's Supper, confession, and baptism. These practices have been a part of the church since the early church days. The theory is that all the major parts of the church service can be spiritually formative, not just the sermon.¹³²

To advance spiritual transformation, a curriculum can be used to teach Christians to follow Jesus and become disciples of Christ. Its critical components include the teaching of core Christian knowledge, training in essential spiritual applications, and training in essential spiritual service-learning events. Also, the continual reminders of vital spiritual truths (such as stewardship of time and money, forgiveness, handling conflict, and authority in spiritual conflict). Along with these, there should be occasions for congregants to be guided through specified practices of the gospel to individual issues. The belief that growth and change are possible and worth Christians making the effort is vital to spiritual formation. Having a spiritual and moral vision is more than simply a vision that stirs believers emotionally, it is part of what gives the hope of a real possibility of transformation. The thought of having a vision is mirrored in Paul's encouragement that Christians should have a perspective on things that would lead them to press forward spiritually (Phil 3:12–15).¹³³ At the center of the experience is an intimate meeting with Christ. Transforming worship does not attempt to teach but seeks an encounter with the person of Christ. The main goal is for worshipers to meet the one who renews, shapes, and transforms believers' lives in God's presence.¹³⁴

¹³² Noland, *Transforming Worship*, 22.

¹³³ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 49, 70, ProQuest E-book.

¹³⁴ Noland, *Transforming Worship*, 22.

Orthodox writers have explained thoroughly the comprehensive character of human transformation through their unity with Jesus Christ. The manifestation uniformly is a doctrine of participation or sharing. Christ shares fully in what humans are, and He makes it possible for humans to share in what He is, in His divine glory and life. Jesus became what humans are, so He could make humans what He is.¹³⁵

Jesus advised that if anyone has ears, let them hear, and listen (Mark 4:23–24). The ears that are needed to hear include an accountable propensity leaning to a cooperative human response to the redemptive will of God. That response puts someone in a posture to receive the type of divine power that manifests and enables God’s distinctive redemptive transformation in a consenting human. This power provides the preeminence of God’s virtuous will in a cooperative human life and has a unique righteous value in transforming a life in the direction of divine goodness.¹³⁶

The reforming worship model undergirds the researcher’s work because it helps govern and regulate worship service based on scriptural principles from praying, teaching, singing, reading of Scripture, preaching, and the Lord’s Table to baptism. It will help congregants become grounded in what worship truly is and inform them of why they should worship and what God seeks from worshipers. It will help guide the research to ensure that it will consist of principles representing reverence for God and commitment to God through corporate worship. The theological worship model undergirds the researcher’s work because it ensures that it will be theologically sound. It will help by giving worshipers a blueprint to worship that will give them a sense of what God expected under the Old Covenant from His worshipers and points them in the

¹³⁵ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 43.

¹³⁶ Moser, “Responsive Phenomenology,” 426–35.

right direction toward Jesus for true worship principles under the New Covenant (John 4:23–24). The transforming worship model undergirds the researcher’s work because it will help guide the worshiper into an intimate experience with God through participation. It will help guide the planning of worship to create an atmosphere of communal worship where the worshiper can be shaped by the Holy Spirit and transformed in the presence of God. These models will help motivate the worshiper to become committed and respond to God acceptably (Rom 12:1–2).

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that God cares about how Christians worship Him. God revealed in His Word that He is worthy of praise and worship, and people were created to worship Him alone. Christians should worship Him, in response to His goodness, majesty, greatness, and power reflected in His creation (Rev 14:7). Idolatry is the primary problem of humanity, and idol worship gives rise to Christians offering unacceptable worship to God.¹³⁷ Idolatry effectuates Christians to dishonor God and become disobedient. False images tell lies to the believer and misrepresent the Bible.¹³⁸ Idol worshipers offend God, make Him jealous, and they begin to become like the idols they worship, instead of becoming like God and reflecting Him. God has a covenant relationship with Christians, and they should learn from Scripture to worship Him and obey Him.¹³⁹

Worship should be governed and regulated by Scripture, and it should be theologically sound (2 Tim 3:16–17) so it will point Christians in the right direction of what true worship is. It should be taught in such a way that Christians understand what God expects from those He seeks

¹³⁷ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 11, 29.

¹³⁸ Dennis Okholm, *Learning Theology Through the Church’s Worship: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 18, ProQuest E-book.

¹³⁹ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 94.

to worship Him. Worship should come from a heart of respect, love, honor, and gratitude. Christian worship should be passionate and presented to God with reverence.¹⁴⁰

Worship should be done with the right attitude, an inward expression from the heart ushered in through the New Covenant by Jesus. No longer is worship an outward expression adapting to a place and repetitive patterns of behavior. Christians must surrender their lives to God by having a lifestyle of worship. They must allow worship to shape them and transform them into the image of Christ as they gather for an intimate experience with God during corporate worship (Rom 12:1–2).¹⁴¹ The Holy Spirit in Christians given by Christ assures endurance to glory. A spiritual life is worked through Christians by the sovereign God, and He unites Christians to Christ, and they no longer are completely deprived. Christians now can respond to God with gestures of faith, love, and hope.¹⁴² Christians must worship the Father willingly, excitedly, and with awe through Jesus because He is the truth (John 14:6).¹⁴³ Worshiping God in spirit and in truth will help Christians become committed worshipers who revere Him (Heb 12:28).

¹⁴⁰ Smuts, “The Power,” 221–37.

¹⁴¹ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1364.

¹⁴² Jones, *Knowing Sin*, 28, 37.

¹⁴³ Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 1049.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

There is a problem at Life Changers Church, and it is a lack of teaching on modern-day idol worship, which renders a lack of committed worshipers who revere God. The purpose of this action research project is to implement a worship handbook that will motivate congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God. In this chapter, the researcher lays out a plan to aid the participants through teaching out of a worship handbook and assigning tasks that will assist in recognizing modern-day idol worship in their lives. The plan explains how participants will be taught and gain the knowledge to see where they are deficient in their worship and will be able to make changes in their thinking and their actions (Rom 12:1–2). The action plan will change their spiritual and personal lives and cause them to be able to offer true worship to God (John 4:23–24). The tools the researcher will use to measure the success of the plan will be observation, interviews, questionnaires, and progress notes from the participants throughout the intervention to discover sustainable solutions to the worship problem.

Intervention Design

The purpose of the action research is to implement a worship handbook that will motivate congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God. To accomplish this goal, the researcher will conduct an intervention. The researcher will ask the senior pastor of Life Changers Church for permission to recruit members for the intervention and to be allowed to use the church location for the intervention (see Appendix A). Upon approval (see Appendix B), the researcher will recruit participants for the intervention.

The researcher will contact each participant face-to-face or over the phone to ask if they would be willing to participate in an intervention action research study (see Appendix C). The researcher will explain that there is a worship problem at Life Changers Church, that they are directly affected by the problem, and that they are needed to help find sustainable solutions to the problem. The researcher will tell the recruits that the problem is a lack of teaching on modern-day idol worship, which renders a lack of committed worshipers who revere God. The recruits will be asked if they are willing to participate in the intervention. If they agree to participate, they will be given a consent form to sign and return to the researcher (see Appendix D). They will be told that the intervention will be in the form of a Bible class teaching about worship and that the consent form has more details about the intervention. The participants will be given a tentative beginning and end date for the intervention. The researcher will collaborate with the participants on a meeting place for the intervention. It will be a place that is comfortable for them so they will be able to be more transparent during the intervention. The researcher may have to make a Zoom call online to teach the participants. The researcher will teach the participants through videos, music, and literature.

The participants will be involved by having hands-on experience through singing, sharing, reflections, and any helpful input related to the problem. The researcher will get verbal feedback through open-ended questionnaires and interviews (see Appendix E and F). Two weeks before the intervention, the researcher will email a questionnaire to the participants. They will return it the week before the Bible class. Boundaries will be set for the research by the investigator that everyone involved can agree to. The recruits involved in the intervention will possibly be three teenagers, a praise and worship singer, a pastor, a young woman, and two married couples.

To enact the intervention, each Thursday, starting at seven in the evening for one hour during the intervention, the Bible class will begin with a prayer. It will be in a preplanned location that is comfortable for the participants. The researcher will teach a worship topic or a topic related to worship, define the topic, and introduce a biblical story to represent the topic and a biblical text for the topic. There will also be a prayer related to worship and reflection questions on the topic. The teaching will come from the worship handbook (see Appendix G). The researcher will teach the participants about acceptable and unacceptable worship. The participants will be taught who Christians should worship and should not worship, why they should worship, and how to worship from biblical and theological standards. The teachings will also explain modern-day idol worship, how God feels about idol worship, the consequences of idol worship, and the blessings of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. The teaching on worship will begin in the Old Testament and end in the New Testament. Each Old Testament worship topic will be explained to reveal how it points to the New Covenant in the New Testament through Jesus Christ. Each New Testament worship topic will be explained to reveal how the New Covenant through Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant in the Old Testament.

At the end of the Bible class, the participants will be asked if they understand the context of the Scripture verse. To encourage involvement, the researcher will inquire about what text stood out to them that was extraordinary. The participants will be encouraged to describe how they can relate some of their daily actions to the actions of the characters in the Bible. The participants will be asked if they understand and agree with God's actions and requirements for worship and to explain. To see if the participants have a lifestyle of reading the Bible, they will be asked if they are aware of another scripture in the Bible that relates to the topic text. The researcher will encourage the participants to offer any scriptural texts that they think should be

taught to the congregation. The researcher will inquire if the participants believe they are committed worshipers who revere God and why or why not.

The investigator will explore what could be done to help the participants become committed worshipers who revere God. The teaching on worship from the Bible class will be printed on regular copier paper that the participants will take home to reflect on. To engage in the intervention activities and apply what they are learning, the participants will be asked to duplicate what the researcher has done in the Bible class in certain areas. For example, based on their personal needs and what they believe will help the worship problems they may have, the participants will choose their worship topic, a definition of the topic, a biblical story to represent the topic, and a biblical text for the topic. The participants will also add a prayer related to the worship topic and a reflection question(s) on the topic. The Bible text will be in the King James Version, the New International Version, and the Amplified Bible. Each week for an hour on Thursday, participants will have space to voice their reflection thoughts, express through a song, and discuss their topic for clarity at the Bible class. They will also be able to express how they believe the teaching on the worship topic will or will not affect how they will worship in the future. The participants will be asked to bring a notebook and writing utensils to take notes and for their reflections. The participants will be asked to meditate each day at their homes on the information that was shared until the next class.

The participants will be asked to engage in personal worship at their homes, such as singing, praying, and Scripture reading throughout the week until Sunday service so they will be spiritually primed and ready to worship corporately to have a personal encounter with God. They will be asked to use a reflection journal at home so the researcher can track the success of their participation. The Bible class will be audio-recorded. To determine the usefulness and success of

the intervention, the researcher will measure the outcome variables of each participant's spiritual growth throughout the time of the intervention. The outcome variables will be measured on different occasions by observations of each participant for the before and after-effects of the Bible class and it will also consider the element of cause and effect in other areas.¹

The researcher will measure the outcome of participation for each participant for engagement in the activities starting at week one, then at week three, at week six, at week nine, and at week twelve, which will be the end of the intervention. The observation levels of participation that will be measured include lack of participation, passive participation, moderate to energetic participation, and complete and committed participation in the class as presented in figure 1.

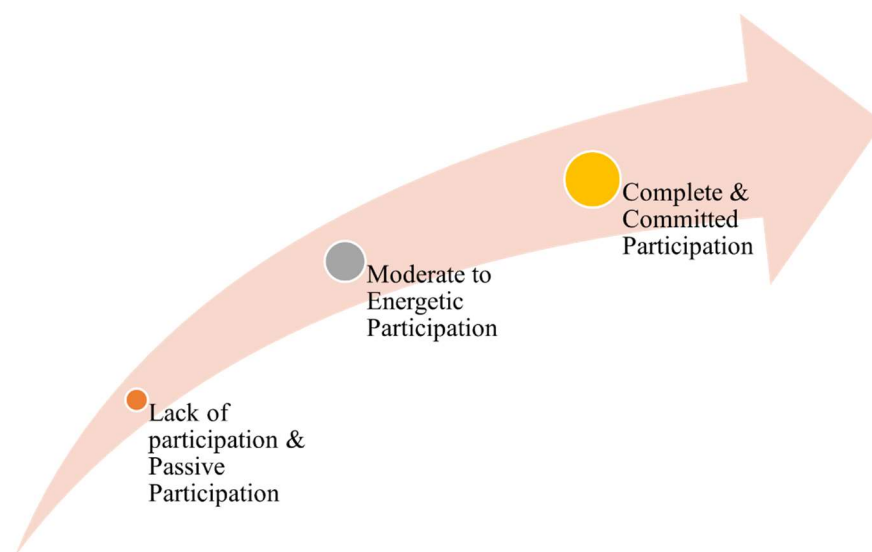


Figure 1. Data collection for levels of participation

The researcher will conduct interviews, offer open-ended questionnaires, and observe participants throughout the intervention based on and related to the problem presented and statement of purpose starting two weeks before the Bible class and then at various other points

¹ Jos W. R. Twisk, *Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis for Epidemiology: A Practical Guide* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1, ProQuest E-book.

during the intervention. These research tools will be used to measure any perception or behavior changes resulting from the teachings from the worship handbook and activities in the intervention. It is important to observe an individual's actions because sometimes a person will do things that are contrary to what they say and believe under a certain set of circumstances. How people spend their time, energy, and money is sometimes a poor representation of the values and beliefs of their church, community, and who God created them to be. Observation will also help the researcher gather information about the participant's cultural, social, physical, economic, and political contexts. By observing the participant's interactions, the researcher can better understand their ideas, relationships, norms, practices, and habits as presented in figure 2.²

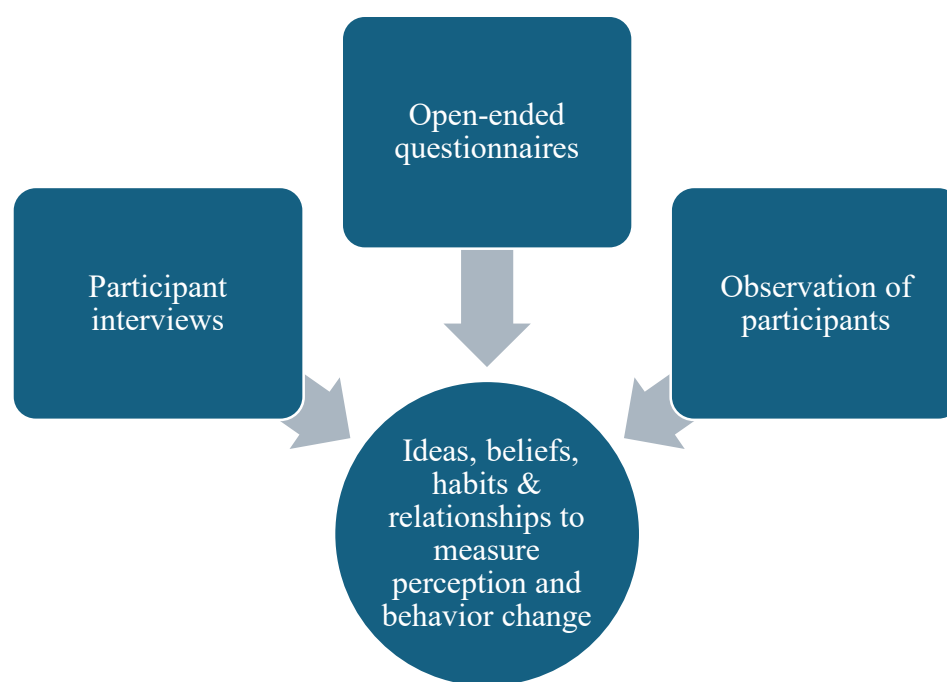


Figure 2. Data collection tools

The researcher will reach out to the participants to set up a time to conduct individual interviews that will be recorded for accuracy to analyze the data and measure results. The

² Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 93–94.

researcher will conduct interviews at a preplanned location where the participant feels comfortable and can be themselves. This allows for a relaxed conversation so the participant can feel like they can express what they think and feel about the questions asked. The researcher will start the recording right before the question is asked and stop recording when the participant has answered the last question. The researcher will regularly contact each participant via email, phone, or online to encourage them or assist them with anything that will help them stay on task. The researcher will contact the participants and review the plan to assess whether they are on task and progressing toward completing their weekly activities. There will be a collaboration on whether the plan needs to be modified in any areas. The researcher will give celebratory remarks to the participants for successfully achieving the tasks.³

The researcher will ask the participants to set up alerts on their cell phones to remind them to stay on task. The intervention would allow the researcher to teach and explain modern-day idol worship from the worship handbook. The intervention would allow the researcher to make a change to the researcher's problem by allowing the participants to be taught from the worship handbook about worship from a biblical standard, how important it is to God, and how important it should be to them. It would allow the participants to have input on what they believe they need to understand better what acceptable worship is. It would make a change by allowing the researcher to collaborate with participants to devise helpful research questions based on the problem and on their personal experiences and perspectives, and not the researcher's perspective or assumptions of what the solutions should be.⁴

³ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, Fourth ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2014), 105–6, 180.

⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 101.

The intervention would allow the participants to address and take control of the problem through hands-on experience and allow them to see through different lenses from God's point of view, the pastor's point of view, the congregation's point of view, and apply what they have learned to their lives. Through the intervention activities modern-day idol worship will be explained, the participants will be able to understand what type of worship God seeks, and they will be able to identify modern-day idol worship in their lives and address it with God's Word and through prayer. The intervention would allow the participants to lean on each other for support and encouragement. It would allow the researcher and the participants to accomplish rewarding results that fortify the community of believers ultimately.⁵

At the end of the action research intervention, the participants will have the researcher's worship handbook that was emailed to them. They will be asked to take their personalized worship teachings to be combined with the other participant's personalized worship teachings to construct a worship handbook that they can read and reflect on. The participants will also be able to use their interpersonal skills to share their personal experience and teach others from the researcher's worship handbook and their personalized worship handbook for long-term solutions to the problem.

If the intervention helps to increase teaching on modern-day idol worship and true worship of God and helps participants to become committed worshipers who revere God, then it may help other congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God. Christians must be educated so they can learn about modern-day idol worship and acceptable worship of God. Christians should be taught to make acceptable worship of God a habit because habits effortlessly shape the Christian's world. When a habit is formed, the brain no longer fully

⁵ Sensing, Qualitative Research, 163.

participates in decision-making, and the worship patterns that are practiced automatically emerge. Because the unconscious choices that someone makes form the individual just as much or more than the conscious ones, the patterns can shape someone who would never consciously choose them even if they were aware of them. A liturgy is a pattern of actions or words regularly repeated as a way of worship and formed in a particular way. Formation is what is practiced and done, and about unseen habits. People become their habits because habits shape their hearts. People must be taught that making and trusting in idols will cause them to become like them (Ps 31:6) because what they trust and depend on is what they will love. People are what they love, and what they love is what they worship. Christians learn to love God through practice and experience as presented in figure 3.⁶



Figure 3. Teaching about true worship

⁶ James K. A. Smith, *You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 14–15, 34, 43.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The researcher secured IRB approval for the intervention design on April 24, 2023 (see Appendix H). The researcher conducted an intervention for a problem at Life Changers Church, which is a lack of teaching on idol worship and renders a lack of committed worshipers who revere God. The researcher approached the senior pastor of Life Changers and explained that there is a problem at Life Changers and what the problem is. The researcher asked the senior pastor if he agreed that the problem existed. He agreed that the problem existed at Life Changers Church. The researcher asked permission to recruit members to be a part of the intervention and to be allowed to use the church location for the intervention if needed (see Appendix A). The senior pastor was happy to help the researcher in any way possible. The senior pastor gave the researcher permission to use Life Changers Church to conduct the intervention and permission to recruit participants (see Appendix B).

Each participant was contacted either in person, by phone, or by email to ask if they would be willing to participate in an intervention action research study (see Appendix C). The recruits were informed that there is a worship problem at Life Changers Church, that they are directly affected by the problem, and that the researcher needs their help to find solutions to the problem that would be sustainable. The researcher explained to the recruits that the problem is a lack of teaching on modern-day idol worship, which renders a lack of committed worshipers who revere God. The recruits agreed to be a part of the research study. The recruits were told that they would be emailed a consent form to sign and return to the researcher. The consent form was emailed and had more details about the intervention. The consent form was signed and returned within a few days (see Appendix D). After receiving the consent forms (see Appendix D), the researcher called the participants to remind them that the intervention would be in the form of a

Bible class teaching about Christian worship and idol worship. The participants were given a tentative start and end date for the intervention.

The researcher collaborated with the participants on a meeting place for the intervention, a place that was comfortable for them so that they would be able to be more transparent during the intervention. The participants agreed to meet at the researcher's home for the intervention. Calls were made through FaceTime on cell phones to teach a married couple and two teenagers who could not physically be present for the intervention. The married couple and teenagers were on FaceTime during the time that the other participants who were physically present were being taught.

The researcher played music for the participants to sing along with. The participants were encouraged to volunteer to sing a worship song and share personal worship stories, reflections, and give any helpful input related to the problem during the research. There were songs that were sung each week (see table 1). The researcher received written feedback through open-ended questionnaires and verbal feedback through interviews (see Appendix E and F).

One week before the first Bible class was supposed to begin, the researcher emailed a questionnaire to the participants and conducted interviews. Some interviews were face-to-face at the participant's homes and some interviews were over the phone. The participants returned the questionnaires between one and three days.

The participants that were involved in the intervention were three teenagers, a praise and worship singer (leader), a pastor, a young single woman, and two married couples. When the researcher read some of the questionnaire answers from the teenagers, the researcher smiled and felt joy because of their seemingly sincere and straight-to-the point answers. One of them elaborated fully on some of the questions. The interviews were audio recorded along with the

researcher taking notes. All the following interviews were audio recorded along with the researcher taking notes. The interviews were in person at the participant's homes or over the phone. After the fifth Bible class, the researcher started conducting the second interviews with the participants and emailed the second questionnaires to the participants.

The questionnaires were returned to the researcher between one and three days. The third interviews were conducted a week after the final Bible class because of the participants' holiday schedules and because the researcher had training class. The third questionnaires were emailed to the participants the next day after the tenth and final Bible class. Some of the questionnaires were returned to the researcher by email between one and three days, and some were returned four or five days later by email because the participants forgot to send them. The researcher set a one-hour or less time boundary for the research Bible class that all the participants agreed to.

There is a schedule of weekly research activities as presented in table 1.

Table 1. Schedule of weekly research activities

Week 0:	Initial	Interviews	Interviews	Questionnaires
Schedule of Research Activity	questionnaires sent to participants	scheduled	conducted	returned
Week 1: Sept 07, 2023 Thursday 7pm	Theme: The Root of Modern-day Idol worship and How to Avoid It	Song: "Here I Am to Worship"	Scriptures: Isa 14:12–15; Gen 3; 1 Cor 2:15–17; Rom 5:12–21; Gal 5:19–26; Matt 4:8–12	
Week 2: Sept 14, 2023	Theme: Deficient Worship	Song: "Great Is Your Mercy"	Scriptures: Gen 4; John 8:44; Num 18:26; Mal,	

Thursday 7pm			3:10; Col 3:23–24; Matt 5:21	
Week 3: Sept 21, 2023 Thursday 7pm	Theme: God's Command for Worship Is Founded on Love	Song: “Wonderful Jesus”	Scriptures: Exod 20:2–6; Gen 22:1–18	
Week 4: Sept 28, 2023 Thursday 7pm	Theme: Dualistic Worship	Song: “Awesome”	Scriptures: Matt 6:24; Exod 32:1– 10; Ps 27:14	
Week 5: Oct 06, 2023 Thursday 7pm	Theme: Prideful Worship	Song: “King of Glory”	Scriptures: Gal 5:20–26; 1 Sam 15:10–28	Second questionnaires emailed to participants
Week 6: Oct 12, 2023 Friday 7pm	Theme: True Worship	Song: “You Deserve It”	Scriptures: Ps 89:20–37, 51:1– 17; Heb 12:28; Rom 14:11, John 4:21–24	Second interviews conducted
Week 7: Oct 26, 2023 Thursday 7pm	Theme: Ritualistic Worship	Song: “Anointing Fall on Me”	Scriptures: Mal 3:5, 9,14, Matt 15:1–20	
Week 8: Nov 02, 2023	Theme: Singing As Worship	Song: “Joshua Fought the	Scriptures:	

Thursday 7pm		Battle of Jericho”	John 4:23–24; Heb 10:25; Ps 113:3, 100, 150	
Week 9: Nov 09, 2023 Thursday 7pm	Theme: Worship and Spiritual Adultery and Sins of the Flesh	Song: “Holy”	Scriptures: Jas 4:4, Gal 5:16– 25; 1 John 2:14– 15; Rom 12:1–2; 1 Kgs 11:1–13; Deut 17; Prov 16:18–19	
Week 10: Nov 12, 2023 Friday 7pm	Theme: Worship Hypocrisy	Song: “Victors Crown”	Scriptures: Amos 5:14, 18; 6:14, Matt 23:1–36; 2 Cor 11:14	
Week 11	Final interviews conducted			
Week 12	Researcher reviewed questionnaires, interviews, and Bible class feedback			

Week One Intervention: The Root of Modern-day Idolatry and How to Avoid It

The researcher enacted the first session with a Bible class on a Thursday at 7 p.m., which lasted for one hour. The Bible class was at the researcher’s home, which was agreed upon by the researcher and participants. A call was made through FaceTime to teach four participants. The

researcher taught the participants from the worship handbook. The researcher welcomed six participants in person to the class. The researcher asked if any of the participants would like to say a prayer before the teaching started. After the prayer, the researcher played a song called “Here I Am to Worship.”⁷

After the song ended, the researcher reiterated why the participants were there, which was for an intervention to help them become committed worshipers who revere God. The researcher believed that a lack of teaching on modern-day idol worship and true worship was hindering their corporate and private worship of God.

Based on the answers on the questionnaires and interviews with the participants, the researcher explained that the sins of modern-day idols (self-will, pride, addictions, social media, video games, entertainment, money, and disobedience) were affecting their lives negatively and their commitment and reverence to God. The participants were encouraged to take notes during class with the notebook and pen that the researcher gave them. Each participant was given a list of definitions for the words (biblical worship, commitment, covenant, idol worship, modern-day idols, reverence, and spiritual formation) and the researcher read the definitions to them (see Appendix G). The researcher informed the participants that God cares about how He is worshiped, and the instructions are in the Bible. They were informed that there is a right way and a wrong way to worship God. They were informed of some ways to worship God, which is through singing, praying, reading Scripture, preaching, teaching Scripture, the Lord’s Table, Baptism, and serving.

⁷ Tim Hughes, vocalist, “Here I Am to Worship,” by Tim Hughes, recorded 2001, on *Worship Together* Survivor Records, CD.

They were told that Christians should not worship idols because it is a sin, and it would negatively affect their lives. Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments were given along with a theme, a definition for the theme, and the Scripture story was discussed. The researcher explained that it is important for Christians to know and understand why they behave the way that they do. It is vital to know their past so that they can use God's Word to help them and keep them from repeating the sins of their ancestors. It is important to know the origin of idol worship, the first beings to worship God, the first idol worshipers, and God's reaction was discussed.

It was explained by the researcher that Lucifer, the originator of idolatry and sin, rebelled. He wanted to replace God on the throne and to be the object of worship, but God cast him and his angels out of heaven (Isa 14:12–15). The researcher explained that idol worship was the cause of original sin and how Satan, the serpent, influenced Adam and Eve to disobey God (Gen 3). Adam and Eve were tempted by the lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, which is in the world. The lust came between them and God and caused them to be disobedient to God. The choices that they made indicated that they loved their flesh more than they loved God (1 Cor 2:15–17). The researcher explained that mankind's sin was a result of their sinful nature through Adam but there was hope in Christ who made Christians righteous (Rom 5:12–21). Idol worship was explained as a sin of the flesh and how it affects Christians' lives negatively, how they can resist it and avoid it (Gal 5:19–26). It was explained that Satan has been tempting people since the beginning of time (Gen 3). He even tried to tempt Jesus, but Jesus defeated Satan with the Word of God, and Satan fled from Him (Matt 4:8–12). After the teaching, the researcher read reflection questions and read a prayer related to the theme. The teaching, reflections, and the prayer came from the worship handbook (see Appendix G).

After the prayer, the participants were asked if they had any questions or comments about the definitions. The participants were encouraged to talk about any idols that they think they may have in their lives that are affecting them negatively, if they felt comfortable speaking about it. The participants were asked if they knew the origin of idol worship before the Bible class.

The participants were asked in what ways Satan attacks or influences them or others they know, which cause them to partake in idol worship. The participants were asked how they tried to resist or avoid the influences of those idols. After the participant's comments, they were informed about their weekly homework assignment, which duplicated what the researcher had done in the Bible class in certain areas. For example, based on their personal needs and what they believe will help the worship problems they may have, the participants were asked to choose a worship topic, a definition of the topic, a biblical story to represent the topic, and a biblical text for the topic.

They were asked to add a reflection question(s) and a prayer related to the worship topic and theme. The participants were told they could use the King James Version, New International Version, or Amplified Bible for their scriptures. The next day, the participants were emailed an example of what the assignment should look like, which was a copy of the teaching from the first Bible class. They were told that each week they would have some time to express their reflection thoughts, express through a worship song, and or discuss their homework topic for clarity in the Bible class. They would also be able to express how they believe the teaching on the worship topic would or would not affect how they will worship in the future. The participants were asked to bring their notebooks or journals and writing utensils to take notes for their reflections each week. Each participant was asked to meditate every day with quality time on the information was shared at Bible class until the next Bible class.

All the participants were asked to engage in personal worship in their private times such as praying, singing, and Scripture reading throughout the week so they would be spiritually renewed and ready to gather and worship corporately to have a personal encounter with God on Sunday. They were asked to use a reflection journal or notebook at home so the researcher could track the progress of their participation during and at the end of the intervention. The participants were informed that an email would be sent to them the next day to remind them of their homework assignments. A day and time were agreed upon for the next Bible class, and they were asked to bow their heads for prayer. The researcher led a prayer based on the teachings, prayed for the safety of the participants, that blessings be upon them, and ended the class. The recorder was then stopped. The following Monday, the researcher called each participant to confirm they would be at the second Bible class. Participants one through ten were present.

Week Two Intervention: Deficient Worship

Once the participants arrived, the participants were greeted. They were asked to bow their heads for prayer, and the researcher prayed. After the prayer, the researcher played a worship song called “Great Is Your Mercy.”⁸

After the song ended, the participants were told that the theme of the Bible class was deficient worship (see Appendix G). The investigator read Genesis 4:1-20 and explained how Cain and Abel offered worship to God from their substance. It was explained that Cain offered God an inferior harvest from the ground, which was deficient worship. It was not his best; it was probably something he would not consume himself and something that was not a real sacrifice. God did not accept Cain’s worship, because he worshiped God the wrong way. It was not true

⁸ Donnie McClurkin, vocalist, “Great Is Your Mercy,” by Don Moen, recorded 2000, on *Live in London and More*, Zomba Records, CD.

worship from his heart out of love and appreciation for God, for what He had done for him, and for who He is. God is the one who created the earth for Cain and allowed him to bring forth a harvest. Cain was angry, and God told him if he had given Him his best, He would have accepted it. God warned Cain that sin was waiting at his door and he must rule over it and not allow it to overtake him and cause him to commit an act of sin because he worshiped God the wrong way and is now angry.

The participants were reminded of the scripture that says to be angry but sin not because Satan is looking for an opportunity to lead Christians into sin (Eph 4:26–27). Abel gave God the firstborn of his flock. He gave his best, and God accepted it. Abel worshiped God the right way. Because Cain was angry and jealous of Abel because God accepted his offering and rejected Cain's, he killed his brother in a field. Cain allowed Satan to influence him like he influenced his parents, Adam and Eve.

Cain put his wants and desires before God's desires. He became a murderer like Satan. The researcher talked about how Jesus said that the scribes and Pharisees were of their father, the devil, and what the lusts of one's father one will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and did not abide by the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks of lies, it is his native language. He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44, New International Version). When Cain did what Satan influenced him to do, he disobeyed God, he made Satan his father, and his god, which is idolatry. God judged him by not allowing the earth to yield any harvest and drove him away from the land (Gen 4). Abel gave God his first, the tithe (Num 18:26; Mal 3:10). In Matthew 6:21, Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, your heart will be also." When Christians tithe and give offerings instead of keeping it for themselves, it is an indicator that their heart is not tied to their money or things, and they love God more than money or things. The researcher

informed the participants that Christians should always give their best when they serve God, with their tithe, in church, in their families, and in their jobs because they are to serve unto the Lord. Christians should serve God in all of life. When serving others, Christians are serving God (Col 3:23–24).

The researcher read reflection questions and a prayer about deficient worship. The participants were asked if they had any questions or comments about deficient worship and if they could think of any times they gave God deficient worship. The participants were reminded to pray and ask God to help them not to offer deficient worship. They were encouraged to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of the Bible class teaching. They collectively selected when to next meet for Bible class, and the researcher asked someone to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent.

Week Three Intervention: God’s Commands for Worship Is Founded on Love

The participants were welcomed to class. The class began with a prayer; one of the participants was asked to pray. The researcher announced that one of the participants would sing a worship song and asked all the participants to sing along. The song was called “Wonderful Jesus.”⁹

The theme of the Bible class was announced: God’s commands for worship are founded on love (see Appendix G). The participants were reminded to take notes. The researcher read Matthew 22:36–40 and explained that the relationship between God and mankind is rooted and framed in love. God wants a reciprocal and comprehensive relationship. He does not want to

⁹ Zachary Williams and Frank Holt, vocalist, “Wonderful Jesus,” by Zachary Williams and Frank Holt, recorded 2019, on *The Next Chapter*, Enon Music Group, CD.

share His creation's heart with anyone. He wants to be on the throne of His creation's heart. He explained how he wanted to be worshiped through His first and second commandments. He wanted to be put first. The researcher read and explained Exodus 20:2–6, which says to love God is to obey Him and to disobey Him is to hate Him. The investigator explained Genesis 22:1–18, the story of how God tested Abraham to see if he would choose to obey God or disobey God by showing he loved his son more than he loved God. The story was an example of how God wants His creation to love Him more than anyone or anything, and to trust Him to provide when He is obeyed and put first. The investigator read the reflections and a prayer based on the theme.

The participants were asked if they wanted to share any personal situations where they did not obey God or put Him first because they loved something or someone more than Him. They were asked if they could give an example of how someone might disobey God to please someone they love instead of pleasing God, which demonstrates hatred for God (Exod 20:1–6). At the end of class, the participants were encouraged to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for copies of the Bible class teachings. They were reminded to check for week four's Bible teaching that will be emailed to them the next day. The participants and the researcher agreed on the day for the next Bible class, and someone was asked to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent.

Week Four Intervention: Dualistic Worship

The participants were informed that the class was about to begin, and someone was asked to pray. After the prayer, one of the participants was asked to lead a worship song. The song was called “Awesome.”¹⁰ After the worship song, the researcher asked everyone to prepare to take notes. The theme of the Bible class was announced, which was dualistic worship (see Appendix G). The researcher read Matthew 6:24 and explained that Christians should not love anything more than God or serve something alongside God in their hearts. It was explained to the participants that Christians must love and be loyal to God and hate false gods. Christians cannot serve God and money. They must make a choice. It is worshiping God the wrong way. An example of Matthew 6:24 was given by reading Exodus 32:1–10. The investigator explained how the Israelites created and made sacrifices to a golden calf and viewed it as a mediator between them and God. They wanted to communicate with it, rely on it, and trust something that could not see, hear, or talk to them.

Moses was the only mediator between them and God (Exod 32:1–10). When Christians feel like God is taking too long to answer their prayers, they take matters in their own hands and seek other means for getting what they want instead of waiting on God (Ps 27:14). The researcher read the reflections and a prayer based on the theme of the Bible class. The participants were asked if they could think of any examples of how they or anyone they knew practiced dualistic worship or used something as a mediator to get what they wanted or needed from God. The researcher gave some examples of possible mediators to help the participants come up with some examples of their own. Some examples the researcher gave were sageing to

¹⁰ Charles Jenkins, vocalist, “Awesome,” by Richard Mullins, recorded 2012, on *The Best of Both Worlds*, Inspired People Music, CD.

get rid of evil spirits, using crystals, consulting psychics, tarot cards, palm reading, mixing other religious beliefs with Christian beliefs, and praying to one's ancestors or other biblical characters.

At the end of class, the participants were encouraged to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for copies of the Bible class teachings. They were reminded to check for week four's Bible teaching that will be emailed to them the next day. The next meeting day for the Bible class was agreed upon, and someone was asked to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent.

Week Five Intervention: Prideful Worship

The participants were told that the Bible class would begin and then started the recording. The researcher prayed. After the prayer, a participant was asked to lead the class with a worship song. The song was called "King of Glory."¹¹

After the song ended, the participants were asked to prepare to take notes. The theme of the Bible class was introduced, which was prideful worship (see Appendix G). The participants were reminded that pride was the first sin introduced by Lucifer and that humility was an antidote for it. The researcher read Galatians 5:20–26 and gave the participants several scripture verses about pride. A biblical story about prideful worship in 1 Samuel 15:10–28 and 1 Samuel 28 was told. It was explained how King Saul was so prideful that he disobeyed God's instructions, offered a sacrifice of worship instead of waiting on the priest to do it, and, out of fear, consulted a witch, which caused him and his son's demise.

¹¹ CeCe Winans, vocalist, "King of Glory," by Anthony Todd Dulaney, recorded 2021, on *Believe for It*, Pure Springs Gospel Inc.

The participants were offered an explanation of how excessive pride can cause someone to become arrogant, impatient, fearful, self-centered and replace God on the throne of superiority in their heart. The researcher explained how pride can cause someone to lose favor and their blessings from God. It was pointed out that King Saul manifested several sins because of pride (Gal 5:20–26). The reflections and prayer related to prideful worship were read. The participants were asked if they could give any examples of prideful worship or if they had any questions or comments about King Saul’s downfall. At the end of class, the researcher encouraged the participants to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of week five Bible class teachings. The next meeting day for Bible class was agreed upon and a participant was asked to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent from class.

Week Six Intervention: True Worship

The participants were told that the intervention would begin and then started the recording. The researcher prayed. After the prayer, a participant was asked to lead the class with a worship song. The song was called “You Deserve It.”¹²

After the song ended, the participants were asked to prepare to take notes. The theme of the Bible class was introduced, which was true worship (see Appendix G). The researcher gave an Old Testament example of someone who exhibited true worship, which was King David. The investigator explained how God found King David and was pleased with his worship (Ps 89:20–37). He was the apple of God’s eye (Ps 17:8). King David worshiped God the right way. He drove evil spirits away from King Saul by worshiping through music and playing his harp (1

¹² J. J. Hairston, vocalist, “You Deserve It,” by James Hairston, Phontae Reed, Cortez Vaughn, and David Bloom, recorded 2019, on *J.J. Hairston and Youthful Praise, You Deserve It*, James Town Music, CD.

Samuel 16:23). He worshiped with all his might, dancing and leaping before the Lord as the ark of the Lord was brought to his tabernacle.

King David always gave God his best. He gave God his heart (2 Sam 6:12–17), and when he sinned, he repented from his heart (Ps 51:1–17). The investigator explained how Jesus was the root (the source, the life) and offspring of King David, the radiant and bright Morning Star (Rev 22:16). It was explained how Christians must serve/worship God with reverence (Heb 12:28) and that every knee shall bow to Jesus, and every tongue shall confess to God (Rom 14:11). The researcher explained how New Covenant worship would not be in any specific place, it is in the truth of who Jesus is and the work He did on the cross. It is worship from the Christian's heart, mind, and soul (spirit).

Worship is in spirit and in truth (John 4:21–24). It was explained that Jesus is wherever true worship is, and He is wherever Christians are gathered in His name (Matt 18:20). He and His Father are with those who love Him (John 14:23). The researcher explained that Jesus exhibited true worship of God when He sacrificed His life on the cross for the sins of the world. Jesus's sacrifice stemmed from love, obedience, humility, and wanting to be in God's will (Phil 2:7–8; Matt 7:21). The reflections and a prayer related to true worship were read and the participants were asked if they had any comments or questions based on worshiping in spirit and in truth. They were asked if they had a better understanding of what John 4:23–24 meant. They were asked when they do not worship in spirit and in truth, what do they become (in behavior, thoughts, feelings). At the end of class, they were asked to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of week six Bible class teachings. The next meeting for Bible class was agreed upon and someone was asked to volunteer to pray

and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent from class.

Week Seven Intervention: Ritualistic Worship

The participants were told that the class would begin, the recording started, and the researcher prayed. After the prayer, a participant was asked to lead the class with a worship song called “Anointing Fall on Me.”¹³ After the song ended, the participants were asked to prepare to take notes. The theme was introduced to the participants for the Bible class, which was ritualistic worship (see Appendix G). An example of ritualist worship was given from the Old Testament. It was explained to the participants how the Israelites became ungrateful and unthankful to God and began to offer subpar worship. They were tired of following the steps God instructed for them to worship; they felt like it was useless to worship Him. They became haughty and offered vain glory. They began to go through the motions and worship from a ritualistic standpoint instead of from the heart (Mal 3:5, 9, 14).

The investigator gave a New Testament example of ritualistic worship and explained how the scribes and Pharisees accused the disciples of Jesus of not following tradition (religious laws) passed down by their elders, which includes the washing of their hands before they eat. Jesus replied to the scribes and Pharisees, telling them that they did not follow the laws of Moses and that they make God’s laws invalid by teaching man’s traditions as though they were doctrine. Jesus called them hypocrites. Jesus said they honor God with their mouths but not with their hearts. What comes out of their hearts is what causes them to be defiled, not how someone washes their hands (Matt 15:1–20). The researcher read the reflection questions and a prayer

¹³ Ron Kenoly, vocalist, “Anointing Fall on Me,” by Donn Thomas, recorded 1992, on *Lift Him Up Live*, Integrity Music, CD.

related to the teaching. The participants were asked if anyone had any questions, comments, or examples of ritualistic worship.

At the end of class, the participants were asked to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of week seven Bible class teachings. The participants and the investigator agreed on a day for the next Bible class to be held, someone was asked to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent.

Week Eight: Singing as Worship

The participants were informed that the intervention would begin and then the recording was started. The researcher asked someone to volunteer to pray. After the prayer, a participant was asked to lead the class with a worship song called “Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho.”¹⁴

After the song ended, the researcher asked the participants to prepare to take notes. The theme of the intervention was given, which was singing as worship (see Appendix G). Examples of praise and worship singing from the Old and New Testament scriptures were given by the researcher. The researcher explained that all Christians were created to worship God through singing. It is what believers were created to do. It is God’s purpose and will for their lives. Because God loves His creation, they were created for His purpose, glory, and for fellowship. For those reasons, He deserves worship (Eph 1:4–6).

The researcher explained that all believers should worship God through singing. Colossians 3:16 states, “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

¹⁴ Mahalia Jackson, vocalist, “Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho,” by George Avakian, recorded 1995, on *The Best of Mahalia Jackson*, Sony BMG Music Entertainment, CD.

hearts to the Lord.” God is seeking worshipers (John 4:23–24). Through singing, Christians exhort one another as commanded in the Bible (Heb 10:25). Worship through singing should be based on Scripture. The lyrics of the songs will help shape believers and help them to have an acceptable lifestyle of worship that is pleasing to God.

Worship outside of church and in private represents a lifestyle of worship. Believers should worship God through singing in every situation, sad, happy, in trouble, and when they need help (Ps 113:3). God instructs Christians how to come before His presence, which is with singing (Ps 100:2). Christians should worship joyfully and tell others of the goodness of God (Ps 9:11–12). Christians should worship God with musical instruments (Ps 150:1–6). Christians should worship God in trials and tribulations like Paul and Silas, who were physically bound but not spiritually bound. Through prayer and singing, God delivered them (Acts 16:25–26). Where God’s Spirit is, believers are spiritually free (2 Cor 3:17). No matter what situation the world throws at Christians, they must be filled with the Spirit.

They must be thankful, sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make melody in their hearts to God, and they will stay filled and powerful. Instead of overindulging in worldly things, Christians should overindulge in worship corporately and privately, which is a lifestyle of praise and worship (Eph 5:18–20). Christians must sing a new song unto the Lord, worship Him joyfully, bow down, and kneel before the Lord their maker (Ps 96:1–13; 95:1–6). Christians who worship God in spirit and truth will have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev 21:27). The researcher read reflection questions and a prayer related to the teaching. The participants were asked if they had any questions, comments, or examples of how worship through singing affects their lives. At the end of the class, the participants were asked to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of week

eight Bible class teachings. The day for the next Bible class was agreed upon and someone was asked to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants one through seven were present. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent.

Week Nine Intervention: Worship and Spiritual Adultery and Lust of the Flesh

The participants were informed that the Bible class was about to begin, and the recording was started. The researcher asked someone to pray and after the prayer, someone was asked to lead a worship song. The song was called “Holy.”¹⁵

After the worship song, the participants were encouraged to prepare to take notes. The theme of the Bible class was introduced, which was worship and spiritual adultery and lust of the flesh (see Appendix G). James 4:4 was read which states, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” The investigator explained that when Christians are being friends with the world, they agree with the world’s way of how they should treat people. They agree with the world’s way of how marriage should be, they agree with fornication, and they agree with worshipping God along with modern-day idols. They agree to disobey God and live contrary to His Word (Gal 5:16–21).

The researcher explained that someone who is friends with the world is agreeing with the world and agreeing with God. By doing that, they are conforming to the world and the lifestyle of an unbeliever instead of being transformed by the renewing of their minds into what is acceptable to God (Rom 12:1–2). It was explained that friendship with the world is an indication that a Christian agrees with and loves the lust of their flesh. They are being led by the lust of

¹⁵ David Binion, and Nicole Binion, vocalist, “Holy,” by David Binion, and Nicole Binion, recorded 2009, on *Heaven on Earth*, Covenant Worship, CD.

their flesh and not by the Holy Spirit. They love the world (self and lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life) more than they love God, and the love of the Father is not in them (1 John 2:14–15). The researcher explained that Christians who are not in friendship with the world crucify their flesh, affections, and lusts. They walk in the Spirit, they live in the Spirit, they bear the fruit of the Spirit, they are in Christ, and will inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21–25).

The investigator explained how the New Testament pointed back to the Old Testament by giving examples of how God's people were in friendship with the world. The Israelites committed spiritual adultery and spiritual prostitution. King Solomon disobeyed God and married foreign women. He had seven hundred wives and princesses, and three hundred concubines. He allowed those foreign women to influence him. He built altars high in the mountains for himself and his foreign wives to worship their gods. In his old age, his heart was turned away from God. God had warned him before and during his idol worship and told him what the outcome would be, but he did not stop worshiping idols. King Solomon was evil in the sight of the Lord; he broke covenant, statutes, and God's commands. His father, King David, did not worship idols. God was furious with King Solomon and because He loved his father, King David, so much, He waited until King Solomon died to take and give his kingdom to someone else (1 Kgs 11:1–13). Israelite kings were forbidden by God to marry many wives because they would cause their hearts to stray away from Him (Deut 17).

King David loved many women as well, but his wives and concubines worshiped his God. King David obeyed God, he worshiped only God, his household worshiped only God, and the people he governed worshiped only God. King David praised, sang, danced, and sacrificed burnt offerings on altars, only to the God of Israel (2 Sam 1–23). When King David sinned, he humbled himself and repented (Ps 51). King Solomon did not humble himself and repent of his

idolatry. Perhaps, because God made King Solomon the wisest and richest man on earth (1 Kgs 4:29–34), he became prideful with a haughty spirit, and pride goes before a fall (Prov 16:18–19). Christians must remember that God is their provider, and they should never allow anything or anyone to take His place. The reflection questions and prayer related to the theme was read by the investigator.

The participants were asked if they had any questions, comments, or could they give any examples of worship and spiritual adultery. At the end of class, the researcher encouraged the participants to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of week nine Bible class teachings. The next day for Bible class was agreed upon. Someone was asked to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended. Participants one through seven were present. Participants eight, nine, and ten were absent.

Week Ten Intervention: Worship Hypocrisy

The participants were informed that the class was about to begin, and the recording was started. Someone was asked to volunteer to pray and after the prayer, one of the participants was asked to lead a worship song. The song was called “Victors Crown.”¹⁶

After the worship song, the participants were asked to prepare to take notes. The participants were given the theme of the Bible class, which was worship hypocrisy (see Appendix G). The participants were given the scriptures Amos 5:18 and 6:14 to write down in their notes. The researcher explained that the prophet Amos was a shepherd and God called him to warn the Israelites about the judgment that would come to them from God because of their idolatry. Amos had to prophesy doom and gloom to the Israelites during a time of prosperity.

¹⁶ Darlene Zschech, vocalist, “Victor’s Crown,” by Darlene Zschech, Israel Houghton, and Kari Jobe recorded 2013, on *Darlene Zschech Victors Crown*, Integrity Music, CD.

God was angry at them because of their social injustice, pride, lack of mercy, and their sin. The leaders worshiped God while oppressing the poor, which was ritual hypocrisy and false worship. They worshiped golden calves (idolatry) that their king made for them. They became wealthy at the expense of the poor. The Israelites expected to find favor with God when they did not care about the disadvantaged. They were greedy and wicked and forgot that God was their source and that they should continue to trust and depend on Him. The Israelites prayed that God would bring vengeance on the pagan nations enemies without realizing that they had become a pagan nation.

The Israelites emulated their enemy's lifestyle. Judgment from God was coming to them because they were prideful; they reflected Satan's character and not God's character. God was going to treat them like they were a pagan nation and cause them to be defeated by their enemies and exiled (Amos 5:18; 6:14). The Israelites needed to seek good, not evil so they could live, and then the Lord God Almighty would be with them (Amos 5:14). The researcher read a NT Scripture that represented worship hypocrisy. The researcher read the scripture, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt 23:27–28 KJV).

Jesus pronounced judgment on the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus warned the crowd and His disciples that the scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites, they did not practice what they taught. Instead of easing the poor's burdens, they added burdens to them. Everything the scribes and Pharisees did was for show. They only looked holy on the outside but were filled with corruption, wicked motives, and desires. They were prideful, arrogant, greedy, and self-indulgent.

They did not care about justice, fasting, and praying in private. They did not teach about being merciful, kind, or loving. Instead, they taught their traditions as if they were doctrine which only prepared their converts for damnation because their character would not be changed. The scribes and Pharisees were self-righteous and claimed that they would not have killed the prophets in the OT like their forefathers, but they would later kill Jesus's disciples (Matt 23:1–36). Jesus called them vipers who were like Satan pretending to be God's good servants (2 Cor 11:14).

The investigator explained that Christians must be careful not to conform to the sinful actions of some of society's leaders who are self-righteous, hypocrites, and who behave like the scribes and Pharisees. Christians must renew their minds so that they can be transformed into acceptable servants of the Lord and walk in His will (Rom 12:1–2). The reflection questions and a prayer related to the theme were read. The participants were asked if they had any questions, comments, or if they could give any examples of worship hypocrisy.

The participants were asked what they could do to resist and avoid worship hypocrisy. At the end of class, the participants were asked to check their emails the next day for reminders to do their homework assignments and for a copy of week ten Bible class teachings. The researcher asked someone to volunteer to pray and dismiss everyone. The recording was then ended.

Participants one through six were present. Participants seven, eight, nine, and ten were absent.

In summary, while evaluating the Bible class experience of the participants, the questionnaires, and interview feedback, they concluded that the intervention positively affected their lives. The intervention enabled the participants to be vulnerable and transparent about their spiritual struggles with modern-day idols. The participants were made more aware of how specific modern-day idols have negatively affected their lives, and they gained a better

understanding of how true worship of God can help them combat, resist, and replace their idols with worshiping in spirit and in truth. The investigator is pleased with the spiritual growth of the participants in the areas of reaching out to others for encouragement and to encourage others. Also, they understand that they must be intentional with their worship daily and aware of people and outlets that would distract them from offering true worship to God (1 Pet 5:8–9). As a result of the intervention, the participants understand and remember that people have a sin nature and they cannot change their character if they are not aware of why they sin, aware of what their sin is, and aware that they must repent and allow God to help them change through different means of true worship.

Although the intervention positively impacted the participants, the investigator realized that there could have been better planning strategies for the questionnaires. The initial questionnaires should have been given following the initial interview and in the presence of the researcher to know how knowledgeable the participants were about modern-day idols and true worship for God. Also, to know if the participants gave genuine responses in certain areas instead of responses that could have come from others that they felt they were expected to have. Also, there could have been different types of surveys added with more specific questions related to modern-day idol worship and true worship of God. Lastly, the researcher could have done a better job of staying on top of some of the questionnaires that were not returned.

The research proved that having more patience, listening deeply, and being more compassionate helped the participants take steps toward healing and deliverance. The researcher realized that counseling is very much needed to support struggling Christians. Lastly, the researcher has a better understanding of how to help people who struggle with idols because it is

a human problem that, ultimately, only God can solve and give them victory through His Word, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the blood of Jesus.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In Chapter 3, a precise intervention communicated the problem through a ten-week Bible class approach. Chapter 4 uncovers the results of the concluded intervention. The intervention was initiated because of a problem at Life Changers Church, which is a lack of teaching on modern-day idol worship, which renders a lack of committed worshipers who revere God. A worship handbook was implemented to teach congregants about modern-day idol worship, its effects, and how to replace it with true worship of God, which would motivate congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God.

Collective Results

As a result of the intervention, the participants became more knowledgeable about acceptable and unacceptable worship. This new knowledge caused them to have a renewed mindset. The participants began to be aware of the many modern-day idols and the many ways to worship God in spirit and in truth. The participants became aware of the modern-day idols that were influencing them, dominating their lives, and what caused their idolatry. The participants began to use what they were taught from the worship handbook to combat the attacks of Satan and replace modern-day idol worship with true worship of God. The participants' renewed minds caused them to make better decisions, which helped them to become transformed and offer acceptable worship to God (Rom 12:1–2).

Bible Class Results

Week one's Bible class theme covered modern-day idol worship and its roots. The participants showed engagement, and most of them asked questions about the definitions they received from the investigator (see Appendix G). Most of the participants indicated that they were not aware of all the things that were considered modern-day idols and all the methods used to worship God. The participants seemed intrigued about learning about who were the first to worship God and the first beings to commit idolatry.

Most of the participants indicated that they were not aware that all sin stemmed from pride including idolatry. The participants pondered the information they received. There was some laughter from some of the participants as they pondered and expressed how Satan had been influencing them and others they knew in their personal lives just like he did to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:1–5). One participant expressed the importance of putting on the whole armor of God to combat the schemes of Satan (Eph 6:10–19) and acknowledged the importance of studying one's opponent to be able to resist him. Some of the participants communicated the importance of knowing why, who, and how to worship acceptably according to Scripture. They noted the importance of knowing the history of acceptable and unacceptable biblical worship.

Week two's Bible class theme was about deficient worship. Some of the participants shared examples and stories about the sin nature of humans and how they offered God deficient worship. They expressed that they offered God deficient worship through not tithing, praying, singing, reading Scripture, and serving like they should because they placed other things as more important than obeying God. Some of the participants gave some reasons for their deficient worship such as working long hours and carnal distractions. Most of the participants expressed

how offering deficient worship affected their minds and physical bodies negatively. The participants acknowledged that God was worthy of their best worship and that they should honor God with their best and put Him first because it is giving back what He blessed them with.

In week three's Bible class, the theme of discussion was God's command for worship is founded on love. The participants were engaged. Some of the participants asked for clarification about God not being pleased when people make their children idols and put them first in their lives. The participants were not aware that they were putting their children before God. They gave some reasons for their actions. They began to get an understanding of the scriptures and acknowledged that they were putting their children before God. One participant stated she did not want to be an overbearing Christian parent as it relates to making her children obedient to God's Word. Some of the participants acknowledged disobedience to God by not teaching their children the Word of God and training them in the way that they should go (Prov 22:6). When the Bible speaks of training a child in the way that they should go in Proverbs 22:6, it means parents should have respect for their child's individuality as it relates to them choosing a trade or vocation, not their self-will in choosing to disobey God.¹ Some of the participants asked each other to share some idols that they put before God. Some idols were their cameras, cell phones, computers, and games. Some participants encouraged each other by offering ways to remind themselves to spend quality time reading Scripture and praying so they can show God love and prioritize Him by being obedient to His commandments and putting Him first. They suggested to one another to use cell phone alarms as reminders to read Scriptures and pray. Using alarms as a reminder helps people to begin a rhythm of prayer.²

¹ Derek Kinder, *Proverbs* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 206.

² Earley, *The Common Rule*, 34.

Week four's theme was about dualistic worship. The participants were engaged and some of them were very responsive. After examples of dualistic worship were given, the participants acknowledged that they understood how Christians can go through or take different approaches, and avenues to get answers from God. Some of the participants gave some examples of dualistic worship that others they know have practiced, such as praying to someone or something other than God, like their ancestors or the universe. Some of the participants gave examples of dualistic worship that they have practiced, such as depending on and trusting in their strength, abilities, and thoughts while asking God for help. One participant explained that when Christians are practicing dualistic worship, they are not practicing Christianity, they are practicing self-will instead of allowing God's will to be done in their lives. That participant went on to say that when Christians do those things, they should repent.

In week five, prideful worship was the theme. Some of the participants were inspired to give examples of prideful worship. One participant's example was how some politicians refuse to do what they swore on the Bible to do, which is to uphold the Constitution. They break the law to get what they want instead of trusting and depending on God. Because of their pride, they do not step down and they never publicly repent. Some participants agreed they lack humility and cave into peer pressure out of fear by following worldly ways of achieving wanted answers instead of trusting and depending on God. One of the participants acknowledged that her pride kept her from obeying God when it came to career choices. Her pride got in the way of having to let go of a certain financial status. That participant acknowledged that when she repented and obeyed God, He gave her creative ideas of how to be successful, and she learned to continue to trust and depend on Him. God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble (Jas 4:6).

In week six, true worship was the theme. The participants were attentive, and some were inspired to share their thoughts. Some of the participants shared how they felt when they did not worship God in spirit and in truth. Some of them stated that they felt stressed, they worried a lot, and they did not sleep well. Some acknowledged feeling frustrated, overthinking, short-tempered, less patient, and irritable. One participant stated her body was tense and ached because of not offering true worship to God. Some of the participants began to share their reasons for not worshipping in spirit and in truth, which was because of distractions. Overwhelmingly, their distractions were spending too much time on their computers, working, playing games, and social media. The participants encouraged each other with ways to be less distracted. Some of the ways to be less distracted were by starting their day with worship through prayer, singing, and dwelling on God's Word. Also, using their cell phone alarms to be reminded to read Scriptures, which strengthens, influences, shapes, and encourages the correct behaviors.

One participant stated that whatever someone dwells on influences them, and they will become like what they are influenced by (Ps 135:16–18). That participant quoted Proverbs 23:7, which states, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov 23:7 KJV). The participants agreed that when they worship in spirit and in truth, their mood changes for the better. The participants concluded that true worship is warranted in every situation of life.

Week seven's theme was ritualistic worship. Some of the participants shared personal stories of ritualistic worship. One participant stated that he often asks himself if his worship is rehearsed or genuine and from the heart. He explained that Christians must remind themselves, whether at church or home in private, to make their worship personal. Most of the participants nodded in agreement. The participants expressed and agreed that worship should not be going through the motions, it should be with passion, and the heart which is to please God. One

participant stated when she sings and leads at church, she must remember that although the songs are repetitive because of rehearsals, it is not a performance; it is serving God. Although she reads Scripture daily, it should be personal. Worship is for God. That participant stated that she was guilty of ritualistic worship.

In week eight, the theme was singing as worship. Some participants gave examples of how worshiping God through singing can change the atmosphere, change how someone feels, strengthen them, and give them peace from God. They explained how singing can cause someone to go from being sad, afraid, and stressed out to being encouraged, happy, confident, and bold. The participants shared how singing corporately with others miraculously strengthens them. One of the participants gave an example of how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s demeanor physically changed when he began to join in singing with Mahaila Jackson and his congregation. The song restored his joy and strengthened him. That participant shared how important it is to sing new songs to God because when Christians have a love affair with God, new songs should flow from their hearts. The participants expressed and agreed singing outside of church represents a lifestyle of worship.

In week nine, the theme was worship, spiritual adultery, and sins of the flesh. The participants acknowledged and agreed that it is possible to worship God and be disobedient to Him simultaneously. Most of the participants explained and agreed that it is possible for Christians to love someone or something so much that it can supersede the love that they have for God, which manifests into choosing to disobey God's Word. One participant shared how much he loves his wife and likes to make her happy, and he acknowledged that he could understand how disobeying God to a certain extent to please his wife can happen. That participant noted that a Christian's faith should be built up by words that align with Scripture.

The wrong words can change a Christian's belief system by allowing their words to take root in their heart. Some of the participants expressed and agreed that Christians must be careful about whom they listen to. If they listen to someone who gives them advice not in alignment with Scripture, they will be led into disobeying God's Word and plan for their life.

Most participants agreed that being friends with the world was teaching and believing as the world does as it relates to how someone lives their life instead of how the Bible instructs Christians to live. Most of the participants agreed that having a command of the Scripture and having a strong prayer life can help Christians avoid giving in to their flesh and idolatry, which helps them to submit to what God wants. One of the participants reminded the others that Christians having friendship with the world is enmity with God, and friends of the world are enemies of God. He calls them adulterers and adulteresses (Jas 4:4).

In week ten of the Bible class, the theme of worship hypocrisy was discussed. Some of the participants gave examples of worship hypocrisy. They shared that some people who share the gospel with others are some of the same people who are mean and uncaring in their private lives. Also, some people who film themselves helping people are hypocrites because some of them just want to be seen. They are not doing it for the right reasons; they should not care who sees them. The participants expressed and agreed that some politicians who profess to be Christians only care about certain groups of people instead of all people. They are like the Pharisees and scribes in public but have hidden agendas in private.

One of the participants was emotional while sharing that she is a helpful person who cares deeply for people and takes time to listen and pray for people, but when she needed help from those same people, they were not available for her. She explained that they only pretended to care for her. She stated that they are the kind of Christians who use people. The participants

agreed with her when she expressed that those types of people do not do unto others as they would have others do unto them (Matt 7:12). The participants expressed and agreed that what is inside a person's heart matters more to God than what someone displays on the outside. "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7 KJV).

Interview Results

The following responses reflect the results of the one-on-one interviews (see Appendix F). All the participants had similar first-time worship experiences: they were all children, age seven or under, and they were at church with either their parents or grandparents. They remembered mimicking the adults, singing, praying, praising, dancing, and lifting their hands.

For children in their stage of development, spirituality is established from feelings triggered by a specific experience more so than logical assessment. Although the process changes as the child grows older, the emotional setting of their faith story has a lengthy and progressive impact. Their emotional capacity, negative versus positive, and hopeful messages can affect the flexibility and conforming qualities of one's character in adulthood.³

Each participant reminisced about how they felt the first time they worshiped God. Most of them felt joy, peace, happiness, excitement, and a sense of belonging. Some felt shy and did not quite understand what was going on. Overall, their worship experience as children was enjoyable.

When the participants were asked how they felt when they worshiped God, they all expressed having an overwhelming feeling of joy and gratefulness in the presence of God. They expressed feelings of awareness and understanding of what true worship is and were cognizant

³ Carman Gill and Robert R. Freund, eds., *Spirituality and Religion in Counseling: Competency-Based Strategies for Ethical Practice* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 2–3.

when offering true worship to God. Some participants acknowledged having a deeper understanding and awareness of what God seeks from His worshipers. One of the participants acknowledged that he had a deeper understanding of the correct way to worship, which is intentionally in action and with the right attitude.

The participants shared that they worship at church and in their personal lives through singing, praying, and reading Scripture. Most of them noted that they worship God through serving. The participants expressed that they could worship God more at church and in their personal lives by volunteering at church, studying the Bible, praying, singing, and evangelizing. Most of the participants stated they could teach and serve more.

Some participants expressed that worshipping God the way they should affects their lives in a way that is instrumental in helping them think positively, helping them resist sin, and helping them feel like their prayers are answered. When they do not worship God like they should, it hinders their Scripture reading, they have the wrong thoughts, feel bad, moody, fearful, and less patient. They also worry more, they are easily irritated, and doubtful. Some participants shared that when they worship God the right way, they are less stressed, feel right in the sight of God, do not move in their strength, have better spiritual insight, and feel empowered and bold in Christ. They have better family relationships, their flesh is under control, and they feel confident in their abilities. Some of the participants shared that when they do not worship God the right way, they are anxious, they over-think, they have less faith in God, they move in their strength, have self-doubt, and their life is in turmoil.

As the project progressed, some participants noted that they are frustrated and have insecurities, as well. Some of the participants stated that when they worship God in spirit and truth, they are more spiritually aware, walk in their purpose, and feel better overall. When they

do not worship in spirit and in truth, they fall back on responsibilities, are moody, have less patience, and are easily triggered.

Most participants stated that worship meant praising and glorifying God because He is worthy. It is honoring God and paying homage to Him. It is giving back to God, using their gifts and talents for Him, and acknowledging God for what He has done. It is communicating with Him and loving Him. Some participants acknowledged that worship glorifies and praises God in good and bad times. It is having a personal relationship with Him and serving Him. It is spreading His Word to others. Some of the participants agreed that worship is praying, singing, reading Scripture, and thanking Him according to Psalms 100. It is also a way to fight the enemy according to Ephesians 6:10–18 and it is also reverencing God.

The participants acknowledged how important they believe worship is to God. Most of them stated that they believe worship is very important to God because worship is part of His guidelines and foundational principles. They explained that worship shows obedience to God and He created humans to worship Him. Some of the participants believe worship is most important to God because it is required in His commandments and it shows Him love. One participant stated it is a conduit for a personal relationship with Him because He seeks worship day and night. Some of the participants agreed worship is important to God because He desires and deserves to be exalted. They concluded that worshipping God is their reasonable service (Rom 12:1–2).

Some of the participants shared that the life situations that caused them to worship God are when things go bad, and they would lean on God and their faith. They confessed to worshipping Him to be blessed and for giving them life. Some of the participants stated they worship God because of the state of the world. Most of the participants stated that they worship

God to show Him love and because He's worthy. They concluded that they worship God in all situations, whether they are happy or sad.

The participants shared how they thought they worshiped idols. Most of them acknowledged that they prioritize self-image by going to the gym to achieve a certain body image, allowing sports to dominate their lives, being on their cell phones, computers, social media, and technology, and overly pursuing money instead of spending quality time worshiping God. Some of the participants noted that they worship idols by placing the importance of material things above God, they trusted in their strength instead of trusting in God. They practiced self-will instead of submitting to God's will and put pleasing their family before pleasing God.

Some of the participants were even more transparent and elaborated in detail by stating that they worshiped idols by wasting too much time on lifeless worldly things that could not fulfill them (Rev 9:20). One participant noted dualistic worship was practiced by mixing Christian values with their own opinions, intellect, and thoughts, and placing them above God instead of trusting and depending on Him. That participant also acknowledged practicing prideful worship and placing the people they love before God, such as their children and spouse. That same participant acknowledged giving in to the lust of their flesh, such as anger and emotions, instead of going to God in prayer first.

Some of the participants admitted to some things that cause them to worship idols including stress, work, the enjoyment entertainment provides and the attachment to the value placed on it, laziness, not trusting God, lack of money, disappointment, fear, depression, and trying to get fit and look like celebrities. Some participants noted stubbornness, disobedience, their flesh, distractions, moving in their strength, weak relationship with God, and lack of faith in

God. One participant acknowledged suffering from insecurities when he failed at something worldly caused him to worship idols. Most of the participants concluded that the causes of their idol worship are not wanting to deny themselves of personal wants, being undisciplined, the devil's manipulation, trying to fill a void only God can fill, impatience, personal boredom, and not being aware of the many idols that currently exist.

Some of the participants explained that idol worship affects their lives negatively by causing them to be more concerned about their physical body (outward appearance) instead of their spirit. It distracts them from spending quality time with God. It makes them feel bad and angry. Most of the participants admitted that idol worship affects them negatively by leading them out of the will of God and causing them to waste time. Idol worship makes them feel frustrated, anxious, and argumentative and coerces them to pursue and attach value to worldly entertainment. One participant stated that it distorts God's message and makes him feel defeated by the devil. Also, it affects him in ways that create dependence and then addiction instead of being dependent on God as his rock and source. Most of the participants agreed that idol worship affected their lives by circumventing their time from reading the Bible like they should, which makes them spiritually weaker. It negatively affects their relationships and overall well-being. It makes them feel self-conscious and distant from God. It makes them feel stuck in a cycle of not completing goals because of distractions of idols.

Most of the participants acknowledged that teaching about modern-day idol worship at church would affect their lives positively and hold them accountable. It would open their eyes and give them a new perspective about what God wants. It would be a reminder of the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable worship. It would make them aware of God's truth and the lies of the devil. It would help them successfully fight the devil. Some of the participants

acknowledged that the teaching would make others aware of idol worship. It would teach them how to recognize, avoid, and combat its influences. Some of the participants concluded the teaching would help them prioritize worshiping God as most important in their lives.

At the end of the intervention, most of the participants acknowledged that teaching from the worship handbook made them aware of the many types of idols previously unknown to them. They expressed that they better understand what true worship is and the various means of worshiping God. It made them aware of what idols pull them away from God so they can make different decisions. They acknowledged that the class reminded them of what is important in a Christian's life. It was a reminder of the real issues of sin in the world. It helped them become closer to God, and they can teach others to become closer to God. One participant noted because Scripture supported the teaching, it convicted her and revealed her lack of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Some of the participants noted that the teaching helped them to make better choices and avoid making the same wrong choices. Most of the participants believed the teaching helped them understand how to recognize idols, resist them, and break free from them with true worship of God.

Questionnaire Results

The following responses reflect the questionnaire results (see Appendix E). Most of the participants explained modern-day idol worship as prioritizing and making anything more important than God. Some of the participants' explanations of modern-day idol worship included putting oneself before God, which they had never recognized that way before. Most of the participants concluded that modern-day idol worship was worshiping, trusting in, and depending on anyone or anything as if they were God.

Some participants did not think they worshiped idols at the start of the intervention. Most of the participants admitted to participating in modern-day idol worship in the beginning of the intervention. Their idols were overly admiring celebrities, materialistic things, social media, T.V. money, and careers. Their reasons for idolatry were not prioritizing God as first in their lives. Some of the participants acknowledged their idols were self-will, which is self-worship. They wanted to do what they wanted to do instead of obeying God. By the end of the intervention, all the participants acknowledged participation in idolatry. They acknowledged that they were trusting and depending on their thoughts, opinions, and ideas. Stress was the driving force for their idol worship.

The participants agreed that modern-day idol worship should be taught in church to help prioritize personal worship of God and to understand the correct way to worship God. Most of them believed it should be taught for awareness of how they intentionally and unintentionally worship idols. One participant shared that the teaching is needed because Christians generally do not see the people or things they prioritize before God as idolatry. Instead of seeing idolatry for what it truly is, which is sinful and evil, they see it as adoration, love, or a commodity that they enjoy. Every sin is idolatry, an implied adoration for Satan.⁴ The participants overwhelmingly agreed modern-day idol worship should be taught for awareness of distractions to worshipping God and learning about true worship for mind renewal and transformation.

Some participants believed worship according to the Bible meant putting God before all else, reverencing, paying homage, loving, and praising Him wholeheartedly. Most of the participants recognized worship according to the Bible as bowing down before God in service with the right attitude.

⁴ Jones, *Knowing Sin*, 43.

Most of the participants believed it was important to worship God because He is worthy, He is good, and because they love Him. Some participants acknowledged worshipping God to receive strength. Some of the participants acknowledged the importance of worshipping God because they were created to worship Him (Isa 43:7). Some of the participants acknowledged that they spent very little time on personal worship. Some of the participants noted that they spend thirty to sixty minutes in personal worship daily. One participant acknowledged that they need to spend more time on personal worship, but they were trying.

Some of the participants understood a committed worshiper as someone who spends quality time in prayer, is obedient to God, and spreads the gospel. Some participants agreed a committed worshiper is someone who intentionally worships God in spirit and truth and worships Him consistently in every situation of life. Most of the participants shared that they show God reverence by praising, worshipping, and obeying Him. Also using their gifts and talents for Him. Some of the participants reverence God by humility, honoring Him, and teaching their children the Word of God.

Some of the participants explained that they worship God out of appreciation, gratitude, and love. Most of them concluded that they worship God because He is the true and living God and out of obedience to His commandments (Exod 20:3–5). The researcher wanted to know about the mindset of the participants during worship. Most of the participants shared that they are thinking about how good God is when they are worshipping Him. One participant stated that they were thinking about spreading God’s Word to others because He is good.

Data Analysis

The feedback from the Bible class week one through week ten reveals how each weekly theme sheds light on the problem by presenting the participants with various modern-day idols

and explanations of them. The participants could be transparent about the various idols they worshipped once they were made aware of them. They were able to identify the types of idols they struggled with, they shared explanations for the cause of their idolatry, and the negative effects the idols caused in their lives. As a result of teaching from the worship handbook, the participant's responses reflect the awareness that all sin is idolatry.

They acknowledged that their idolatry was a result of giving in to their sinful nature, which has evil desires and Satan's temptations. They understood that because they were stressed with life's daily trials and tribulations and did not offer true worship to God, they were left susceptible to seeking out pleasures to relieve and soothe their pain, anger, stress, and anxiety. The relief was only a temporary distraction from their present discomforts.⁵ They understood that they must fight and be aware of how social media can shape people in hate and fear, how computers and cell phones shape people to be absent from reality, and how laziness and excess train them to love themselves above all else.⁶ The participants acknowledged that they must humble themselves and repent. The participants were inspired to encourage one another and come up with strategies that could help them combat the idols with various types of true worship found in the Bible. Also, they acknowledged the intervention's positive impact on their lives, which gave them hope for their future and victory over idols, as presented in table 2.

Table 2. Bible class data analysis

	Types of Idolatry	Causes of Idolatry	Impact of Idols	Impact of Bible Class
Week 1:				

⁵ Lina AbuJamra, *Fractured Faith: Finding Your Way Back to God in an Age of Deconstruction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2021), 44, 62, ProQuest E-book.

⁶ Earley and Dempsey, *The Common Rule*, 52.

The Root of Modern-day Idol Worship And How to Avoid It	Participants acknowledged practicing idolatry	Sin nature and Satan's influence	Lack of true worship and susceptible to Satan's schemes	Awareness of acceptable and unacceptable worship from Scripture
Week 2: Deficient Worship	Giving subpar worship	Working and carnal distractions	Negative effects on the mind and body	Awareness to honor God with their best
Week 3: God's Command for Worship Is Founded on Love	Family, camera, cell phones, computer, and games	Unaware of God's commandments	Disobedience to God	Awareness to spend quality time to read Scripture, pray, and put God first
Week 4: Dualistic Worship	Trusting in one's own strength (self-will)	Lack of trust and dependence on God	Not practicing Christianity	Awareness to repent and trust and depend solely on God
Week 5: Prideful Worship	Pride	Lack of humility, fear, friendship with the world	Disobedience to God	Awareness to repent and obey Scripture
Week 6: True Worship	Social media, computers, careers, games	Not worshipping in spirit and in truth	Stress, anxiety, sleep deprivation, frustration, short-tempered, impatient, irritable, body ache	Awareness to worship in spirit and in truth, intentionally, and daily
Week 7: Ritualistic Worship	Traditions and fleshly patterns	Wrong intentions because of repetition, and lack of passion	Disingenuous worship with the wrong attitude	Awareness to worship in service to God, for God, and

				with the right attitude
Week 8: Singing As Worship	Lack of worshipping God through singing	Worldly distractions, lack of corporate worship	Sadness, fear, stress	Awareness to corporately sing from the heart in and out of church to have a lifestyle of worship
Week 9: Worship and Spiritual Adultery and Lust of the Flesh	Spiritual adultery, loving others and things more than God	Friendship with the world, fleshly influences	Disobedience to God's Word, replacing God as first, giving in to sin nature	Awareness to build one's faith with Scripture instead of worldly influences
Week 10: Worship Hypocrisy	Worship hypocrisy, pleasing self instead of God	The need for public adoration with hidden agendas	Self-serving behavior instead of serving God and others	Awareness to do unto others as you would have them do unto you

The research results for the Bible class from week five to week ten reflect the awareness of how sin distorts God's Word. The participants became aware that they were pleasure-seeking because of their sinful nature and the devil had promised that satisfaction and pleasure would be the result of their actions, better than what they have and better than Christ. They only saw what they wanted, not what they needed. They acknowledged a lack of faith in God and that they must build their faith in the Word of God as presented in table 3.⁷

⁷ AbuJamra, *Fractured Faith*, 62.

The feedback from the one-on-one interview questions (see Appendix F) reflects the overall transparency of the participants as it relates to their experience with idol worship and how teaching about modern-day idol worship in Bible class affected their lives. The results from questions six, ten, eleven, and twelve reflect an understanding of some modern-day idols taught from the definitions (see Appendix G) and in Bible class. Question six results reflect week one of Bible class. The theme was the root of modern-day idols and how to resist them. Question ten's results indicate acquiring knowledge from week five Bible class, the theme was prideful worship, and from week four Bible class, the theme was dualistic worship. Feedback from question eight represents the importance of worshiping God out of obedience, which was taught in week three of Bible class, the theme was God's commands for worship are founded on love. Feedback from question ten represents knowledge gained from week four Bible class, the theme was dualistic worship, and from week five Bible class, the theme was prideful worship.

Overall, the participants acknowledged that they are in a better position to make better choices concerning idolatry because they can recognize the difference between negative desires (Jas 1:14–15) and positive desires because, through Jesus, they have been given good desires for goodness and life (Ps 37:4).⁸ Also, feedback from questions thirteen and fourteen indicates the value received from the intervention as presented in table 3.

⁸ AbuJamra, *Fractured Faith*, 44.

Table 3. Data analysis of interview results

Q6	Explain how worship or the lack thereof affects your personal life.	The participants felt confident, bold, and spiritually aware, or anxious, frustrated, insecure, less patient, and easily triggered
Q8	Explain how important you believe worship is to God.	Extremely important because He deserves it, He commands it, and it is their reasonable service
Q10	In what ways do you think you worship idols?	Material things, self-will, pride, trust and depend on one's thoughts, opinions, intellect, flesh, dualistic worship
Q11	Explain what causes you to worship idols.	Flesh, distractions, stubbornness, laziness, insecurities, impatience, unaware of various idols, temptation from Satan, stress, entertainment
Q12	Explain how idol worship affects your life.	Frustration, anxiety, dependence, addiction, distraction
Q13	Explain how teaching about modern-day idol worship at church would or would not affect your life.	Awareness of idol worship, it would teach them how to recognize its influences, combat it and avoid it
Q14	Explain how the teaching from the worship handbook in Bible class affected your life.	Awareness of various idols and true worship, various means of worship, and a reminder that idolatry is sin

The written feedback from the questionnaires (see Appendix E) reveals how the teaching in the Bible class and the definitions that were given and explained (see Appendix G) made a

positive impact on the participants. The feedback from questions one, two, four, and seven reflects knowledge gained from the definitions (see Appendix G) and the feedback from questions eight and nine reflect knowledge gained from week three Bible class, where the theme was God's commands are founded on love. Feedback for question three reflects Rom 12:1–2 as it relates to being made aware of various modern-day idols and various means of offering true worship to God for mind renewal and transformation. Across-the board, the participants became aware of how their sinful nature and Satan used things and people to sidetrack them from obeying and offering true worship to God. They acknowledged that they must resist sin (Eph 6:10–18) and serve God in their daily lives as presented in table 4 (Rom 12:1–2).

Table 4. Data analysis for questionnaire results

Q1	Explain what modern-day idol worship is.	Worshiping, trusting in, and depending on anyone or anything as if they were God
Q2	Explain any practiced modern-day idol worship. Explain why or why not? Explain how or how not?	People, material things, social media, money, self-will, trusting and depending on their own thoughts, opinions, and ideas
Q3	Explain why modern-day idol worship should or should not be taught at church.	Awareness of distractions to worshipping God and learning about true worship for mind renewal and transformation
Q4	Explain what worship is according to the Bible.	Bowing before God, serving God in action and with the right attitude
Q7	Explain what a committed worshipper is.	Someone who worships God consistently and, in every situation,
Q8	Explain how you show reverence to God.	Obeying, praising, worshiping, submitting, honoring, humility, and teaching their children the Word of God
Q9	Explain why you worship God.	Gratitude, love, obedience to God's Word

The participants were overwhelmingly transparent about their idolatry in the interviews and questionnaires. They were less transparent during the Bible class. When people desire for someone to be transparent with them, it is assumed that they want to understand who a person authentically is as it relates to being true to their values. It is important for Christians not to whitewash their lives. This culture does not want a relationship with fake, inauthentic Christians. Christians need to be vulnerable and raw instead of appearing hypocritical, then, their witness for Christ can be effective. People do not want to feel judged; they will only respond to someone broken and real. The participants were authentic with their responses, and they all shared many of the same idols, causes, and effects.

The results from the questionnaires, interviews, and Bible class express a sin summary in which pride is the root of all the symptoms. It is a result of humans taking God off the throne in their hearts. When God is taken off the throne, the self takes His place. The idols have been given their worship, their money, their time, and their best efforts. Idolatry keeps Christians seemingly comfortable, stuck, and sick from tension. The participants realized to be healed they must repent, obey God's Word, and forsake the idols they have been obeying (1 John 5:2-3).⁹ Identification of idols lead to understanding of the causes that lead to understanding of the effects.

Overall, the levels of engagement for the participants were satisfactory based on observations. Most made tremendous efforts to participate and displayed a high level of commitment to the intervention. They gave responses to the questionnaires and interviews, and were present at the Bible classes. They were transparent, vulnerable, and willing to participate.

⁹ Whitney Capps, *Sick of Me: From Transparency to Transformation*, 1st ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 15-16, 69-70, 78, 83.

They encouraged one another and were helpful and respectful throughout the intervention. Two participants displayed passive participation, two showed moderate to energetic participation, and three participants showed complete and committed participation. The lowest levels are due to personality traits of shyness in the Bible class and not returning all the questionnaires.

The participants expressed progression in mindset as the intervention advanced. At the beginning of the intervention, most of the participants acknowledged participating in modern-day idol worship. As the participants became more aware of the many modern-day idols that exist, they became more transparent, and they all acknowledged participating in idolatry. Also, they were able to identify the idols, their causes, and the negative effects of the idols in their lives. As the intervention progressed, the participants began to realize that it was because of their sin nature that they were easily sidetracked and distracted by idols which were spiritual attacks orchestrated by Satan. They began to understand and use the different means of worship to resist and replace idolatry with true worship of God (John 4:23–24). As the intervention advanced the participants expressed their awareness that biblical worship meant bowing down in reverence and serving God in action and with the right attitude. They realized that true worship was a lifestyle, and it must be intentional (Col 3:23–24). They realized true worship entails not conforming to worldly thinking and actions, which comes from mind renewal and leads to transformation, and obedience to God. Also, with help from the Holy Spirit, their worship will be acceptable to God (Rom 12:1–2). By the conclusion of the intervention, the participants understood that teaching about modern-day idol worship and true worship of God was needed for awareness and remembrance to offer true worship to God (John 4:23–24) so that they could become committed worshipers who revere God.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to implement a worship handbook that motivates congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God. As a result of teaching from the worship handbook and the participants being involved in worship activities outside of the church, the participants were engaged in the Bible class. When the researcher asked the participants to sing, pray, or answer a question, the participants responded. The participants volunteered and shared their experiences of how modern-day idol worship influenced them, how they reacted, and what they did to combat it. The participants became more knowledgeable about worship, which caused a renewed mindset. Their knowledge caused them to be more aware of Satan's attacks and influences so they could combat him with God's Word, prayer, and singing. They began to recognize idolatry in their lives, resist it, and replace it with true worship of God. The teachings from the worship handbook gave the participants a better understanding of who they are, why they behave the way they do, and the importance of worshiping when they feel like it and when they do not. Overall, the intervention allowed the participants to be transparent about their struggles with modern-day idols once they were made aware of some of the many that exist.

There were correlations and dissimilarities between the Bible class, questionnaires, and one-on-one interview feedback. Overall, the participants shared most of the same struggles with the same idols, with the same causes and effects. Commonly, people who experience one distinct form of struggle are more presumably to experience other forms of struggle as well.¹⁰ Also, the participants were overwhelmingly transparent about their struggles with idolatry in the

¹⁰ Kenneth I. Pargament and Julie J. Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles in Psychotherapy: From Research to Practice* (New York, NY: Guilford Publications, 2021), ProQuest E-book.

questionnaire and interview feedback as opposed to the limited transparency in the Bible class. In the Bible class, the participants offered more examples of idol worship in other's lives instead of their personal lives, possibly because of not wanting to be judged or viewed a certain way by others in the Bible class. Broadly, the participants placed more importance on being available for the Bible class and interview sessions than returning all their questionnaires and completing assigned homework. There was a difference in the responses from the participants in Bible class because there were some vocal participants and some shy participants. The shy participants were reluctant to volunteer to give feedback. Overall, the participants encouraged one another in the areas where they struggled and offered strategies and solutions to foster committed worshipers who revere God. The participants overwhelmingly agreed that the intervention positively affected their lives by making them more aware of the modern-day idols they struggled with and the variety they did not know existed. Also, they were made aware of how the idols negatively affected their mind, body, and relationships with God, family, and friends.

The participants vigorously agreed that the intervention was a reminder to prioritize God for worship, which would help them renew their minds for transformation so they will not be conformed to the world's way of thinking and behaving. They understood that they must be committed to worshipping God. They were aware that worship is not something that they should just simply fit into their daily schedules, but they must allow their daily schedules to be transformed into constant acts of worship. As they become transformed, they become more authentic in their life of worship (Rom 12:1–2).¹¹

The participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that the intervention made them aware of what unacceptable worship is and what true and acceptable worship of God is. Because of their

¹¹ Lawrence Pang, "Spiritual Growth Through Authentic Worship," *Compass* 50, no. 3 (2016): 4–6.

awareness, they were able to begin clearing the clutter of Satan's lies from their minds (Phil 4:6–7) because they had a better understanding of the different means of worship that they can use to combat, resist, and replace idol worship with worshiping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24). Finally, the participants were able to become motivated to become committed worshipers who revere God (Phil 4:13).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

As a result of the action research project, the researcher surmises that all the research completed on biblical worship, modern-day idol worship, and the intervention, which was conducted with the implementation of the worship handbook, will make indelible marks in the participants' lives. The participants will be more knowledgeable and understand what acceptable and unacceptable worship is according to Scripture. The participants will have a renewed mind and a renewed sense of who God is and how He wants to be worshiped. They will have a renewed sense of who they are, why they were created, and a new spiritual connection with God.

As a result, they will be on a path to transformation that will enable them to refrain from conforming to the world's way of thinking, behaving, and worshiping (Rom 12:1–2). They will be able to identify the influences of modern-day idol worship and the presence of it in their lives and others' lives and combat it with the instructions in the Word of God (Eph 6:10–18). They will begin to walk in their God-ordained purpose, which is to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and use the gifts and abilities that He gave them throughout their daily life of service and worship and teach others how to do the same.

The action research project results will challenge the current trends in worship because it will prove that the topic of true worship and idol worship should be explained. It should be an essential focus and taught in every church. In John 4:23–24, worshipers are who God seeks; if God seeks worshipers, it is important and should be of utmost importance to all Christians. The way Christians worship affects their lives negatively or positively. Following the analysis and culmination of the thesis project, the researcher will consider establishing a worship class for

new members, leadership, and anyone interested in attending Life Changers Church. The class will be taught from the worship handbook so that congregants will be made aware of the many modern-day idols that affect their lives. Also, so they can have a better understanding of how to combat those idols with biblical means of true worship (Eph 6:10–18). The class will help them better understand why God sent His greatest sacrifice of worship (Heb 10:1–18). Christian counseling at Life Changers Church using the worship handbook will be considered as well.

The problem, purpose, and thesis statements established in Chapter 1 of this DMIN project address the need to establish more to-the-point, influential, and useful guidance for Christians who struggle with wholeheartedly committing to and reverencing God. The literature review revealed a need for more research on the importance of teaching modern-day idol worship to make Christians aware of the many idols that influence, dominate, and affect their lives negatively. In Chapter 3, a precise intervention communicated the problem through a ten-week Bible class approach, and Chapter 4 uncovered the results of the concluded intervention. To complete this project, Chapter 5 will consider the intervention's assumptions and the data, including the implications, applications, and limitations. In addition, further research considerations will be discussed.

Research Implications

From the conception of the study, the researcher endeavored to implement a plan to teach Christians about modern-day idol worship and true worship from a biblical standpoint, effectively, and in the spirit of love that will motivate them to become committed worshipers who revere God. The results of this research study imply that if this study is used in other ministry settings, there will be strong engagement in the Bible class, and the participants will show transparency with their responses in the one-on-one interviews and questionnaires. The

research will enable participants in other ministry settings to become aware of the modern-day idols that they worship and the causes of their idolatry. It will also help them find ways to resist and replace the idols with true worship of God.

The research results indicate that the study will yield encouraged participants who will acknowledge how the Bible class positively affected their lives. The research revealed that teaching about modern-day idol worship and true worship of God in other ministry settings will cause the participants to become enlightened and feel like the teaching is useful for their specific worship needs and experiences. The research results concluded that the group meeting approach would provide a safe, comfortable, and convenient environment for participants and researchers. This environment will allow the participants to feel supported and encouraged to be transparent by other participants and by the researcher. The research infers that in other ministry settings, it will help foster closer relationships between the participants and the researcher.

The research results suggest that in a group ministry context, the more reserved and shyer participants could observe others until they feel comfortable enough to participate or until another participant encourages them to share their stories. Also, the ramifications of having a group ministry setting could cause participants to be less transparent than they are on the questionnaires and during one-on-one interviews.

The research study implies that in a ministry setting, there will be obvious agreement among the participants in similar areas as it relates to their idolatry, what caused them to participate in idol worship, and the effects of the idol worship in their lives and in the lives of others they know. There is an indication that there will also be agreement about the various means of worship they practice regularly and the lack thereof. The research results suggest that the Bible class will enable participants to share their knowledge and teach others such as family,

friends, and strangers about modern-day idol worship and true worship of God. The research results suggest that in a ministry setting, there will be a desire and need for teaching about modern-day idol worship, its causes, effects, and the true worship of God.

The research data gleaned from observations conclude that in a ministry context, participants will be receptive to sharing their explanations of what they believe is acceptable and unacceptable worship. The research implies that stress is a major contributor to spiritual struggles and that life's issues can shape the mindsets of Christians. The issues of life cause humans to conform to the world's way of thinking and living instead of daily renewing their minds and being transformed into a willing sacrifice that is acceptable to God (Rom 12:1–2).¹

The research suggests that life issues (pain from relationship hurts, stress from taking care of children, demonic forces in the world, post-pandemic stress, money issues, and peer pressure) are common to humans and the effects of modern-day idols will be evident.²

The research suggests that researchers and participants will be able to pinpoint where, when, why, and how participants are distracted by modern-day idols and help them make better decisions about how they spend their time. The research indicates that in a ministry context, researchers will realize the importance of remembering to have patience with people, to have compassion, and to pray for those wrestling with modern-day idols as well as providing some solutions to break free from them (Eph 6:10–18). The research project results suggest that other ministry settings would experience a positive impact in the areas of mind renewal and spiritual transformation (1 John 5:20). The research concluded that because of teaching Christians about

¹ Alex Novack, *Stress* (New York, N Y: Rosen Publishing Group, 2023), 20, ProQuest E-book.

² Pargament and Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles*, 80.

modern-day idol worship and true worship of God, researchers can successfully motivate Christians to become committed worshipers who revere God.

Research Applications

Applying the results of the research will impact Christians who are participating in modern-day idol worship and do not realize it. It will help Christians understand why they behave the way that they do as it relates to their sinful nature. It will give them the history of God's first true worshipers, the first idol worshipers, how it affects them today, and why it is important to offer God true worship. Applying the research results will positively affect the future service and ministry of teaching about the presence of modern-day idol worship brought on by life's stressful and devastating situations and the schemes of the devil. Christians will be informed and continue to raise awareness by sharing and teaching other Christians in their homes, at church, in their community, and wherever the Holy Spirit leads them. The application of this research encourages a wide range of opportunities, such as teaching young teens before and after they experience the trials and tribulations of life. The applications will educate and arm young married couples before and after they have children. It will inform all Christians and be a reminder of the influences of Satan, how to recognize the influences, how to combat his attacks, and how to break free from them (Eph 6:10–18). As a result, the research will educate and train Christians to maneuver through the challenges of practicing Christian values in a world that opposes their faith. Teaching biblical truths within the research will be accessible and applicable in the lives of Christians, which will open their eyes to the truth and strengthen their faith, facilitating character change.³

³ Noland, *Transforming Worship*, 68.

Within the applications, Christians will have the opportunity to be heard and share their worship and life experiences comfortably and encouragingly. The applications will be administered in a caring, patient, understanding, and empathetic way. The applications will be able to help pinpoint where, when, why, and how Christians are influenced by modern-day idol worship and the cause. The application of this research will allow a personalized assessment of individual Christians because of the variety of idols that will be unique to their worship experience.

The application will help them find solutions for resisting, avoiding, and replacing the idols that influence and dominate their lives with true worship of God. This research will be applied to gauge the quality of ministry and support at Life Changers Church. Because everyone has different worship experiences and the world is constantly changing for the good and the bad, there is an ongoing need to gauge and upgrade the value of teaching that fits the individual Christian's worship needs. As a result of the research, data is obtained to contribute to the ever-changing ministry approaches and techniques. Life Changers Church will examine this project and its evident implications and applications to better minister to congregants in modern-day idol worship and true worship of God. One specific way to examine this project is to assess the knowledge offered to the participants in the worship handbook. Question fourteen from the interview communicated the application idea, which asked participants to explain how the teaching from the worship handbook in the Bible class affected their life (see Appendix F).

The participants agreed that the Bible class teachings made them aware of the variety of modern-day idols, more aware of Satan's schemes (Eph 6:10–18), the different ways to offer true worship, and what true worship of God is. This response from the participants confirms the need

for Christians to have additional teaching from the worship handbook as a reminder at church and at home.

The research can be applied to raise awareness for the desire and need for teaching about true worship and spiritual struggles with modern-day idol worship to teenagers, young adults, married couples, parents, and older adults. Christian education and formation classes can be provided to fit various worship service times for discussion and learning settings for young adults, youth, and older adults at any stage in their faith walk.⁴

Awareness can become tangible evidence by motivating someone to have a renewed mind, which could bring about spiritual and behavioral transformation (Rom 12:1–2). If awareness is present in someone, it can be recognized by others around them, which could facilitate change for them⁵

This awareness can be raised in all types of ministry settings such as churches, prison ministries, homeless ministries, and counseling settings. It is important that ministry is not limited to the worries and walls of the church. Ministry is for the community, and it must be intentional to fulfill the calling to be a facilitator of transformation in every part of someone's life. It is God's purpose to gather all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10).⁶

The applications of this research in ministry can build opportunities to sustain and champion support for the mind, body, and spirit. By the participants having conversations with other Christians concerning the importance of knowing what true worship is and their spiritual

⁴ Cindy Klick, *Guidelines Ministries with Young People: Empower Youth and Young Adults in Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 2016), 24.

⁵ Thomas H. Ulrich, *Spiritual Leadership: A Guide to Focus, Awareness, and Mindfulness* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 27–36.

⁶ John Pritchard, *Handbook of Christian Ministry: For Lay and Ordained Christians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2020), 13, ProQuest E-book.

struggles, it will help promote discussions that extend to the people they are closest to such as family, friends, and coworkers. More formally, spiritual struggles are defined as experiences of tension, conflict, or strain that center on whatever people view as sacred, whether it is God, family, jobs, or calling (vocation). Research shows that spiritual struggles can be discovered in any group, at any time, or in any situation. Women and men of all ethnicities, ages, and religious groups acknowledge spiritual struggles.⁷ Those discussions will help apply the research data in helpful ways that promote mind renewal, transformation, commitment, and reverence for God.

Because people can struggle with things that they hold sacred, spiritual struggles can take the shape of many things, such as focusing on things they have made into gods in their hearts and demonic forces. They can focus on families, institutions, organizations, individual relationships, one's values, practices, internal beliefs, and feelings. Spiritual struggles may occur in one's mind, with other people, or with the supernatural. Spiritual struggles can be found in conflicts and tensions located around what seem to be secular parts of life (nonreligious activity). Struggles are human experiences and are complicated. There are various types which vary in intensity, duration, and frequency. For those reasons, they deserve attention from researchers and practitioners. This suggests that struggles are often painful, are found everywhere, and are significant.

The application of this research will help name and normalize spiritual struggles and will help people accept and readjust themselves to the truth that they are wrestling with serious spiritual issues. Spiritual struggles are an appropriate topic of conversation in therapy. Therapists can encourage acceptance by inspiring clients to recognize and monitor the feelings and thoughts that come along with spiritual struggles as they would a variety of distressful experiences. The

⁷ Pargament and Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles*, 6, 15.

principal message here is that having struggles is okay, and it is okay to feel anxious and experience countless thoughts and feelings that are connected to struggle.⁸

It is normal to have struggles, but normalcy for Christians should be to struggle triumphantly, which is a growth process for followers of Christ (2 Cor 2:14).⁹ Many people in the Bible experienced spiritual struggles: Job, the apostle Paul, and Jesus. Spiritual struggles can create the potential for power and growth.¹⁰ The application of this research will be relatable to the community's genuine existence, its struggles, and joys.¹¹

Research Limitations

Although the data analysis revealed some beneficial areas of the project, some limitations were identified after the intervention assessment. The research was restricted in gaining complete transparency in the Bible class about modern-day idol worship practiced because of the group setting. Complete transparency could have been beneficial to the research. Because of human nature (sin nature) it is hard to admit wrongdoing like Cain (Gen 3). Because of the group setting, the research project did not allow the more reserved and shy participants to share their thoughts on some subjects, without their input, a favorable evaluation was hindered.

Although the participants were made aware of the modern-day idols that they struggled with and the various means of true worship of God to combat the attacks of the devil, the research project was not capable of getting some of the participants to follow through with the prescribed Bible class teachings in their everyday lives. It is up to the participants to realize that

⁸ Pargament and Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles*, 6–7, 13, 140, 158.

⁹ AbuJamra, *Fractured Faith*, 104–5.

¹⁰ Pargament and Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles*, 13,18.

¹¹ Pritchard, *Handbook of Christian Ministry*, 1.

they must be intentional with their daily worship and become aware of people and things that would distract them from offering true worship to God (1 Pet 5:8–9).

The research was hindered because of spiritual struggles. Christians have spiritual struggles that are common to humans and prevent their commitment. Because Christians live in a world full of temptations and distractions (Matt 26:41), it causes them to experience depression, resentment, shame, helplessness, and anger. Many Christians become addicted to things they use to lessen their mental pain, and much of their anguish and stress comes from being human. Only God can provide a way of escape from temptation (1 Cor 10:13).¹² The research was not capable of changing the hearts of the participants through just teaching measures because a change of heart happens through the formation of their worship experiences and practices based on a desire to please God because of the love and admiration they have for Him.¹³ Only God can give Christians the hope they need to be victorious over the enemy and give holy desires to obey Him instead of their flesh (Rom 7:25).¹⁴

The research alone could not keep the participants from being conformed to the customs and values of the world, and instead dedicating their lives through worship to God and walking in holiness. The research alone was incapable of causing mind renewal by focusing on godly values and transformation because of spiritual maturity so they could please God and live according to His will (Rom 12:1–2). Although the participants were taught the Word in Bible class, it was incumbent upon them to be consistent in being doers of the Word (Jas 1:22–25).

Although the research was implemented to motivate the participants to become committed worshipers who revere God, it was limited in preventing the participants from

¹² Dominic Pettman, *Infinite Distraction: Paying Attention to Social Media* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2016), 9.

¹³ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 23, 25.

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart*, 109.

succumbing to the influences of modern-day idols, in helping them constantly offer God true worship, and walking in total obedience to God (1 John 5:2–3).

Further Research

In Chapter 2, the literature review indicated that humans have a sinful nature passed down by their first parents, Adam and Eve (Gen 3). It revealed how influences from Satan and other people (such as peer pressure and stress from family members, jobs, money, and life's trials and tribulations) can cause Christians to repeat the same sins (idolatry) of their ancestors, even when they are not trying to. As a result of the research, it was discovered that the participants in some areas and to some degrees have repeated some of the same good and bad worship behaviors of the Bible characters that were used in the worship handbook. To build on that discovery, further research is needed on how to include family members and friends so participants can receive input from someone on the outside looking in to help pinpoint where modern-day idol worship is affecting their lives, how it started, and how it can be replaced with true worship of God.

Family members and friends are affected by someone who is practicing modern-day idol worship and could provide input about themselves and their ancestors that could be contributors to the participant's struggles with modern-day idol worship. The family members and friends would be there for support and encouragement, as well. Observational data from this project indicated that participants were unwilling to be as transparent and truthful as they could have been in Bible class because they were in a group setting instead of a private setting. Maybe the use of a journal would help those participants convey their thoughts more openly.

No one close to the participants was telling them that they were affected by their idolatry, which could have helped them be more open because of their love for their family or friends.

Further research could reveal that having family or close friends in a private setting with a participant could prove to be negative or helpful. One favorable outcome could be that a family member's or friend's presence and encouragement could strengthen their relationship and help find solutions for sustainable and successful outcomes (Jas 5:16). A negative could be undue pressure and stress placed on the participant to pretend to have changed or want to change, which will not be good for anyone involved.

As a result of the research project's time limits, there was not enough time to teach about some of the modern-day idols or expand on the ones that were taught. The researcher was limited by time restraints, as there were only ten weeks available to enact the intervention, but at least twelve weeks were needed, which was the original plan. The ten weeks did not allow the participants to get enough information and to have a dialogue about the information that could have helped them be aware of more modern-day idols and of more ways to worship and serve God in spirit and in truth. Twelve weeks could have given the participants more time to complete homework assignments and track their worship progress in their journals. For further research, an extended time to teach participants about modern-day idol worship could be beneficial for them to get all the information they need so they can be equipped with the tools they need to combat the influences of modern-day idol worship. Also, it would provide enough time to accurately report the findings of the research.

Researchers should become acquainted with the observable events under study. They should deeply involve themselves in whatever field they are studying with lengthened engagement with their research participants (repeated interviews/observations over some time other than a one-time thing with participants). This acquaintance has benefits for working with participants and explanation of findings, but it also has possible risks of making theories about

what is being explored and perhaps under or over-interpreting findings from the researcher's viewpoint rather than depicting the participant's views.¹⁵

Although the outcome for the participants was to become committed worshipers who revere God, the researcher could have added more objectives to aim for in the project formulation. Those objectives could have been in the form of more specific questionnaires and interview questions, asking different questions in Bible class after the teaching based on different surveys, or administering a pre and post-test. These evaluation tools are suggested for future researchers, not because this project had insufficient tools.

To further research, future researchers could ask more specific questions, provide surveys, and a pre- and post-test to possibly achieve more transparent answers and favorable, useful results. The researcher was limited by the participant size, by not having enough group participants, and limited by having a group of participants. For further research, future researchers can have more beneficial results if they have enough or more group participants for dialogue that could strengthen individuals who could gain from other's input. Also, future researchers could have one-on-one teaching so the participants could be more transparent and truthful about their struggles with idolatry, which could render a more successful outcome and results.

Further research would be needed to address this project's research problem in different contexts, locations, cultures, and settings. This research problem can be focused on helping people in close, intimate relationships, friends, and family relationships. Further research could focus on the problem at Christian schools and with Christians from different cultures. This

¹⁵ Rena, Lyons. *Diving Deep into Qualitative Data Analysis in Communication Disorders Research*, 1st ed. (Guildford, England: J&R Press Ltd, 2022), 20.

research problem can be the focus in a Christian counseling setting, a prison ministry setting, a homeless shelter setting, a women's shelter setting, a men's shelter setting, a church, and a home setting. The research problem can focus on helping people in various settings by being an example of Christ through caring, compassion, listening, and transformative love. It can help point out areas where people are on a path of self-destruction. It can focus on helping people make decisions that will lead to them growing in honesty, self-confidence, love, and authenticity. As a result, the research will help facilitate self-awareness and spiritual growth.¹⁶

People from past to present, from many different nonreligious and religious groups, from ordinary to extraordinary, from all walks of life and cultures who face a broad range of life experiences have spiritual struggles, even people with psychological problems. Spiritual struggles are also more common in some situations and within some groups than others because spiritual struggles are an existing human experience.¹⁷ To meet the needs of participants, this research project can be carried out in person, on a computer through Zoom, or FaceTime over the phone. This research project has many possibilities for further research because it is helping people become aware of the power of Jesus Christ amid their struggles with modern-day idol worship.

More than a thousand experimental studies report positive correlations between religious involvement and various aspects of psychological, relational, or physical health. Recent work has identified complex religious and spiritual struggles as both a cause and effect of distress, while

¹⁶ Pritchard, *Handbook of Christian Ministry*, 22–26, 47.

¹⁷ Pargament and Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles*, 15.

others have noted that some religious and spiritual struggles can be profound enough to impair emotional and psychological health.¹⁸

For further research, future researchers can expand on the framework of this research project by providing needed guidance in areas where participants are experiencing severe crisis, shame, guilt, and rejection. Also, it could provide guidance to help participants manage stress, fear, and doubt brought on by family relationships, careers, money, insecurities, addictions, and childhood traumas.

Individuals have spiritual conflicts with other people or with the supernatural that are deeply suppressed, and it can be difficult to put them into words. Spiritual struggles can also be repressed or suppressed because the person may not be fully aware of their spiritual struggles. Although someone may be asked questions about spiritual struggles, the questions may not frequently lead to a helpful response because of shame, personal feelings, guilt, and fears of criticism and disapproval by God or others. As a result, there may be a reluctance to acknowledge their spiritual struggles to a therapist. Although many people would love to have an opportunity to discuss their spiritual struggles, many may have concerns about whether spiritual struggles are a proper subject for discussion in psychotherapy. Some people may be wondering if therapists have the qualifications to talk about these distinct issues.¹⁹ This is something future researchers can investigate.

The research results concluded that teaching modern-day idol worship and true worship was helpful, desired, and needed so the participants could become aware and committed

¹⁸ Joshua A. Wilt et al., "Partnering with God: Religious Coping and Perceptions of Divine Intervention Predict Spiritual Transformation in Response to Religious–Spiritual Struggle," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 11, no. 3 (2019): 278–90.

¹⁹ Pargament and Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles*, 140.

worshippers who revere God. They needed teaching in the spirit of love, support, understanding, and empathy while teaching them how idol worship affects their lives negatively and how true worship for God brings peace, happiness, joy, and a clear vision for their future. The participants agreed with strong support that the teaching from the worship handbook in Bible class should be taught in the church for awareness and as a reminder of the schemes and attacks of Satan through modern-day idols. They agreed that the Bible class positively affected their lives, enabling transparency and making them more aware of the variety of modern-day idols, which caused them to confront their public and personal spiritual struggles. It also gave them a better understanding of the different means to offer God worship in spirit and in truth out of love and obedience, which will help them to identify, resist, and break free from modern-day idols.

If Christians become more aware of the root and approach of temptation, it will assist them with putting away old idolatrous habits and patterns before they succumb to them. God provides a way to escape temptation (1 Cor 10:13). Christians must pray to guard against giving into the lust of the flesh and fear so God can give them holy longings for obedience to Him. Christians must be alert and on guard to be successful against Satan's schemes. Peter warns that the devil is the adversary and is like a roaring lion prowling and seeking someone that he can devour (1 Pet 5:8).²⁰

This project design backed the problem, purpose, and thesis statement. To increase awareness of acceptable and unacceptable worship (idolatry), the researcher will use this work to continue to provide occasions for teaching families, friends, and communities about the influences of modern-day idols, how to resist them, and replace them with true worship of God.

²⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart*, 100, 109, ProQuest E-Book.

There will be a continuance by the investigator to commit to a lifestyle of serving others by providing emotional and spiritual support through counseling, teaching God's Word, praying for others, listening to others' concerns, and noticing the influences of modern-day idols. This project design has brought awareness of the need to appreciate and comprehend how to meet the needs of people so they can offer acceptable worship to God while simultaneously receiving healing, deliverance, provision, hope, peace, and joy from Him.

In summary, the problem, purpose, and thesis statement infer consideration of the necessity to assess the quality of teaching on modern-day idol worship and true worship of God given through the worship handbook in Bible class. A need has surfaced through this project for a clearer understanding of how to teach Christians the variety of ways to worship God in spirit and in truth and minister to those who are being influenced and dominated by modern-day idols while they seek help to understand why they are struggling and are bound in everyday life. In addition, it teaches them how they can break free from the idols by renewing their minds and being transformed so they can offer God worship that is good and acceptable and in His perfect will (Rom 12:1–2). Based on the exposure of this action research, Life Changers Church congregants would thrive in worship publicly and privately if they would embrace the approach from the worship handbook.

This approach would aid a united family of Christians who would work to perfect the saints, work in the ministry, and edify the body of Christ (Eph 4:11–14). If the worship handbook is embraced as an active aid to teach congregants insightful and biblical ways to offer God acceptable worship, it would provide the knowledge for an understanding of how to identify, avoid, and replace modern-day idol worship with true worship of God. There would also be a

standard for evaluating the productiveness of the ministries in which the possibilities for spiritual growth and transformation would be evident. As a result, God would receive true worship.

God cares about how He is worshiped, and the instructions are in His Word. Christians are to worship God only and not idols (Exod 20:3–10). Christians are to worship Him, bow down, and kneel before Him with the right attitude because He is their maker (Ps 95:6). There is only one God, one mediator between God and men, and that mediator is Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom, a substitute sacrifice for the sins of mankind for a testimony given for all He has done and for who He is at the right and proper time (1 Tim 2:5–6). Christians must always endeavor to be prepared to battle against Satan’s temptations (Eph 6:10–18) while worshiping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24).

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APPENDIX A
PERMISSION REQUEST

Dr. Keith E. Ivy

Senior Pastor

Life Changers International Ministries
11770 Haynes Bridge Rd.

Suite 205-497

Alpharetta, Ga. 30009

Dear Dr. Keith E. Ivy,

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a DMIN degree. The title of my research project is Modern-day Idol Worship. The purpose of my research is to implement a worship handbook to motivate congregants to be committed worshipers who revere God.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Life Changers Intl. Ministries. Also, I would like to contact members of your church to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on an official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Franzetta L. Ivy

Graduate Student

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL RESPONSE

Date:

April 28, 2023

To

Franzetta L. Ivy

LIFE CHANGERS INTL**MINISTRIES INC.**

Dear Franzetta L. Ivy

After a careful review of your research

proposal entitled Modern-Day Idol

Worship at Life Changers Church:

How It Was Identified and Replaced

with True Worship of God, I have

decided to grant you permission to

contact our members, invite them to

participate in your study, and conduct

your study at Life Changers

International Ministries Inc.

Check the following boxes, applicable:

 I will provide our

membership list to Franzetta L. Ivy,

and Franzetta L. Ivy may use the list to

contact our members to invite them to

participate in her research study.

 I grant permission for

Franzetta L. Ivy to contact potential

participants who best fit her research

needs and to invite them to participate

in her research study.

Sincerely,

Keith Ivy
Senior Pastor

████████████████████

████████████████

████████████████

www.lifechangersintlinc.org

lifechangersintl@gmail.com

11770 Haynes Bridge Rd.

Suite 205-497

Alpharetta, Ga. 30009

APPENDIX C

VERBAL RECRUITMENT

Hello potential participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a DMIN degree. The purpose of my research is to implement a worship handbook to motivate congregants to become committed worshipers who revere God. If you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be thirteen years old or older. Participants, if willing, will be asked to attend a Bible class about worship once a week for no longer than an hour. The participants will be asked to participate in questionnaires and recorded interviews that will take no longer than an hour each. The participants will be asked to take notes during the Bible class for reflection. The participants will be asked to partake in activities at their home each week, such as constructing a worship topic, a Scripture verse, a short Bible story on the topic, a reflection question(s), and a short prayer, which should take an hour. They should be prepared to discuss their activities in the weekly Bible class. The participants will be asked to take time to pray, read a Scripture verse, and worship God through singing each week at their home, keep a journal for accountability, and so the researcher can track their level of involvement in the activities for research results. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you like to participate in my research study and or allow your child to participate? Yes. Great, could I get your email address so I can send you more details? Yes. Thank you for your time.

The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please complete it and return it to me. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORMS

Consent

Title of the Project: Modern-day Idol Worship at Life Changers Church: How It Was Identified and Replaced with True Worship of God

Principal Investigator: Franzetta L. Ivy, Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate, you must be 18 years old or older. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to implement a worship handbook to motivate Christians to become committed worshipers who revere God.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in a Bible teaching class about worship, which includes verbal input, taking notes, and filling out questionnaires that will take no longer than an hour.
2. Participate in activities at home such as constructing a worship topic, a definition of the topic, a Scripture for the topic, a short biblical story to go along with the topic, a reflection question, and be prepared to elaborate on it. This will take no longer than an hour.

3. Participate in an audio-recorded interview. This will take no longer than an hour.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect a direct benefit from participating in this study. They should expect to receive direct benefits from this study, including teaching and training that they would not ordinarily receive. Benefits to society include literature that is helpful to my discipline and a strengthened community of believers.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and/ or all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years/until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then they will be deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Franzetta L. Ivy. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. W. Ryan Steenburg, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Parental Consent/Combined Parental Consent and Student Assent/Parental

Title of the Project: Modern-day Idol Worship at Life Changers Church: How It Was Identified and Replaced with True Worship Of God

Principal Investigator: Franzetta L. Ivy, Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Project Study

Your child is invited to participate in a project study. To participate, he must be thirteen years old or older. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to allow your child to take part in this project study.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to implement a worship handbook that will motivate Christians to be committed worshipers who revere God.

What will participants be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I will ask him to do the following:

1. Participate in a Bible teaching class about worship which includes verbal input, taking notes and filling out questionnaires that will take no longer than an hour.
2. Participate in activities at home such as constructing a worship topic, a definition of the topic, a Scripture for the topic, a short biblical story to go along with the topic, a reflection question, a prayer, and be prepared to elaborate on it. This will take no longer than an hour.
3. Participate in an audio-recorded interview. This will take no longer than an hour.

How could participants or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study. They should expect to receive direct benefits from this study, including teaching and training that they would not ordinarily receive. Benefits to society include literature that is helpful to my discipline and a strengthened community of believers.

What risks might participants experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks your child would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Project records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. After three years all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years/until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will participants be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to allow your child to participate will not affect your or his current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should be done if a participant wishes to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw your child from the study or your child chooses to withdraw, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw him or should your child choose to withdraw, data collected from your child will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Franzetta L. Ivy. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. W. Ryan Steenburg, at [REDACTED].

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researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child as part of his participation in this study.

Printed Child's Name

Parent Signature

Date

Minor's Signature

Date

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child as part of his participation in this study.

Printed Child's Name

Parent Signature

Date

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How would you explain what modern-day idol worship is?
2. Do you believe you have practiced modern-day idol worship in any way? Explain why or why not. Explain how or how not.
3. Explain why modern-day idol worship should or should not be taught at church.
4. Explain what worship is according to the Bible.
5. Explain why it is important to worship God.
6. How much time do you spend in personal worship?
7. Explain what a committed worshipper is.
8. Explain how you show reverence to God.
9. Explain why you worship God.
10. Explain what you are thinking about when you worship God.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When was your first worship experience?
2. Explain how you felt the first time you worshiped God.
3. Explain how you feel now when you worship God.
4. In what ways do you worship at church and in your personal life?
5. Explain how you could participate in worship more in church or your personal life.
6. Explain how worship or the lack thereof affects your personal life.
7. Explain what worship means to you.
8. Explain how important you believe worship is to God.
9. What life situations cause you to worship God?
10. In what ways do you think you worship idols?
11. Explain what causes you to worship idols.

12. Explain how idol worship affects your life.

13. Explain how teaching about modern-day worship at church would or would not affect your life?

14. Explain how teaching from the worship handbook in Bible class has affected your life.¹

¹ Question fourteen was not a part of the original plan. To enhance the research, it was added at the end of the tenth week to help measure the efficacy of the intervention.

APPENDIX G

WORSHIP HANDBOOK

This worship handbook was created to teach congregants about the dangers of idol worship. It will teach congregants not to worship God the wrong way or worship something else. It will teach congregants what acceptable and unacceptable worship is according to Scripture. It will help congregants identify the influences of idolatry or any presence of idolatry in their lives. This worship handbook will demonstrate how congregants' worship could affect their lives negatively or positively as it did for God's people throughout the history of the Bible. This worship handbook will be used as a guide to help congregants worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24 King James Version).

Week One Intervention: The Root of Idolatry and How to Avoid It

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit (Isa 14: 12–15, KJV).

The originator of idolatry, pride, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, disobedience, lies, violence, corruption, and deception was Lucifer/ the devil. God rejected him and kicked him out of heaven over worship (Ezek 28:16–17). He wanted to be like God, he wanted God's glory, God's worship, and he wanted to replace God (Isa 14:12–15). Satan has tried to influence many people since the beginning of time to get them to worship him instead of God, including Jesus. Satan had the gall to try to tempt, influence, and proposition Jesus to worship him, saying that if He bowed down to worship him, he'd give Him all the material things anyone could ever desire. Jesus did not debate with him; he did not tell him He was God manifested in the flesh and already had the power to have whatever He wanted. Jesus simply replied with God's Word, "Get

thee hence, Satan; for it is written, ‘thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve’ and the devil fled from Him” (Matt 4:8–12 KJV). Idolatry is a work of the flesh (Gal 5:17–20). Christians must be sober-minded and aware of the devices that Satan uses to try to influence them to partake in idol worship. Satan is always looking and searching for someone to corrupt and turn them away from God in their hearts (1 Pet 5:8).

Man’s First Act of Idolatry

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 Cor 2:15–17, KJV).

Adam and Eve: Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden in Eden. He influenced her to commit idolatry through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Cor 2:15–17). The serpent told Eve she would be like the gods. The lust for the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil came between them and God and the lust for wisdom to be like God. God brought judgment on the serpent, Adam, and Eve (Gen 3:1–24).

Reflections: Am I always focused on pleasing God and being aware of Satan’s schemes to try to tempt me with sin? How will you combat Satan the next time you are tempted to sin against God?

Prayer: Father God, I know Satan is the root of all sin and evil. I know he will do whatever it takes to distract me from focusing on pleasing you in my daily life of worship. Father, give me strength and help me keep your Word in my heart to use as a weapon to defeat the devil so he will flee the next time he tries to tempt me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Week Two Intervention: Deficient Worship

Tithing: God loves His people; He blesses them, and He expects them to reciprocate the love by worshiping Him with their substance. God spoke to the Levites, the priest, to take from the Children of Israel what God commands them to give. God gave it to the Levites for an inheritance (a tenth of the produce from the land, whether it's fruit or grain). The Levites were to give a tenth to God. It belongs to the Lord, and it is holy (Num 18:26). Bring the tithe into my storehouse. I will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing you do not room enough to receive (Mal 3:10). "For where your treasure is, your heart will be also" (Matt 6:21 KJV). When Christians tithe and give offerings instead of keeping it for themselves, it's an indicator that their heart is not tied to their money and that they love God more than their money (Matt 6:24).

Cain and Abel: Cain worshiped God the wrong way. He did not give God his best, and he offered God an inferior unacceptable harvest from the ground. It was probably something he would not eat himself. It meant nothing to him. God rejected his worship and said if he did well, He would have accepted it. Meaning if you do what's right, I will accept it. If you do not do what's right, sin is waiting at the door, it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. Right after that, Cain murdered his brother, Abel, in a field because God accepted his worship and not Cain's. He was driven far away from his family, which was God's judgment. Abel worshiped God the right way (Gen 4:1–16). Abel brought of his firstlings, his best. His worship was a true sacrifice from the heart (John 4:23–24). Cain and Abel had different attitudes about worship, which resulted in different actions. Cain was tempted by Satan and his deficient worship led him to murder. The scribes and Pharisees had the same spirit as Cain. They were emulating the character of Satan instead of God. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees at the temple that they

were of their father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and did not abide by the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks of lies, it is his native language. He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

Reflections: Have I given my best to God, my family, my church, my employer, etc.? Have I been truthful to myself and God about my worship? How do I know if I'm giving God my best?

Prayer: Father God forgive me for not giving you my best worship. Help me to search the Bible and meditate on it so I will know and be reminded of what acceptable and unacceptable worship is. Give me the strength and the mind to worship you in spirit and in truth so I will not give you deficient worship. In Jesus' name, amen.

Week Three Intervention: God's Commands for Worship are Founded on Love

One of the Pharisees, who was an expert in the law, tried to trip Jesus up by asking Him a question. He said, "Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt 22:36–40, KJV). God's entire law can be reduced to these two laws. God wants a reciprocal and comprehensive relationship with you. He does not want to share you with anyone or anything.

The Greatest Commandment: God set the standard of how He wanted to be worshiped and he explained through the first and second commandments. God let His people know that He was the Lord God, the one who had brought them out of bondage. He forbid them to put other gods before Him and in first place in their hearts. They were not to carve and make images of statues (idols) and worship them as if they were a god or deity. The images could not be anything in the likeness of things in heaven or in the earth, or under the water. They were forbidden to bow down

and worship and serve them. God said He was a jealous God and if they did those things, He would bring judgment to their third and fourth generations. To do those things shows hatred for God, but He would show mercy and bless those who love Him and keep His commandments (Exod 20:2–6). Love is more than a feeling, it is doing.

The Test: Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac to God because he loved God more, he obeyed God, he feared God, he trusted God, and he was committed to God. God tested Abraham with something he knew that he loved with all his heart, mind, and soul. He knew Abraham had waited most of his life to have a child with Sarah, the woman he loved. Isaac was the promised child from God. Abraham passed the test (Gen 22:1–18).

Reflections: Do I love God more than anyone or anything else? Have I kept the first and greatest commandment? What idols are keeping me from putting God first?

Prayer: Father God, thank you for always putting me first, loving me, forgiving me, blessing me, healing me, providing for me, and having mercy on me. Help me to put you first in my heart, mind, and soul. Help me to obey your Word, which is nourishment and life to my spirit. Help me to remove the idols from my heart and put you back on the throne of my heart. Help me fulfill your commandments through Jesus Christ, in Jesus's name, amen.

Week Four Intervention: Dualistic Worship

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:24, NKV). Christians should not place anything above God, not money, fame, possessions, or status. God must have your devotion if you are to receive spiritual direction. It goes back to being committed to God and keeping the covenant. You can have possessions, but do not let possessions have you. Do not rely on possessions (Luke 16:13).

The Children of Israel and the Golden Calf: God's people told Aaron to make a golden calf so they could have a mediator in place of Moses, who was not there. They wanted to worship it and offer sacrifices to it. They wanted to worship God and something else in place of God. They wanted a god they could see and touch as a representation of the mighty God. The calf (Canaanite's idol) did not represent God in any way. It did not represent His strength, His power, His love, wisdom, or protection. It did not represent God's goodness, character, or righteousness. God said they have corrupted themselves. He punished them with plagues (Exod 32:1–8, 35). The apostle Paul explained that God is not like silver, gold, or stone. He cannot be carved and shaped into what man wants Him to be. He explained that man must repent of their idol worship or they will be judged one day by the righteousness of Jesus, the only mediator (1 Tim 2:5) and Savior resurrected from the dead (Acts 17:29–31).

Week Five Intervention: Prideful Worship

Now the works of the flesh are manifested which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envy, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal 5:19–26 KJV).

Pride is a sin, and it is idolatry. When someone is filled with excessive pride, the results of it are manifested in the flesh. People display the characteristics of what is in their hearts. Pride is a characteristic of Satan, who was filled with pride when he was cast from heaven. Satan wanted to take God's place on the throne; he wanted to be the object of worship. Pride is self-worship which is idolatry.

King Saul and his pride: King Saul worshiped God the wrong way. He was impatient. He could not wait for Samuel the priest to arrive and offer the sacrifice to God after He caused him to win a battle. King Saul disobeyed God. He spared the life of King Agag, whom God commanded to kill along with the king's animals, men, women, and children. King Saul kept everything that he thought was valuable. He set up a memorial for himself, and when Samuel asked him why he conducted the sacrifice, he claimed it was to honor God, but it was plain disobedience. Samuel reminded Saul how God raised him from nothing and preferred obedience instead of a false act of worship. Samuel told him his rebellion was as sinful as witchcraft, and his stubbornness was like iniquity and idolatry. Because he had rejected God's Word, God rejected him and his sacrifice of worship. He took the anointing from him and replaced Him with David (1 Sam 15:10–28). After that Saul made excuses, he said he feared the people, so he obeyed them instead of God. King Saul's sin of pride led him to consult a witch, a medium, (Gal 5:20) instead of a prophet of God (1 Sam 28), which is a sin. His pride caused his death. God gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud (Jas 4:6).

Reflections: Am I prideful (in what ways)? Am I arrogant (in what ways)? In what ways do I obey my flesh or others? Do I fear people more than I fear God (peer pressure)? In what ways am I humble, and in what ways am I not humble? When I'm afraid, do I seek out other things to put my trust in?

Prayer: Father God, forgive me for being arrogant and prideful. Forgive me for being disobedient to your commands. Forgive me for obeying others instead of you. Forgive me for obeying my flesh instead of you. Help me to be humble so that I can please and obey you so that you can promote me.

Week Six Intervention: True Worship

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23–24).

True Worship: Jesus was a true worshiper. When Satan tempted Him to bow down and worship him, He refused. Jesus resisted Satan with the Word of God. Jesus believed His heavenly Father was the only one who deserved worship. He humbled Himself because He knew only God had the power to exalt Him (Matt 4:1–11). Because of Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross, Christians can worship God anywhere and it should be from their spirit, mind, body, and soul. It should stem from love, obedience, and humility to be in God’s perfect will (Phil 2:7–8 Matt 7:21).

True Worship: “I have found David” (Psalm 89:20–37). David was the apple of God’s eye (Ps 17:8). David worshiped God the right way, he drove evil spirits away from King Saul by playing his harp (1 Sam 16:23). He worshiped with all his might, dancing and leaping before the Lord as the ark of the Lord was brought to his tabernacle. David always gave God his best, he gave God his heart (2 Sam 6:12–17), and when he sinned, he repented from the heart (Ps 51:1–17). Jesus was the root and offspring of David (Rev 22:16). Christians must serve/worship God with reverence (Heb 12:28), “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” (Rom 14:11).

Reflections: Am I worshiping God in spirit and in truth? Am I worshiping God with my heart, soul, mind, and spirit? Am I worshiping God in faith, love, in holiness, through prayer, singing, reading my Bible, serving at church and home, and on my job? Am I worshiping God by depending on and trusting in Him for wisdom, guidance, power, healing, and provision? Do I

comply with the Holy Spirit who convicts, leads, and intercedes for me as I offer true worship to God in faith?

Prayer: Father God, help me to worship you in spirit and in truth. Help me to worship you with my heart, soul, mind, and actions. Help me to worship you through prayer, praising, singing, reading your Word, and serving. Help me to serve and worship only you by depending, relying, and trusting in you. Holy Spirit help me and empower me to resist idol worship, in Jesus's name, amen.

Week Seven Intervention: Ritualistic Worship

Ritualistic Worship: The people of Judea worshiped God outwardly but not inwardly from the heart. They offered subpar sacrifices. They complained about the tedious process. They did not bring their tithe and offerings, which was robbing God. It was ritualistic worship, just going through the motions and giving God vain glory. They were haughty and felt like serving God was useless. The people felt like there was no profit in keeping God's commands. They felt like they were in a state of mourning. It was boring serving God. In their hearts, the people wanted to be like the pagan nations, which was more pleasurable to their flesh. They had forgotten how God had always blessed and protected them (Mal 3:5–9 14).

False Worship/Traditions: The Pharisees and scribes pretended to honor God by practicing the traditions (religious laws) that were handed down by Jewish elders. They were more concerned about ceremonial traditions such as the steps one must take to wash their hands before they ate. They overlooked keeping God's commandments such as loving their neighbor as themselves, honoring their parents, and helping the poor and widows. Jesus said that they invalidated the Word of God depriving it of power and authority and keeping it from affecting the hearers' hearts for the sake of their traditions (Matt 15:1–20). God is not interested in the

traditions of men. God wants His people to follow His commandments. God wants love shown through obedience. God is not fooled by Christians pretending to honor Him. Jesus said wickedness in the heart is what defiles humans, which is why Christians must allow God to change their nature so they can honor God with the heart along with their words and actions (Matt 15:11).

Reflections: Are there times when I practice ritualistic worship? Are there times when I do not feel like worshiping God from my heart? Are there times when I go through the motions, doing things because people expect me to or because everyone else is doing it? Do I offer fresh, new, sincere, and true worship from my heart? Am I following man's traditions, and worldly traditions, and holding more value to it than the principles of Jesus?

Prayer: Father God, forgive me for following the traditions of people, valuing the world's way of doing things to gain acclaim, accolades, and money instead of following and valuing your Word, which will give me peace, life, and will add everything to me that I need. Help me to worship you in spirit and in truth. Help me to remember all that you do for me and serve you with gladness even when I do not feel like it because you are worthy.

Week Eight Intervention: Singing As Worship

Scripture: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps 95:1–6, KJV).

Singing as Worship: Singing is one powerful way to worship God. The Bible instructs Christians how to come before His presence, and it is with singing. God wants His creation to worship Him willingly and with joy. God wants Christians to sing to Him through every situation, whether they are sad, happy, or afraid (Ps 113:3). For Christians, life can be peaceful, chaotic, unpredictable, or harsh, but praising and worshiping God through singing can change the atmosphere. Paul and Silas were sad, afraid, and in despair, but they did not let that stop them from worshiping God. They worshiped God by singing and praying, and He delivered them from prison. God is a good God, and He deserves praise no matter the situation. God wants Christians to use their gifts, their voices, and instruments to worship Him (Ps 150:1–6). Singing along with prayer and thanksgiving will help Christians stay filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will empower Christians to worship God the way He deserves and when He deserves it, which is all the time. True worshipers sing new songs to the Lord from their hearts. True worshipers exhort others and declare that He is worthy, holy, and the Creator of the world. True worshipers do not worship idols (Ps 96:1–13).

Reflections: How often do I praise and worship God through singing? Do I Have a lifestyle of singing to the Lord? Do I sing only when times are good, and I feel blessed? Do I sing to the Lord when things are going wrong and I'm sad or need help? Do I sing new songs (original songs to the Lord from the heart)?

Prayer: Father God, forgive me for not praising and worshiping you through singing. Help me to sing to you in every situation I go through. Help me to tell others of your goodness so that I may win them to Christ. Help me to sing new songs to you, praising you for what you do for me and for who you are to me. In Jesus's name, amen.

Week Nine Intervention: Worship and Spiritual Adultery and Lust of the Flesh

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jas 4:4 KJV).

Friends With the World: The Israelites committed spiritual adultery and prostitution by worshiping God and Baal on the altars they built for God. God felt like the rejected husband, and He destroyed them (Hos 8:11–12). The Israelites craved and lusted after the world’s way of worship and eventually gave their hearts to it, followed by their actions. They became friends with the world; they conformed to the world’s ways of living. They did not allow God’s Word, prayer, and thanksgiving to renew their minds so that they could worship only Him and live according to His will for their lives (Rom 12:1–2).

Married to Idol Worshipers: King Solomon became friends with the world when he married foreign women. His wives caused his heart to be turned away from God. King Solomon in his old age gave his heart to demonic idols that he worshiped. Satan used his love for women and caring more about pleasing them instead of God, which caused him to fall in love with their gods. He worshiped them instead of God. God made him the wisest and richest man on earth, and he forgot about Him. King Solomon forgot that God was his source, and he began to trust, depend on, and rely on false Gods for his direction. God called King Solomon evil and gave his kingdom to someone else after he died.

Reflections: Am I in friendship with the world in any way, in what way? Have I conformed to the world’s way of worshiping? Do I love something or someone more than God? Am I committing spiritual adultery?

Prayer: Father God, you are so worthy of my worship. You deserve my whole heart, you deserve glory, honor, and adoration. You are a good Father. Help me to fight temptation with your Word. Help me to guard my heart from idols. Give me the strength not to allow anything to steal my heart away from you. Help me not to commit spiritual adultery, and help me to be committed to you and reverence you all the days of my life. In Jesus's name, amen.

Week Ten Intervention: Worship and Hypocrisy

“Woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt 23:27–28 KJV).

Hypocrisy and Judgement: Jesus pronounced judgment on the scribes and Pharisees for being hypocrites. They taught one thing out of their mouth in public but did not live what they taught. They were religious men who required others to follow God's commandments and required others to do things that they would not do themselves. They burdened the poor, took homes from widows, and did not honor their parents. They did not obey God's commands. They looked righteous and holy on the outside but were wicked on the inside. They were filled with pride and arrogance; they were self-indulgent and greedy. They bragged that they would not have murdered the prophets in the Old Testament, but they were the ones who later murdered Jesus's disciples and prophets for preaching the gospel. Jesus called them vipers and snakes who would not escape being condemned to hell (Matt 23:1–36). They were like Satan, pretending to be God's good servants (2 Cor 11:14).

Ritual Hypocrisy: The Israelites were warned of judgment to come through the prophet Amos. The Israelites worshiped God while oppressing the poor, which was ritual hypocrisy and

false worship. They worshiped golden calves (idolatry). They expected to find favor with God while being greedy and wicked. They forgot that God gave them what they had and that they should continue to trust and depend on God as their source. They prayed and expected God to protect them from pagan nations, even though they behaved like the pagan nations. Because of the idols, the Israelite's hearts were turned away from God, and He was angry (Amos 5:18–6:14).

God wants Christians to behave like His obedient children. Christians must not be conformed to the evil desires of the world and offer false worship. God desires that Christians worship Him only and in spirit and in truth, from the core of who they are. God wants Christians to seek Him as passionately as He seeks them, and remember Him, not just because of what He does for them, but because of who He is: the Creator of all life. God is good, He is merciful, He's a provider, He is a healer and a protector. God loves His people (John 3:16).

Reflections: Have I been prideful and arrogant? Do I reflect Christ, or do I reflect Satan? Do I expect others to do things for me that I do not or will not do for them? Do I put more work into looking good, holy, acting caring or kind than I put into changing my inner man, my soul, my mind, my spirit? How can I change my character to match the character of Christ?

Prayer: Father God, thank you for loving me despite my sinful nature. Thank you for blessing me even when I do not deserve it. Father, help me to love people as much as you do. Help me to not be prideful, arrogant, and merciless, whether I'm prosperous or not. Help me to remember that it is you who blessed me with every gift and ability that I have and to humble myself so that you may exalt me. Help me to reflect Christ inside and out and not the world. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Worship Handbook Definitions

Biblical worship. Biblical worship is serving. It is serving God with the right attitude of love, humility, reverence, loyalty, and obedience. Also, God’s commandment says to serve Him through other service relationships with justice and peace. Bowing before God is worship, according to the Bible which symbolizes acknowledgment of being a servant who is limited in knowledge and in power (Gen 24:48; 2 Chr 29:30).¹ Worship is not merely an attitude; it is an action also. The Hebrew verb *hishtahawa* is translated as worship. *Haway* means to lay prostrate, which is the root behind *hishtahawa*. Another important word used to describe the act of worship is *abad*, a verb that means to make, to serve, and to do. The word the Bible uses to describe and emphasize worship is lively and define worship as serving and bowing down. Worship of God should be the goal in all the activities of someone’s life. Worship is always executed by God’s creation in response to the divine inventiveness of the supreme Creator. He created everything for them, starting in the Garden of Eden.² Because God exists, worship exists, and humans were created in His image and likeness and for His glory.³

Commitment. Commitment is unwavering fidelity. God expects exclusive worship. Loving God represents a covenant commitment identifiable by unwavering fidelity. God expects committed worshipers because of the things He has done and kept His covenant with His people.⁴ Daily reading of the Scriptures, daily devotionals, participation in weekly Bible studies,

¹ Levi, “Worship,” 487-504.

² Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 31–32, 39, 44–45.

³ *Ibid.*, 25–45.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

and a commitment to live out a lifestyle consistent with gospel teachings were hallmarks of a generation that saw itself as the people of the book.⁵

Covenant. A contract or a binding arrangement between two or more parties. God freely made a covenant with humanity in the beginning under the condition of absolute obedience in which they would receive His blessings and not His punishment. The covenant and moral laws that were mediated through Moses at Mount Sinai to the people of Israel, which included the Ten Commandments, must be observed in the context of what preceded them. The covenantal God who created the earth and revealed Himself to Abraham, then to Moses. To understand the moral laws and covenants given to Abraham and Moses, Christians must always remember they naturally point forward to the coming of Christ.⁶ God redeemed His people so that they may worship Him the right way. Obedience corresponds with the worship of the true and living God and covenant keeping.⁷

Idol Worship. Idol worship is the worship of other gods. God forbids the worship of other gods in the Hebrew Bible.⁸ Idolatry does not merely mean one thing. Idolatry means serving God without His command and written Word. Idolatry means adoration and image formed from the Greek language and means adoration of images. Idol worship violates the first commandment. Idolatry is apostasy, abandoning God and Christian virtues, substituting God and His Word for something else, whether internally in the heart and soul or externally. Idol worship is the worship

⁵ Trozzo, "Towards Christian Education," 34–42.

⁶ Crowe, *The Path of Faith*, 3, 43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19, 45.

⁸ Levi, "Worship," 487–504.

of a creature. Idol worship leads people from God and the Christian faith and causes them to rely on and trust in other's or one's works, strengths, and righteousness.⁹

Idol worship is not restricted to just humans, it is man-made systems and ideologies. It is something that is wrong, and something that is warped.¹⁰ Idol worship is worshiping angels, heavenly bodies, and demons with supernatural powers.¹¹ Idolatry is false worship, meaning religious ritualism. It is ritual hypocrisy.¹² Idolatry is will-worship, worship in agreement with one's ideas, it is an act of self-worship and particularly the worship of one's will and wants.¹³

Modern-day idols. Modern-day idols are thoughts, loves, longings, desires, and expectations that humans worship in place of the true and living God. They trust and rely on them for identity and righteousness or okay-ness. Humans deify the outward appearance of anything that reflects their glory, worth, or beauty.¹⁴ Those outward appearances are comprised of physique, homes, cars, people, ideas, things, consumerism, fame, celebrity, or money. Also, national pride, race, and weapons. These false idols and gods move and operate the political, economic, and cultural power. Humans bow down to their scintillating modern seductiveness. The strongest idol and competitor to God is self, self-righteous, self-love, self-worship, self-reliance, and self-exaltation. These idols are loved more than God, they replace God, and they are loves that have gone wrong.¹⁵

⁹ García, *Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire*, 6, 11, 23–24.

¹⁰ Okholm, *Learning Theology*, 18, 119.

¹¹ Wright, *Here Are Your Gods*, 11–14.

¹² Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 276.

¹³ Duncan, *Does God Care*, 46–47.

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart*, 18, 83.

¹⁵ Wright, *Here Are Your Gods*, 86, 116–118, 120, 124, 128.

Idols may be the boosting of human pride or the entertainment of seekers.¹⁶

People worshipped manmade images (in the Hebrew literature) that represented earthly materials. Crafted images born of human imaginations that are lifeless: they cannot see, hear, understand, or speak. They are gods and images of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. These idols are attributed divinity, power, and status by their worshipers because they do not have these things within themselves, and they are powerless (Ps 113:15–18).¹⁷

Reverence. Sometimes synonymous with respect, it is a comprehension of human limitations that begins with the virtue of reverence, which expands the scope to be in awe of what is believed to be beyond someone's control, such as God, justice, nature, truth, and even death. Reverence is the virtue that suppresses human beings from attempting to act like gods. To fail to remember that one is only human and think that one can pretend to be like a god result in the opposite of reverence.¹⁸

Spiritual Formation. There are many definitions of spiritual formation, but for this thesis project, a definition that describes spiritual formation for Christians will be used. Spiritual formation, simply put, is the process of being changed to become more like Jesus. It is a gradual and ongoing process where a personal change happens, and the believer grows spiritually. This change occurs because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit leads the believer into transformation and conformity to the image of Christ. Spiritual formation and transformation are available to every Christian if they intentionally and honestly seek to be in the presence of God.¹⁹

¹⁶ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 418.

¹⁷ Swazo, *Destroying Idols*, 15–18.

¹⁸ Woodruff, *Reverence*, 1.

¹⁹ Earley and Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation*, 12.

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

April 24, 2023

Franzetta Ivy

William Crawley

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22–23–1388 Modern-Day Idol Worship

Dear Franzetta Ivy and William Crawley,

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 that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not “designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

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

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP

Administrative Chair

Research Ethics Office