EQUIPPING THE WORSHIP TEAM AT MAIN STREET

BAPTIST CHURCH IN GEORGETOWN, TEXAS,

WITH A BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORSHIP

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A Project

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by

John Lee Sullivan

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APPROVAL SHEET

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PREFACE

I would never have been given the opportunity to go back to school and complete this ministry project if it were not for all of the family and friends in my life. All thanksgiving and worship goes to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the source of my entire life and gives me strength when I have nothing to contribute that is of my own. I thank the Lord for bringing me to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and allowing me to grow as a worship pastor so that I may use the gifts He has given me to serve His local church.

While pursuing the doctor of educational ministry degree in Christian worship, I had the honor and privilege of studying with Dr. Joseph Crider. Dr. Crider has been a profound encouragement in my life. He not only invested in my call to the gospel ministry, but has always demonstrated a sincere love and compassion to both me and my family. I am incredibly grateful for his spiritual leadership and biblical instruction in worship.

I would also like to thank my church family. Main Street Baptist Church in Georgetown, Texas, has been my home for these past eight years and is where I have served as pastor of worship and missions. Main Street has shown a tremendous amount of love to me and my family. They not only allowed me the opportunity to attend school and further my education, but also demonstrated much support and encouragement through the entire process. In addition to the church body, Pastor Ernest Jones has been a strong advocate in my life both professionally and personally. He has always supported me and has been an encouragement to me these past eight years. His door has always been open to me, and I will not soon forget the love and respect he has consistently afforded me.

My wife, Beth, has been my rock and my constant companion. She has been a part of this journey long before I ever stepped foot on the campus of The Southern

Baptist Theological Seminary. I dreamed of going back to school and finishing my doctorate once I finished my master's degree in music in 2004. One event in life led to another, and I resigned myself to the fact that I might never pursue a doctoral degree. Through all of my doubt and resignation, Beth never let me give up on my desire to continue my education. She has been an encouragement to me from the very beginning and never let me quit or become lackadaisical in my pursuits of higher education.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Eugene and Patsy Sullivan. From an early age, they encouraged me by giving me the opportunity to study music. There were many days I felt like quitting, but they demonstrated outstanding love and patience as they saw something in me that I did not see in myself.

The Lord has been very good to me as He has put many people in my life that have made a positive and profound impact. To God be all the glory, praise and honor.

Soli Deo Gloria

John Lee Sullivan

Georgetown, Texas

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, worship has been a heated topic of debate in the local church. Debates range from style of music and instrumentation to graded choral programs and the arts. Through all of the bickering over style and programming, some churches have sacrificed biblical integrity and Christ-centered worship for cultural relevance. The church needs to press beyond programming and style and move to be more grounded and theological in worship practice and understanding.

Context

The context for this project takes place within the worship ministry at Main Street Baptist Church (MSBC) in Georgetown, Texas. As with many Southern Baptist churches, MSBC has seen a shift in worship practice through its brief history. MSBC began twenty-six years ago as a theologically moderate Southern Baptist church within the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). From the church's inception, the musical language was traditional, consisting mostly of hymns with some elements of contemporary music interspersed throughout the service. Although MSBC currently offers separate gatherings that differ in musical style (traditional and contemporary), a similar liturgy is consistent between the two services. Each corporate worship service includes a pastoral prayer, offering, Lord's Supper, sermon, and invitational response. Specific biblical instruction pertaining to worship has been primarily conveyed through the songs that have been passed down from generation to generation. Beyond song texts, the liturgies practiced each week during the corporate gathering, and occasional sermon

on the subject of worship, there has been virtually no specific and intentional instruction in the area of biblical worship.

Several areas of concern were relevant to this ministry project. The first dealt specifically with the area of biblical instruction and worship at Main Street. Between the two services, MSBC offers a Bible study at 9:40 am. Few of the volunteers who serve in the worship ministry attended Bible study regularly. Some left campus to eat breakfast between services and then returned for the second service. In addition to a lack of participation in the church's Sunday morning Bible study, there were no instructional opportunities afforded to the members of the worship ministry in the area of discipleship and worship. It was disconcerting that so many of the volunteers in the worship ministry knew little concerning biblical worship. A few people had some grasp of the subject and desired to broaden their understanding of biblical worship, but the majority of the worship team at MSBC simply did not understand a problem existed. Most volunteers in the worship ministry would still equate music and worship as one and the same. They had a difficult time understanding that music is one of many responses to God in worship.

A second area of concern in this ministry dealt with a lack of Scripture proclamation during the music portion of the service. Primarily, the only time that Scripture was read aloud was during the pastor's sermon. Therefore, generations of worshipers at MSBC had not been taught the primacy of Scripture in worship. This problem had become so great that some people at MSBC said that Scripture readings and responsive readings during the music portion of the service were not very baptistic. They compared it to being more liturgical as in Catholic and Lutheran worship gatherings.

A third area of concern in the worship ministry had to do with the issue of style over substance. Attenders of both the traditional and the contemporary services were guilty of this problem. Many people would rather sing a song that fit their particular style of music than a song that was biblically and theologically sound. This issue led to a church that was divided in the area of music. In both the contemporary and traditional services,

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some variety of music was placed in the order of worship to bridge the stylistic gap, but both services remained divided.

In summary, three primary factors contributed to the anemic worship culture at MSBC: lack of biblical instruction in worship, underuse and virtual nonuse of Scripture during the corporate singing time, and confusion among the congregants over the appropriateness of particular music styles utilized during corporate worship.

Rationale

The three stated contextualized concerns gave reason to believe MSBC was ready for a reform in its worship practices. The first contextualized concern addressed a lack of biblical training in worship, thus leading to a church family that experienced limited spiritual depth in regard to its worship practices. This project provided instruction for those involved in the worship ministry at MSBC to be better equipped in leading biblical worship. The proposed biblical training paradigm taught and informed the entire church body as they gathered to worship the Lord corporately.

The second contextualized concern addressed a lack of Scripture proclamation during the music portion of the service. This project addressed the issue of Scripture reading and proclamation during corporate worship and reasons it should be observed during times of corporate singing. This project instructed on the efficacy and primacy of Scripture in worship and ways the church has historically practiced Scripture reading for centuries during corporate worship.

The last contextualized concern addressed an understanding of style over substance at MSBC. There seemed to be a higher value placed on musical style in the hearts and minds of most people at Main Street rather than on the substance of the lyric content. This project not only addressed the issue, but also strived to resolve it by teaching the worship team biblically-guided principles concerning the primacy of textual content over musical taste.

In summary, MSBC's history of misinformed worship practices led the church to its current condition. It was imperative that the church reform its worship practices to respond appropriately in corporate worship to the God revealed in Scripture. This project was both necessary and practical to MSBC.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the worship team at Main Street Baptist Church with a biblical view of worship.

Goals

Four goals assisted in achieving the purpose of this project by equipping the worship team at MSBC with a biblical view of worship. The first three goals focused on assessment, curriculum, and instruction. The final goal promoted a plan that ensured further training for the worship team after the curriculum was taught and analyzed.

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practices of the worship team at Main Street Baptist Church.

2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to equip the worship team at Main Street Baptist Church to more effectively lead worship with a biblical understanding.

3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge in biblical worship among the worship team at Main Street Baptist Church by teaching an eight-session curriculum.

4. The last goal was to develop a strategic plan for further discipleship among the worship team at Main Street Baptist Church.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and practices of the worship team at Main Street Baptist Church.[1] This goal was measured by administering the

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[1]All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

Biblical Worship Leader Assessment Survey (BWLAS).[2] This assessment included topics such as biblical passages related to worship, current trends in worship, and biblical responses in worship. This goal was considered successfully met when the worship team completed the survey and the inventory was analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the worship understanding among the worship team at MSBC.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to equip the worship team to more effectively lead worship with a biblical understanding. This curriculum covered basic worship responses such as prayer, music, offering, baptism, Lord's Supper, Psalmody, Scripture reading, and preaching. This goal was measured by a panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[3] This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the rubric evaluation indicators fell short of the 90 percent sufficient level, the strategic plan was revised until such time that it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of biblical worship among the worship team at MSBC. This goal was measured by administering the BWLAS again as a post-survey, which measured the change in biblical knowledge pertaining to worship.[4] This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- survey scores.

The last goal of this project was to develop a strategic plan for further discipleship among the worship team at MSBC. This goal was measured by a panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes,

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[2]See appendix 1.

[3]See appendix 2.

[4]See appendix 1.

training elements, and the action steps.[5] This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. If rubric evaluation indicators fell short of the 90 percent sufficient level, the strategic plan was revised until such time that it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

Definitions and Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Liturgy. Depending on whom one asks and their religious background, *liturgy* can take on several meanings. This word takes on several meanings because the word "liturgical" refers primarily to churches that incorporate responsive readings, chants, and other prescribed orders of worship. In *The Worship Architect,* Constance Cherry helps define this word for the worshiper. She writes that "liturgy" comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*, translated as "the work of the people." It refers to actions that worshipers undertake in order to do the work of worship. Since all worshipers engage to some degree in the actions of worship, all worshipers engage in liturgy.[6]

Worship. Several words in Scripture help point scholars and theologians to define *worship*. Some of these words include: *shachah*, which means to bow down,[7] *proskuneo*, which means to kiss toward,[8] and *latreuo*, which means service to God.[9] In *Jubilate II,* Donald Hustad helps defines worship by saying it is the affirmative, transforming response of human beings to God's self-revealing.[10]

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[5]See appendix 3.

[6]Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 39.

[7]Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1989), 98.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., 99-100.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project was limited to volunteers in the worship ministry, consisting of those who serve on the praise team, choir, and audio/visual ministries. The entire church was allowed to attend and receive instruction as I taught on the biblical foundation of worship, but only the worship team was tested and surveyed. Finally, this project was limited to an eight-week curriculum. This eight-week curriculum included an assessment of the worship team's current understanding of biblical worship, instruction of the curriculum, and pre- and post-instruction surveys that measured change, if any, in the worship team's understanding of biblical worship.

Conclusion

The worship leader plays an integral role in the life of the church. As a pastor, I carry a great responsibility every week in ensuring that MSBC is actively engaged in scripture-saturated, biblically-based worship. Each song incorporated in a Sunday morning service gives those in the congregation the opportunity to vocalize their theology, as well as encourage fellow believers who have come to worship. Not only is it my desire that each person who comes to worship be given the opportunity to sing biblically-based songs, but I also long for those who have come to worship, to hear from the Word of the Lord. Those who worship corporately should have the opportunity to hear from God's Word throughout the entirety of each worship service. One of my favorite passages in Scripture is from the book of Jeremiah: "Is not my word like a fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (23:29). There is nothing like the Word of the Lord as it has the ability to set ablaze a cold, lifeless spirit and shatter a petrified and calloused heart. My continued prayer is that MSBC will be engrossed in biblically-based worship and that they will allow the Word of God to ignite in them a passion and desire to love Him with more zeal and reverence.

How a ministry team leads in worship and what they communicate to the church body will either assist the church in worshiping more biblically or hinder them from doing the same. This project equipped worship leaders with a biblical view and effective practice of worship.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE TO HAVE A
PROPER VIEW OF WORSHIP

This chapter contains commentary on three passages of Scripture specifically
chosen for this project that demonstrate and inform how God's people should worship
Him properly.[1] The passages are taken from both the Old and New Testament in order to
give the people of MSBC an accurate understanding of appropriate worship. The first
passage of Scripture focuses on the prophet Isaiah and the pattern of revelation and
response demonstrated between God and Isaiah in the temple after king Uzziah's death.
The second passage of Scripture focuses on the interaction between Jesus and the
Samaritan women and demonstrates that Jesus is the only path to God and the only way
in which the Father may be worshipped properly. The last passage of Scripture in Psalm
96 demonstrates how God's people are to worship Him properly in community with one
another.

Isaiah's Appropriate Worship of God (Isa 6:1-8)

Isaiah 6:1-8 displays not only God's transcendence by declaring that God is
"seated on a high and lofty throne" (Isa 6:1) and that He is "Holy, holy, holy" (Isa 6:3),
but this passage also demonstrates how God's people are to respond to Him in worship
through God's self-revelation. In *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, Allen Ross writes
concerning revelation and response in worship:

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[1]Obviously, scores of other passages exist throughout Scripture that could be used pedagogically
for corporate worship instruction, but the passages from Isaiah, John, and Ps 96 were chosen for their
unique applicability to the context at MSBC.

Christian worship, whether individual or collective, is the *structured and ordered expression of the proper response* of the people of God to the revelation of God in Christ. . . . The Bible itself does not give a comprehensive definition of worship; it simply describes things that people have done or should do when they receive the revealing words and works of God.[2]

The following section focuses on the pattern of revelation and response in worship and the four things that Isaiah *saw* that point God's people toward that biblical pattern.

Isaiah Saw the Lord: Revelation

J. Ligon Duncan III states, "The biblical idea of revelation and knowledge requires revelation-directed worship. Biblical worship inherently entails a response to revelation."[3] Isaiah 6:1 states that Isaiah "saw the Lord." Several theologians have claimed that Isaiah saw Jesus in the temple. Among these theologians is Allen Ross, who writes,

In fact, when John reported how Jesus fulfilled the suffering servant prophecy recorded in Isaiah 53 as well as the ministry described in Isaiah 6, he explained that Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him' (John 12:41). It was the second person of the Trinity in glory, the preincarnate Christ, who was revealed to Isaiah as the holy LORD, high and lifted up.[4]

It can be reasoned that it was Jesus, the pre-incarnate second person of the Trinity, Isaiah saw in the temple. In *Created for Worship*, Noel Due writes concerning whom Isaiah saw in the temple:

The implications of this use of Isaiah in John 12 are considerable. It means that disbelief in Jesus is the same as disbelief in God. It equates the glory of God revealed in Isaiah 6 with the glory revealed in the Son, and it means that the one whom Isaiah saw in that vision was none other than the pre-existent Son, now incarnate in the man Jesus.[5]

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[2]Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 50, emphasis original

[3]J. Ligon Duncan, "Foundations for Biblically Directed Worship," in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship, Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 54.

[4]Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 48.

[5]Noel Due, *Created for Worship: From Genesis to Revelation to You* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005), 148.

God's holiness is revealed. When Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw Him "seated on a high and lofty throne, and His robe filled the temple" (Isa 6:1). Isaiah also saw seraphim standing above the Lord as they were calling out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; His glory fills the whole earth" (Isa 6:3). Isaiah proceeds to communicate what he observed while being in the temple. He writes, "The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke." The Lord continued to reveal Himself to Isaiah as he was experiencing the presence of the Lord.

The word attributed to God in this passage of Scripture is "holy." Allen Ross defines the word "holy" (qâdôsh) as "set apart, unique, distinct."[6] As Isaiah was in the temple looking at God and observing and listening to the seraphim, he heard them calling out "holy, holy, holy." This is the only word attributed to God in the Bible that is mentioned three times in a row. Otto Kaiser writes, "The threefold attribution emphasizes that he is the source of all holiness."[7] Many attributes can be cited that reflect how God has revealed Himself in Scripture. God is loving, gracious, merciful, just, longsuffering, and so on. It is God's attribute of holiness that demonstrates how the Lord is completely unique from his creation. Ross notes, "Holiness is not one of many descriptions of God; it is the summary designation of all that God is and is known to be in contrast to all of creation."[8] Again, Isaiah was allowed or given permission to gaze upon the Lord's holiness. Even the seraphim, who were sinless beings, could not gaze upon the Lord as they used wings to cover their face (Isa 6:2). Looking upon the Lord in all of His splendor and majesty was a special privilege granted to Isaiah in that moment of divine revelation. Not only was God's holiness revealed in that moment, but also His grace. The Lord

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[6]Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 43.

[7]Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 77.

[8]Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 45.

graciously allowed Isaiah to receive this revelation and remain alive. Concerning the holiness and grace of God, Ross explains,

> This is what makes communion with God so marvelous—he is high and exalted, separate and unapproachable, but he delights to dwell with us. It is the greatness of God that makes his grace so amazing; or to express it in terms of his grace, the way to God in the highest heaven is through the lowest contrition, for those of a contrite heart may know that God dwells with them, and they will dwell with him some day in the highest holy place.[9]

Through the process of God's holiness and grace being revealed, Isaiah saw something else in the temple.

Isaiah Saw Himself: Response

Isaiah saw the Lord, which in itself was a divine miracle. He witnessed the seraphim calling out to one another as they praised Yahweh. Isaiah saw the presence of Jesus as the temple was physically disturbed by the Lord's presence. In spite of all of this, Isaiah lived. In his commentary, John Watts writes, "It is astonishing enough that he has been allowed to see the King, Yahweh of Hosts and still be alive. Hebrew tradition held that to be impossible (Exod 24:10)."[10] Isaiah would have believed that no man could witness what he had experienced and still be alive. Once Isaiah came to the realization that in fact he was still alive, Isaiah saw something else: himself in light of God's holiness. Isaiah responds in verse 6:5 by saying, "Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

In the first five verses of Isaiah 6, there is a pattern of revelation and response in worship. In one moment, Isaiah was humbled and petrified by examining his own sin and failure in light of a perfect God that was without sin. God revealed Himself to Isaiah

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[9]Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 44.

[10]John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 24 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 75.

and then allowed Isaiah to respond to that revelation in his own personal way. In *Christ-Centered Worship*, Bryan Chapell explains,

> What is our automatic response when we truly recognize the greatness of God's glory? We bow down. When God reveals the glory of his holiness to Isaiah, the prophet immediately responds, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isa. 6:5). The light of the glory of God not only reveals his holiness; it simultaneously reveals the ungodliness of all that is human. Thus, in response to seeing God's glory, Isaiah confesses his sinfulness and the sinfulness of all he knows. Recognition of who God truly is leads to awareness of who we really are.[11]

As the glory of God was unfolding in Isaiah's life, he was given the opportunity to look inwardly at his own life to see the sinfulness that was residing within him. Isaiah's first words of response in worship were "woe is me for I am ruined" (Isa. 6:5)." Isaiah could not possibly imagine surviving such an experience, not only because he had seen the Lord, but because he had seen himself in light of God's transcendent majesty. Isaiah's immediate response is one of hopelessness and repentance. Not only for himself, but also for the nation and people that he loved so much. In *The Worship Architect*, Constance Cherry notes, "Once we encounter God's holy presence in worship, we become aware of the stark difference between the divine and mortals."[12] In one moment, Isaiah could spiritually and physically see the difference between God and man. He saw a perfect God and a sinful man. He saw a God high and lifted up, adored by seraphim. He saw himself with all of his flaws and shortcomings. How can a man or a nation stand in the sight of a holy God and feel any amount of certainty of hope for the future? What Isaiah saw next gave hope to Isaiah and the nation of Israel.

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[11]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 88.

[12]Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 141.

Isaiah Saw God's Atonement
at Work: Revelation

The good news is that this encounter between God and Isaiah does not end in verse 5. That would be a rather bleak ending to an otherwise incredible revelation given by God. Throughout the rest of chapter 6, God revealed Himself to Isaiah giving him opportunities to respond back to God with either a statement (v. 8) or a question (v. 11). God gave hope to Isaiah as revealed in verses 6 and 7: "Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said: Now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed and your sin is atoned for." God does not simply speak the words *you are forgiven* and take Isaiah's sin away. God does something physical and tangible in order to accomplish this particular act of atonement for Isaiah's sin. The Lord uses two items to complete this cleansing work.

Coal and fire. It is worth noting that it was not God who placed the coal on Isaiah's lips, but rather it was "one of the seraphim" (Isa 6:6) that placed the coal on his lips. Throughout the Bible, God uses His own servants to accomplish His will. In the book of Matthew, God used an angel to speak to Joseph concerning the arrival of Jesus.

> But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. (Matt 1:20-21)

Whether it was the Lord using angels to save Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom (Gen 19) or an angel telling Philip to go on the road leading south to Gaza (Acts 8:26), God, at specific times in Scripture, uses angels to accomplish his divine and sovereign will. In this specific instance in Isaiah, God used seraphim to accomplish this task.

This piece of coal was the instrument that the Lord used to cleanse Isaiah from not just a recently committed sin, but also the whole of his iniquity. In his commentary, Hans Wildberger writes, "The singular (sin) designates, as the context makes clear, not

simply an isolated, specific transgression but rather Isaiah's sinful nature as such."[13] The whole of Isaiah's sin was removed. Every wicked thing he had ever done or thought was taken away. Every sin of omission was completely removed by the burning coal the seraph placed on his lips.

This piece of coal that touched Isaiah's lips was no ordinary piece of coal, but rather it was "glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs" (Isa 6:6). This piece of coal had been touched by fire. In fact, not even the seraphim could touch this coal. They had to use tongs as a way of delivering it from the altar to Isaiah's lips. Concerning fire and the seraphim, Larry Walker explains, "In a number of places, the Old Testament speaks of the purifying and cleansing effects of fire, so this may be another possible explanation for the presence of the 'burning' seraphim in this passage."[14] Even these "burning" seraphim whom were created sinless could not touch the coal dipped in fire. This was not an ordinary act of atonement that was performed casually. God was very specific in how He atoned Isaiah's sin. The spot on the body where the coal was placed is also significant. Perhaps the coal was placed on his lips because earlier in the text Isaiah says, "I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips" (Isa 6:5). A more logical reason that can be taken from the text is that Isaiah was to be God's spokesmen for the nation of Israel. Isaiah was to use his mouth to spread God's message. Walker writes concerning the placement of the coal: "Perhaps 'lips' are mentioned in 6:7 because Isaiah was to become a mouthpiece for the Lord."[15] In verses 6 and 7, God revealed the good news of cleansing and restoration in Isaiah's life. This good news is

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[13]Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary,* trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 269.

[14]Larry Walker, *Isaiah*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 8 (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), 38-39.

[15]Ibid., 39.

only possible through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is Christ who is ultimately the intercessor between God and man. In *Engaging with God*, David Peterson observes,

> Even the "heavenly things" had to be cleansed by means of "better sacrifices" (Heb. 9:23). In the Old Testament, the sanctuary was a sort of prism through which the relations between God and his people were refracted: "when the sanctuary was cleansed, the sins of the people were objectively expiated and contact between God and the people re-established." Heaven itself can hardly be defiled by human sin, otherwise God would have to leave it! Hebrews, however, appears to be saying that the sacrifice of Christ had cosmic significance, removing a barrier to fellowship with God that existed at the level of ultimate reality and not simply in human hearts. The blood of Christ is the medium by which we are consecrated to God under the new covenant (10:29; cf. 13:12,20) and, because of the shedding of his blood, the blessings of the new covenant are freely available for all who will draw near to God through him.[16]

Isaiah's cleansing brought about another opportunity for him to respond to God's revelation.

**Isaiah Saw His Calling: Revelation
and Response**

The first seven verses in Isaiah 6 describe a biblical pattern of revelation and response in worship. The Lord appears to Isaiah in the temple with seraphim standing above the Lord calling out to one another in reverent praise (Isa 6:1-3). The foundation was shaking and the temple was being filled with smoke (Isa 6:4). In that moment of revelation, Isaiah responds to what he had just seen by repenting of his "unclean lips" (Isa 6:5). Based on Isaiah's response, the Lord brings forth another revelation of atonement by having the seraphim place a burning piece of coal on the lips of Isaiah (Isa 6:6-7).

All of this came about without the Lord speaking a single word. The presence of the Lord in itself was such an awe-inspiring experience; it compelled Isaiah to respond in heartfelt repentance. This passage demonstrates that the Lord does not necessarily need to speak words to His creation in order to reveal Himself. The very presence of God

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[16]David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 235.

can bring about a response from His creation. In *Jubilate II*, Donald Hustad writes

concerning *silent* revelation in worship:

> But the dialog is not always audible—certainly not always cognitive! God may reveal himself in the familiar, symbolic space and furnishings of the worship room, in the quiet greeting of a friend, or in the music of the organ prelude, offertory, or the pre-service "chorus sing"—and we may respond in a quiet, personal confession of need or an expression of adoring love.[17]

Words do not necessarily need to be spoken by the Lord in order for a

revelation to occur. The Lord may reveal Himself any way He chooses. Isaiah is one

example in Scripture of someone who responded without having heard a spoken word

coming from the Lord. However, that changed in verse 8, as the Lord audibly speaks to

Isaiah.

Isaiah's call. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Who should I send?

Who will go for Us? I said: Here I am. Send me" (Isa 6:8). The question the Lord posed

gave Isaiah the opportunity to join or not join the Lord in His work. There are many

instances in the Bible when God called a specific person to perform a task and the Lord

was met with some resistance. Some people mentioned in Scripture that were resistant to

God's call at first, but later obeyed, were Moses (Exod 3:11), Jonah (Jonah 1:1-3), and

Jeremiah (Jer 1:6). God does not force Isaiah into kingdom service upon being cleansed

of His sin. The Lord gave Isaiah the opportunity to respond to His kingdom work once

the sin in his life had been completely removed. Wildberger writes, "God wants Isaiah

freely to make a decision. Isaiah, unlike Jeremiah, has the impression that he is in no way

being coerced or even forced into service. Just like a heavenly being, he freely declares

his readiness to be sent out."[18] Isaiah responds in freedom. He did not have to volunteer

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[17]Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1989), 106.

[18]Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 270.

to do the Lord's work, but out of gratitude and love for Yahweh, Isaiah responded to the Lord's request by saying "Here I am. Send Me" (Isa 6:8).

Conclusion

Biblical worship does not occur if there has been no revelation from God. It also does not occur unless God's redeemed respond to that revelation. Isaiah 6 presents a back and forth pattern of revelation and response between the Lord and Isaiah. Hustad writes, "This account of Isaiah's worship experience is replicated in the order of a Sunday morning service in many Christian churches and also in the macrocosm of God's self-revelation and human response in all history."[19] The dynamic and biblically-based pattern of God revealing Himself to His people and them responding by faith to His revelation is a new and permanent cornerstone for Sunday worship at MSBC.

**The Samaritan Woman's Encounter with Jesus at
Jacob's Well in Sychar (John 4:1-30)**

In John 4:1-30, Jesus reveals to the woman at the well that true and biblical worship is not dependent on the times and places that people chose to worship; rather, Jesus Himself is the true path to worshiping God the Father appropriately. Jesus' encounter with the woman at Jacob's well was one of divine revelation that gave the woman an opportunity to respond to that revelation. This pattern of revelation and response has already been mentioned and demonstrated in the passage found in Isaiah 6. John 4 demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the only path to true and biblical worship.

**Parallels between the Samaritan
Woman and Nicodemus**

Before addressing John 4, the context of Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well actually begins in John 3. Jesus had an encounter with a "ruler of the Jews" (John 3:1) named Nicodemus. Nicodemus wanted to meet with Jesus privately and ask some

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[19]Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 102.

questions that were weighing on his mind. Nicodemus chose to meet with Jesus at night (John 3:2). This is uniquely similar to Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman found in chapter 4. Nicodemus met with Jesus at night so that no one would find out that a well-respected teacher of Jewish people was having a conversation with someone as controversial as Jesus of Nazareth. In the same respect, Jesus met the Samaritan woman in the middle of the day when it was unheard of to see a woman drawing water by herself. In his commentary, John MacArthur notes, "The cool of the evening was the time when women customarily performed that chore."[20]

In both passages, Jesus had private conversations with two very different people. One of these people was a highly-respected teacher of the Jews and the other was a sinful Samaritan woman. Externally, the two characters in the stories are as different as anyone could possibly imagine, and yet, Jesus spoke to both of them at unusual times and in private. Although there is a stark difference in the external appearances of these two individuals, the text demonstrates clearly that both people were spiritually lost. In his commentary on the book of John, Gordon Keddie states,

> It is clear that John means us to catch the contrast between the two. They represent diverse extremes. Nicodemus is the insider, the Jew, the theologian, morally upright and a man. The woman is the outsider, the Samaritan heretic, the unlettered peasant, of easy virtue—and, of course, a woman! In both cases, Jesus has to peel—away layers of resistance to truth—the calluses of hardened, uncomprehending souls—to drive home his claims to their allegiance.[21]

In the text, John makes it clear through his positioning of these two passages that Jesus was not only willing to speak with two entirely different people from entirely different backgrounds, but that the message of the gospel is for everyone to hear. Jesus spoke with both man and woman; Jew and Samaritan; "righteous" and sinner. It is no coincidence or mistake that chapter 4 with the Samaritan woman immediately follows

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[20]John MacArthur, *John 1-11*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 143.

[21]Gordon J. Keddie, *A Study Commentary on John* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2001), 1:175.

chapter 3 with the teacher of the law, Nicodemus. Although numerous and nuanced theological concepts have been rightly developed from both of the aforementioned chapters, it is important for the worship ministry model at MSBC to embrace the range and diversity of humanity who are seeking to be true worshipers. Jesus made a clear statement that worship is not relegated to a specific place and that the religiosity of a person is not the prerequisite to be a genuine worshiper.

Living Water

Jesus' first words to the Samaritan woman were "Give Me a drink" (John 4:7). The Samaritan woman was puzzled that a Jewish man would ask a Samaritan woman for a drink, much less, speak with her. Jesus took this opportunity to have a conversation concerning the truth about Himself. "He answered, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would ask Him, and He would give you living water" (John 4:10). Although the words "Give Me a drink" (John 4:7) were in reference to physical water, the conversation quickly turned to a spiritual nature. Jesus seemed to be showing this woman that there was something greater than the temporary relief of physical water, but rather the life-giving water that satisfies and never runs dry. In *Created for Worship*, Noel Due writes,

> The water of which he speaks is nothing less than the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one on whom the Spirit rests and he knows himself to be the one through whom the Spirit will be poured out in a baptism greater than that of John the Baptist's water baptism (1:32-34). Thus all who will come to Jesus and drink will not only be satisfied, but also they will have a fountain of the Spirit welling up from their innermost being (7:37-39), as they receive the Spirit from him.[22]

The living water Jesus mentions refers to the Holy Spirit. Jesus is testifying in this passage that He is the source of living water that gives eternal life. After Jesus turned this conversation from physical to spiritual, the Samaritan woman did not understand Jesus' words. In turn, she changed the conversation from a spiritual one back to a physical

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[22]Due, *Created for Worship*, 137.

conversation concerning water, buckets, and wells. In verse 15, the woman asked Jesus for water, still thinking Jesus was speaking of physical water. Because of her lack of comprehension, Jesus made a strategic shift in the conversation to a more personal nature.

Changing the Topic of Conversation

Already knowing that this woman had no husband, Jesus asked her, "Go call your husband" (John 4:16). Some theologians, such as Augustine, believed that perhaps Jesus asked her to go call her husband because he was the "intellectual" person in the family whom could easily interpret the things Jesus was discussing concerning living water.[23] Other theologians, such as John MacArthur, believe that Jesus called her to go get her husband to reveal the sin in her life: "Since the woman failed to grasp the nature of the water He spoke of, Jesus moved the conversation to her need for repentance and salvation from sin."[24] Throughout the entire conversation, from "give Me a drink" to "go call your husband," Jesus graciously, winsomely, and lovingly revealed to the Samaritan woman. Through His patient interaction, she began to understand that Jesus was no ordinary person, and that He was opening her eyes to the truth of not only her identity, but how her identity was shaped by her worship. Author Noel Due writes,

> The question regarding worship is part of the woman's response to the reality confronting her. If this man, whom she later comes to know as the promised Christ, could read her heart and mind in order to expose her deepest secrets, could he not answer this question about worship, the one which had separated Jews and Samaritans from the very beginning? . . . The question about the worship, therefore, is an understandable response of one in whom the conviction of sin is at work. She must know if she can and should continue to worship as she has done in the past, since if that worship was wrong her hope for atonement was gone.[25]

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[23]Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapter 1-5,* trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 219.

[24]MacArthur, *John 1-11*, 147.

[25]Due, *Created for Worship*, 135.

True worshipers worship not only the Creator God, but also the Redeeming God. On a weekly basis, worshipers at MSBC must be confronted with the realities of not only who Jesus is, but also who they are and the need they have for a Savior.

Spirit and Truth versus Time and Place

For the woman, the realities of confronting a holy, perfect Savior worthy of her worship derailed her engrained concept that worship needed to take place at a certain location. This "Mountain" had legs that could walk, a mouth that spoke, and a heart that felt and cared for her.

> Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:21-24)

In *Rhythms of Grace*, Mike Cosper writes, "Instead of worship being about time and place—the mountain or Jerusalem—it's about spirit and truth."[26] The woman asked a sincere question concerning the correct place for worship. Jesus informed her that the Samaritans were not correct in the place in which they worshipped (Mount Gerizim). The Jews were correct in having Jerusalem as their place of worship, but that was only for a time. In this passage, Jesus introduced a type of worship that is beyond time and place. In *For the Glory of God*, Daniel Block explains,

> Even so, the statement suggests that Jesus is about to replace the current system of worship with something new. In John 4:20-24 he tells the Samaritan woman that in the future both Gerizim and Jerusalem will lose their privileged status as places of worship, as the Father seeks those who will worship him in spirit and truth.[27]

Jesus already had the woman's attention. He had shared things about the woman that no typical Jewish outsider could have known. Once Jesus had the woman's

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[26]Mike Cosper, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 70.

[27]Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 318.

attention, he articulately answered her question by saying that a new type of worship supersedes the previous forms of worship. Jesus referred to this new form of worship as being done in spirit and truth. When Jesus referred to the word "spirit," he was speaking of the Holy Spirit. Some theologians and commentators have alluded to the fact that the word "spirit" in this context may refer to the spirit of man, but most would agree that the word "spirit" here refers to the Holy Spirit. In *Engaging with God*, Peterson writes concerning both spirit and truth:

> "Spirit" and "truth" are closely connected in John's portrait of Christ. No-one can see the kingdom of God or experience the blessings of the End-time without being born again by the Spirit. The primary reference in John 4:23-24 is not to the human spirit but the Holy Spirit, who regenerates us, brings new life, and confirms us in the truth.[28]

Jesus also revealed to the woman that this new form of worship was to be done in "truth" (John 4:23). Later in the book of John, Jesus labeled Himself by saying that he is the "truth" (John 14:6). In this passage, Jesus was telling this woman that He is the means by which people worship God. Places such as mountains and temples were no longer necessary to worship God properly. Cities such as Jerusalem and Sychar were no longer to be traveled to in order to worship God. Jesus Christ Himself is the means by which all people may worship. Peterson states,

> So the true worshippers will be those who relate to God through Jesus Christ. The coming hour is already present because Jesus draws attention to himself as the giver of living water, using a metaphor which combines both ideas: he gives the ultimate revelation and provides the life-giving Spirit. Jesus is not the focus or object of worship in 4:23-24 but the means by which the Father obtains true worshippers from every nation.[29]

Revelation and Response

There is a big difference between the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus, and that difference has nothing to do with gender, education, or nationality. The difference is

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[28]Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 99.

[29]Ibid.

found in their response to Jesus' revelation. For Nicodemus, the text does not tell what he did after Jesus had spoken with him. John records the last words Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?" (3:9). John 3 does not shed a very positive outcome for the rabbi, Nicodemus.[30] However, the Samaritan woman's response to Jesus' words were very positive and appropriate. She went back into town and told the men of the city the men of the city about Jesus (4:29). The men then made their way to see Jesus (4:30). This passage, much like Isaiah 6, shows a pattern consisting not only of revelation and response in worship, but also an intentional encounter of the God of the universe clearly articulating His desire to seek worshipers to worship Him in Spirit and truth. May it be that the people at MSBC would sense the gravity and importance of being *sought out* by the God of the universe and that He is indeed, Creator and Redeemer!

Conclusion

In this passage, Jesus demonstrated that He is the only path to God and the only means by which the Father may receive acceptable and appropriate worship. Jesus taught that places such as Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim were no longer places where God could be exclusively worshipped, but that Jesus Christ Himself was the way in which a person could worship the Father. Later in the book of John, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (14:6). In this passage, it is disclosed that Jesus changes the whole nature of how God's people are to relate to the Father in worship. Due writes concerning this new system of worship: "As God incarnate, he could do that which no one else could: reconfigure the whole

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[30]Although John does not communicate a positive outcome for Nicodemus at the conclusion of chapter 3, it can be arugued that John 19 does look favorably upon the rabbi. It states in John 19:38-42 that Nicodemus assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial by providing a signficant amount of myrrh and aloes.

understanding of acceptable worship and establish the new covenant on which it was based."[31]

Biblical Foundations for Design, Leadership, and Implementation of Corporate Worship (Ps 96:1-8)

Psalm 96 is one of many passages found in Scripture that give specific detailed instructions in how God's people should worship Him properly in community with one another. Psalm 96 begins by saying the word "sing" three times in the first two verses. Samuel Pierce addresses this repetitious word: "You have—*sing unto the Lord, sing unto the Lord, sing unto the Lord,* three times over; which is very expressive how deeply the heart of the Psalmist was engaged in the subject before him."[32] The idea of God's people singing together is an important issue for the church to reflect upon.

I have found myself consistently communicating to the MSBC ministry team that we have been given an incredible opportunity to *vocalize* our theology in song. We vocalize our theology by singing and declaring the truths of God together. In *Give Praise to God,* Donald Whitney contributes by writing,

> Singing the psalms or the edifying songs of godly Christians helps us to focus on God and teaches us about the things of God in memorable, poetic ways. Singing to him helps us to articulate our own deep feelings to the Lord and enables us to convey things to him in more beautiful and expressive ways than we otherwise would.[33]

By vocalizing or singing our theology, we are not only given the opportunity to express our deepest praise to the Lord, but we are given a means or a device upon which we may retain the truth of God's revelation.

[31]Due, *Created for Worship*, 139.

[32]Samuel Eyles Pierce, *An Exposition of the Book of Psalms: Set Forth as Prophetic of Christ & His Church* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2009), 2:202, emphasis original.

[33]Donald S. Whitney, "Private Worship," in Ryken, Thomas, and Duncan, *Give Praise to God*, 308.

Not only do we vocalize or sing that theology, but as a congregation, we do it simultaneously. In *The Worship Architect,* Constance Cherry writes, "We sing because it is a primary communal activity. It breaks down individualism and builds up a sense of togetherness."[34] Community and fellowship occur when the church gathers together to sing. When MSBC sings songs of praise, as the Scriptures declare, we are to "teach and admonish" (Col 3:16) those who have gathered together in worship. There is purpose and intentionality when the church gathers together to sing. Congregational singing is by no means an act of selfishness, but rather, a means by which we edify and instruct the people of God toward godly living.

In order for MSBC to experience and engage in biblical worship, the church must consistently sing songs that are biblically sound and theologically correct. In addition, our songs must also encourage and admonish (Col 3:16) the body of Christ as we worship Him in Spirit and truth.

Sing a New Song

The Scriptures proclaim in several places that God's people should "sing a new song to the Lord" (Pss 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1). It is important in corporate worship that people who come to praise the Lord honor this command the Lord has given. These passages in the Psalms that refer to *singing a new song* are not meant to stir up controversy in the church regarding *worship wars* between contemporary and traditional styles of music. On the contrary, what an incredible opportunity it is to sing a new song that fits a particular style and genre of music. For the contemporary worshiper, singing new songs seems to be a typical liturgical response within the scope of a contemporary service. Every month, if not every week, those who come to worship the Lord in contemporary worship services are presented with new songs to offer to the Lord in worship. For the person who comes to traditional worship services, this may not happen with much

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[34]Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 155.

frequency, but that does need to be the case. Many songwriters that have a love for the great hymns of the faith write new hymns that many people can learn and sing with little trouble. These new songs communicate great theological depth in their lyrics, vertical chord structures, and simple syncopated rhythms that are predominant in hymn writing.

Why sing a new song? For the Christian, since the time of Christ's death and resurrection, believers in Jesus Christ have new life, and that new life calls believers to sing a new song. The psalmist understood this with great clarity. Regarding singing a new song and the connection points between Psalm 96 and the prophet Isaiah, J. Clinton McCann, Jr., writes,

> Perhaps the most obvious connection between Psalm 96 and Isaiah 40-55 is the invitation to "sing to the Lord a new song" (Ps 96:1; Isa 42:10). In Isaiah, the new song is to be sung in response to the "new things" that God is doing—namely, the return from exile described as a new exodus. Just as the people sang to celebrate the exodus from Egypt, which affirms that God "will reign forever and ever," so they will sing a *new song* to celebrate a *new divine deliverance.*[35]

God's people have always sung new songs upon being delivered from crisis and oppression. In Exodus 15, Moses and the Israelites sang a new song to the Lord once they left Egypt and were saved from Pharaoh's army upon crossing the red sea. Exodus 15:1b says, "I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea." This was not an old song that Moses picked out and decided to sing upon Israel's rescue. This kind of occasion called for the entire nation to learn and sing a new song that was specific to the deliverance they had just experienced.[36]

For New Testament believers, God's people have experienced the ultimate deliverance through Jesus Christ. Even two thousand years after Christ's death and

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[35]J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "Psalm 96," in *Psalms for Preaching and Worship: A Lectionary Commentary,* ed. Roger E. Van Harn and Brent A. Strawn (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 251, emphasis original.

[36]Although human emotion and experience inspire many of the songs that people write, it should be noted that all songs, whether new or old, be rooted in biblical truth in order for God's people to worship Him appropriately.

resurrection, Christians should sing new songs to the Lord out of gratitude for the grace that the Lord bestows on those whom He has adopted as His children. In the New Testament, it is revealed that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down and sang a new song (Rev 5:9). In both Exodus and Revelation, not only are new songs sung to the Lord, but they are also sung in community with one another. Exodus 15:1a, "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord." Revelation 5:8-9 says, "The four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the saint. And they sang a new song." These new songs were not sung in solitary. They were sung in community with one another. Christians are called to sing to the Lord and do it corporately.

Ascribe to the Lord

As the command to *sing* is mentioned three times in the first two verses of Psalm 96, the word *ascribe* is mentioned three times in verses 7 and 8: "Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to Yahweh the glory of His name; bring an offering and enter His courts" (Ps 96:7-8). An important part of private and corporate worship involves *ascribing* to the Lord all the attributes that are true of Him. The more someone chooses to praise the Lord by ascribing to Him all that He is due, the more the worshiper will understand the God who is being worshiped. Verses 7 and 8 make known that the Lord is glorious and strong. It is also revealed that God's name is glorious. God's people are to worship Him by ascribing His self-revealed attributes. In many ways, Psalm 98 is very similar to Psalm 29. The only difference between the verses in these two psalms is that Psalm 29 addresses the "heavenly beings" (29:1) and Psalm 96 addresses the "families of the peoples" (96:7). Concerning the similarity between the two passages, Robert Davidson explains, "In Psalm 29 the appeal is to the heavenly choir; here, as in the previous section, it has a universal earthly

relevance to 'families of the peoples' (v. 7), 'all the earth' (v. 9)."[37] Verse 7 calls the

families of the peoples to praise the Lord. God's people are called to worship corporately

as a family of believers, but at the same time, they should not forsake worshiping Him in

private. Donald Whitney writes concerning public and private worship:

> How can we worship God publicly once each week when we do not care to worship
> Him privately throughout the week? Can we expect the flames of our worship of
> God to burn brightly in public on the Lord's Day when they barely flicker for Him
> in secret on other days? Could it be that our corporate worship experience often
> dissatisfies us because we do not pursue satisfying worship in private?[38]

Worshiping God with other believers is important as it edifies those who come to

worship, but worshiping the Lord privately is also important as it strengthens one's

personal walk with the Lord.

Bring an Offering

Just as it is demonstrated through Scripture that God's people are to sing

together in a corporate setting, God's people are to bring an offering corporately as well.

Psalm 96:8 says, "Bring an offering and enter His courts." In many churches, the time of

offering typically refers to the point in the service when ushers pass the plate throughout

the congregation and money is collected in order to advance the kingdom work that is

taking place in that particular ministry context. Although that is an offering and an

important part of the worship service, the act of passing the plate is not entirely what the

psalmist is communicating. John Calvin writes concerning Psalm 96:8,

> The offering (oblation), which was just one of the sacrifices, here denotes the whole
> worship of God. These outward symbols ceased after Christ's coming, but the
> Psalmist is indicating the doors, once shut to Gentiles, were to be opened for all

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[37]Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand
Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 318.

[38]Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. and updated ed.
(Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2014), 112.

peoples to *come into his courts.* Nvertheless [sic], we may not come empty-handed into God's presence (Heb. 13:15f.; Rom. 12:1f.; I Pet. 2:5).[39]

When someone comes to worship, they are to *offer* to the Lord "their bodies as a living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1). This type of offering in worship is acceptable to the Lord. Believers are to worship God whole-heartedly by singing praise, ascribing attributes and thanksgiving, bringing the first of their fruits in worship, but most of all, offering the whole of their life to God as an act of worship that is both pleasing and acceptable.

Conclusion

Psalm 96 gives the worshiper detailed instructions in how to worship the Lord corporately. God's people are to sing to the Lord, ascribe to the Lord, bring an offering and enter His courts. All of worship must be done in an orderly fashion that honors the Lord, and Psalm 96 helps pave the way toward that kind of worship. As it was said at the beginning, many passages point God's people toward orderly worship that is done alongside of other worshipers. Psalm 96 assists the worshiper to worship God properly and biblically.

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[39]John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, abridged by David C. Searle (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 454.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL, HISTORICAL, AND PRACTICAL
ISSUES RELATED TO DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL
PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section includes commonalities between Hebraic and early Christian worship, Psalmody, and early Reformation worship practices that have influenced MSBC's worship expression and context. The second section offers an historical overview of the worship philosophy and practice at MSBC. The third section of this chapter demonstrates that MSBC must embrace an understanding of corporate worship that goes beyond preferences of musical styles and genres.

**A Historical Overview of Biblical Worship
for the Worship Leader**

In *The Life of Reason,* George Santayana writes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."[1] Although this quote was not written from a biblical perspective, it does convey that Christians find a potential danger in repeating the mistakes of previous generations who did not worship God as He prescribed in Scripture. In the previous chapter, three Bible passages were presented as a foundational platform upon which MSBC and the worship ministry would develop a more accurate view of worship and how that view would aid in response to God's revelation. Although a comprehensive historical account of worship philosophies and practices is well beyond the scope of this study, significant biblical, theoretical, philosophical and historical influences have shaped, and over time, molded the worship culture at MSBC. While the influences may seem

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[1]George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: Reason in Common Sense* (Mineolo, NY: Dover, 1980), 1:284.

topically disparate upon first glance, all have contributed to the theological framework, worship culture, vocabulary, and over-all personality of the church. Numerous and varied influences (historical, theological, and philosophical) impact the worship identity of a particular church, but this chapter focuses on three particular streams of influence that have impacted corporate worship life at MSBC: (1) foundational commonalities between Hebraic and early Christian worship; (2) the Psalms and their influence on Christian worship; and (3) the impact of the Reformation. Surveying key theological and philosophical developments in worship practice throughout history helps provide MSBC with a more complete understanding of its own worship expression and context.

General Commonalities between Hebraic and Early Christian Worship

In *Jubilate II,* Donald Hustad articulates the similarities found in Old Testament and New Testament worship practices:

> Both Jews and Christians revere a transcendent God and give honor to scripture. In both traditions the central focus is God's mighty, gracious acts in the salvation of humankind. For these reasons and others, Jewish synagogue worship and modern Christian services are similar in content and spirit.[2]

For those who worshipped God rightly, the Bible was the ultimate source of authority. Both Jews and Christians understood the importance of God's holiness and majesty and worshipped Him according to His nature as revealed in Scripture. The transcendent nature of God was seen clearly not only in the biblical text, but to those who were blessed to have experienced and witnessed His transcended nature in person (Exod 3, Isa 6). Both Jews and Christians understood that an appropriate response in worship must be according to God's revelation given to mankind. One type of response to God's transcendent nature that can be observed among Jewish and Christian worship practices is the use of music in corporate and private gatherings.

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[2]Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1989), 129.

Music

Music has always been an avenue of response to God in worship. In *Christian Music,* Tim Dowley states, "We start with a major disadvantage. For obvious reasons, we possess no recorded music from two millennia ago; nor do we have any contemporary notated music that might give some indication of how ancient music sounded."[3] At first glance, not having musical notation in written form from the biblical era may seem to be disadvantageous. Questions of what the church should sing and how the church should sing could be answered with more clarity if today's church knew exactly what Jews and Christians sang and in what particular style they sang. For the most part, the Bible is silent in regard to musical style and notation. Several instruments are mentioned in the biblical text (Ps 150), but standard musical notation had not yet been developed.

Although there is no musical notation given in the scriptures, it is true that both Jews and Christians have included music in their worship expression as a way of responding to God's revelation. In *Worship Old and New,* Robert Webber explains that New Testament Christians adopted much of their musical form from Hebraic tradition:

> The roots of sound in the early church are found in the Old Testament heritage. Among these are (1) the monadic system of chanting with cadences, (2) congregational song with repetition as in the antiphon and responsory, and (3) elaborate melodies on a single vowel (as in the Alleluia). In the Jewish synagogue these styles of sound were used in the scripture reading, the prayers, and the psalms.[4]

Not only can it be observed that the early Christian church incorporated Old Testament musical patterns and systems, but they also adapted passages of Scripture (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16) in their singing. The Psalms were some of those passages commonly incorporated.

Music and Prayer in the Psalms

Through the ages, the Psalms have played a vital role in the worshipping life of the church, as passages from this book were both prayed and sung in Christian community.

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[3]Tim Dowley, *Christian Music: A Global History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980), 10.

[4]Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 197.

In *Forgotten Song*, John Witvliet writes, "In public worship services all over the world, pastors, church musicians, and worship leaders regularly ask worshippers to speak or sing ancient words that come to us from the Bible's Psalter."[5] Incorporating the usage of Psalms in public worship is done primarily because of the example set forth by Jesus Christ.

In *The Case for the Psalms,* N. T. Wright explains, "Jesus himself quoted and referred to the Psalms in the manner of someone who had been accustomed to praying and pondering them from his earliest days."[6] Luke shared with Theophilus in his Gospel that Jesus grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). From a very young age, Jesus studied the Scriptures and grew in His understanding of them. Jesus can be observed several times quoting and praying the Psalms. The Scriptures show that even in Christ's darkest hour, He prayed the Psalms. The first instance on the cross in which Christ is observed praying a psalm is in the gospel account of Matthew. Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). On the cross, Christ experienced something He had never experienced before: complete and utter loneliness. In His loneliness, Jesus responded by praying a psalm. As Jesus prayed the words of Scripture, He demonstrated that God the Father had already given words to His people upon which they could respond to Him in prayer and worship.

Another example of Jesus praying a psalm on the cross can be found in Luke 23:46. "Into Your hand I commit my spirit" (Ps 31:5). According to Luke, the very last words Jesus spoke before He died were from a psalm. The obvious emphasis Jesus placed on the Psalms as a resource for His prayer life not only provides a foundational application for praying and worshiping through psalm passages as a personal spiritual discipline, but has significant impact for the structure of corporate worship as well. The

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[5]John Witvliet, " Words to Grow Into: The Psalms as Formative Speech," in *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*, ed. C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 7.

[6]N. T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 14.

worship gathering at MSBC has recently been, and will continue to be, influenced by the Psalms as outlines and guides for both public prayer and worship.

Theologians observe through gospel accounts that Jesus demonstrated a passion for the Psalms by not only praying them, but by singing them as well. In *Christian Music,* Tim Dowley writes,

> Mark's Gospel recounts that at the end of the Passover meal at which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus and the apostles sang a "hymn" before going out to the Mount of Olives. This would almost certainly have been the traditional Jewish Hallel-hymn drawn from Psalms 113-18.[7]

The Psalms were given to man with the intent of not only being prayed, but by being sung as well. In his Gospel, Mark indicates, "After singing psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (14:26). The Scriptures clearly reveal that Jesus prayed and sang the Psalms during the last hours of his life. Donald Whitney writes, "The psalms were inspired by God for the purpose of being sung to God."[8] When one sings words that have been taken directly from the Scriptures, one can be assured that they are singing God's truth. However, this does not imply that a person singing songs directly from the Psalms is worshiping God appropriately. A person can read, pray, and sing songs taken directly from the Scriptures and yet miss the revelation that God intends to communicate to an individual.

The Psalms sung and not simply spoken seem to possess a heightened emotional capacity. In *Te Deum,* Paul Westermeyer writes, "The Psalms may be spoken, but they cry out to be sung."[9] For hundreds of years, song writers have taken the words from the book of Psalms (and other biblical texts) and placed them in a musical setting, which has given worshipers another form or avenue in which to express their praise, lament, and confession to God.

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[7]Dowley, *Christian Music*, 29.

[8]Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 45.

[9]Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980), 25.

The Psalms are an appropriate way to begin a conversation with God when learning how to pray and worship because the Psalms express a wide range of human thought and emotion. In *Give Praise to God,* Paul Jones contributes by saying, "Psalms teach us how to worship, and they provide fitting, biblical language with which to thank, praise, implore, and glorify God."[10] In worship, the Psalms provide a means to reflect the heartfelt intentions of man and the praise and honor that God the Father deserves.

For the congregation of MSBC, utilizing the Psalms as foundational prompts for devotional prayer and worship, and helping them realize that the Psalms provide rich content for corporate gatherings are vital for two reasons: (1) it demonstrates the importance of Psalmody to New Testament believers, and (2) it helps the congregation experience the reality of continuity between the Old and New Testaments in relationship to prayer and worship.

Worship and the Reformation

While the Psalms help provide invaluable instruction for both private and corporate worship, the Reformation has significantly impacted Sunday morning gatherings at MSBC. As liturgical complexity continued to develop in the Roman church, so too did the complexity of music in corporate worship—so much so that professional clergy were the only musicians capable of singing much of the liturgy. Common church attenders were relegated to spectators rather than participants. Westermeyer writes,

> At central points, the people's musical office in worship had been removed. The ordinary of the Mass was taken over by choirs, the people's response in propers like the gradual Psalm had been curtailed, morning and evening prayer beyond the family had become solely choral or monastic, and a mindset that viewed music's

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[10]Paul Jones, "Hymnody in a Post-Hymnody World," in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship: Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 225.

essence as something not heard further lessened the importance of the people's singing.[11]

The absence of congregational participation changed with Luther and the other reformers. Although reformers such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli agreed on theological issues like salvation through faith alone by grace alone, they did not all share the same views concerning music in the church. Westermeyer elaborates, "On this central matter of justification, the Reformers were agreed. But beyond that they disagreed at a number of points, music among them. . . . Luther recovered the congregation's singing, Zwingli denied, and Calvin restricted it."[12]

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

One of the most defining marks of the Reformation was the nailing of Luther's Ninety-Five Thesis on the church door at Wittenburg on October 31, 1517. Many people learned of Luther's convictions concerning these matters and his popularity grew rapidly. In *The Story of Christian Music,* Andrew Wilson-Dickson explains the reason that Luther received so much attention in a short amount of time: "This might have been of merely local interest had it not been for the invention of the printing press. Printed pamphlets allowed news to spread with lightning speed."[13] The invention of the printing press changed how people received information as Luther was able to spread his message of gospel enlightenment to a much larger audience.

In addition to preaching and teaching a gospel that was centered on justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ, Luther advocated conducting worship services in the German vernacular. In *Give Praise to God,* Nick R. Needham writes, "One of the

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[11]Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 112.

[12]Ibid., 141.

[13]Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel an Authoritative Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music for Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 58.

most basic thrusts of the Reformation was to make worship an act of the whole congregation."[14] The concept of all congregants participating in worship is important for MSBC to understand. The entire body of Christ should actively participate in the worship of God.

For hundreds of years, people's voices were silenced for several reasons. First, the Catholic mass was performed in Latin and very few people could understand the words being spoken and sung. Next, the priest performed and administered many functions of the church as a representative or an advocate for the people, such as the observance of the Eucharist. Luther believed that all people should be active participants in the church's worship practices. Needham offers the following insight concerning the priesthood of the believer:

> Theologically, this congregational model of worship was undergirded by the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers: the whole Christian congregation is a priestly body, and therefore its worship must be corporate and congregational in nature, rather than a performance by a professional worshiper watched by a passive people.[15]

Needham's insights are both relevant and practical for the people of MSBC. Last year, Ernest Jones (pastor of MSBC) preached a series of messages entitled "A Family of Priests Revealing Christ."[16] Throughout these messages, he advocated that the church is first a family made up of many parts forming to make a singular body. Jones had also been teaching the congregation that along with being a family, each person in the church family has been given the role and responsibility of being a priest. For several people, the word *priest* can have negative connotations because of its association with the Catholic Church. Jones addressed these concerns and utilized 1 Peter 2:9 "You are a

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[14]Nick R. Needham, "Worship through the Ages," in Ryken, Thomas, and Duncan, *Give Praise to God*, 396.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ernest K. Jones, "A Family of Priests Revealing Christ" (sermon preached at Main Street Baptist Church, Georgetown, Texas, November 1, 2015).

chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light."

Luther was a strong proponent of the people's involvement in the ministry of the church, and that included the church's voice and song. Hustad elaborates on Luther's view of church music by writing,

> Luther was the most inclusive and consistent of the Reformed leaders in his espousal of all sort of music for worship—the most sophisticated art forms of his time and also the simple congregational hymn, often based on tunes that long had been associated with secular texts.[17]

Luther's view on priesthood of the believer, congregational participation, and music made an impact not only in his own context, but in part, how the church worships today.

The last part of Jones' vision statement for MSBC dealt with the subject of revealing Christ. He taught that it is not enough to only be a family of priests. The goal and vision of MSBC is to be a family of priests that reveals Christ. Missions and evangelism are a vital component of the ministry at MSBC. It is MSBC's vision to take this gospel message that Luther proclaimed, *justification by faith in Jesus Christ*, and share it with the world.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Much like Luther, John Calvin found disagreement with Catholic teaching and sought a Reformation in worship and word. Luther and Calvin both agreed that worshippers needed to understand the words being taught. In *Christ-Centered Worship,* Bryan Chapell observes, "Calvin joined his fellow Reformers in wanting God's people to *understand* God's Word and worship."[18] Calvin was a proponent of allowing the people of God to read the Bible, pray, and sing in their own language. MSBC can look back at

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[17]Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 186.

[18]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 42.

Luther, Calvin, and other reformers and see the important contributions these theologians had in delivering the Word of God and the worship of God back to the people. In addition to people's understanding of the text, Calvin wanted to see the church participate in the liturgy. "Commitment to the priesthood of believers is evident not only in the language Calvin used to involve the laity, but also in his encouragement of their participation in the worship service."[19] As was evident with Luther, Calvin believed that all of God's people were given the role of priesthood and thus, should be given the responsibility of participating in worship. MSBC and Baptists in general can trace the doctrine of priesthood of the believer back not only to biblical authority, but also to the Reformer's teachings.

Although Luther and Calvin found agreement on several topics, such as congregational involvement, they disagreed on other topics, such as the role of music in the church. Luther was a champion of all kinds of music and styles and he welcomed variety. He was a musician himself and felt that music played an important role in the life of the church. Luther communicated the following statement concerning his view on music: "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise."[20] In light of Luther's evident love and appreciation for music, Calvin did not agree with Luther on this particular matter. Calvin's attitude toward music may have come from Zwingli's initial view of complete abstinence of music in the church.[21] Although Calvin did not agree completely with Zwingli, he remained particularly cautious concerning the music that would be sung in church services. First of all, Calvin wanted no instrumental music in worship. He stated, "Instrumental music was only tolerated in the time of the Law (the

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[19]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 42.

[20]Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*, 60.

[21]Dowley, *Christian Music*, 112.

Old Testament) because of the people's infancy."[22] Calvin felt that instrumental music was too worldly and drew attention away from the biblical text. Calvin believed in the primacy of the Word and felt that the Word should be sung with only one's voice. Westermeyer writes,

> The strictures he (Calvin) imposed were metrical psalms, a single monophonic line, one note for each syllable of text, without melismas, without polyphony, without instruments, and without choirs except as a group (of children) led the congregation's unison singing.[23]

Calvin believed that the only text worthy of being sung in worship was the biblical text, primarily the Psalms. Any other text would create a possible danger of not giving proper worth and worship to God.

Although MSBC does not practice strict Psalm singing with no instruments as Calvin suggests, the church can learn certain theological principles from Calvin's view of worship. MSBC should look to the Scriptures and find what is acceptable and not acceptable in worship. As the worship leader, I have made a point to select songs that contain texts clearly rooted in the Scriptures and place them in MSBC's worship services.

MSBC can also learn from Calvin's position on the importance of congregational singing. In his article in the Oxford History of Christian Worship, Bruno Burki indicates, "The active participation of all the faithful in the celebration, especially in the singing of psalms," is one of the key features of Calvin-styled worship.[24] A passage of Scripture that I often quote to the congregation is found in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." It is the role of the congregation to teach and admonish one another through the principles

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[22]Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*, 65.

[23]Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 157.

[24]Bruno Burki, "The Reformed Tradition in Continental Europe Switzerland, France, and Germany," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship,* ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B Westerfield Tucker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 444.

prescribed in this passage of Scripture. In order for the congregation to be taught and admonished through song, the congregation must be able to understand and respond to the words being spoken. It is then that the people of God may experience the *word of Christ dwelling* in the lives of those who have come to worship.

A Historical Overview of Worship
Philosophy and Practice at MSBC

Although MSBC began over twenty-seven years ago in the fall of 1989, the history of the church well precedes that date. The church was previously known as First Baptist Church, Georgetown (FBC) before constituting as MSBC. FBC began its service in 1925 in downtown Georgetown and resided there for many years until those in leadership decided that the church should relocate to the west side of town on Highway 29. Several FBC members felt strongly about maintaining a "downtown presence" in Georgetown and decided to buy the building from FBC to start a new downtown church. This new church came to be known as Main Street Baptist Church. There were over 200 charter members at the time of MSBC's constitutional charter, and several are still members.

MSBC's first minister of music and youth was David Morse. He was called to the church while also attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He commuted each week from Fort Worth to Georgetown until he finished his master's degree in religious education. Morse served as minister at MSBC from 1989 to1995. Both he and his wife, Nicole, are currently full-time missionaries in Tanzania with the International Mission Board (IMB). The Morses recently returned to Georgetown to visit family, and I had the opportunity to talk with them about their experiences at MSBC and what it was like in the earliest years of the church's existence.

Morse proceeded to tell me that close to a year after MSBC began, the church hired their first full-time senior pastor, Don Gurney. Gurney served at MSBC from 1990 to 1993, at which time he retired from pastoring. In 1994, MSBC hired their second

senior pastor, David Edwards. When Edwards became pastor, he wanted to start a new service that was more contemporary, and Morse led the church's first contemporary service. Morse communicated that the first praise band consisted of four vocalists (David Morse, Nicole Morse, Kathy Cummins, and Paul Justice), a pianist (Kathy Duke), and an acoustic guitarist (David Morse). Kathy Duke is still involved in the worship ministry at MSBC. She recently celebrated her twenty-fifth year as church organist. She is also the church's worship secretary and plays the keyboard in the contemporary service.

In addition to singing on the praise team with her husband, Nicole Morse played an active role in the church's worship ministry. She and her mother (Lillian Black) started the first children's choir at MSBC and were the directors. The children's choir is still an active ministry at MSBC today.

Church Demographics

MSBC is a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, the General Baptist Convention of Texas, and Strategic Church Solutions. MSBC has two morning services that are different in style, but maintain a similar liturgical pattern consisting of singing, Scripture reading, pastoral prayer, offering, sermon, and Lord's Supper. MSBC averages 450 to 500 people on a Sunday morning between the two services. The first service (which makes up about a third of the church's population) is a traditional service that starts at 8:30 a.m., and consists mostly of hymns sung out of the 2008 Baptist hymnal. Accompanying the service are piano, organ, and a thirty-voice choir. The ages of the people in the choir range from eighteen to eighty. Most of them are older adults who have been retired for some time.

A traditional service works very well in this particular community because Sun City, a retirement community within Georgetown's city limits, is an attractive place for older people to move once they have retired from their careers. Many Sun City residents attend MSBC and attend the first service. MSBC is unique in that many churches in Georgetown do not offer traditional services in the strictest sense of the word. Many

churches, that claim to offer traditional services, have opted to do blended services as a way of attracting a wider demographic.

The second service, which is the contemporary service, begins at 10:50 a.m. This commences immediately after the Adult Bible Fellowships, which occurs at 9:40 a.m. The contemporary service is identical to the traditional service in regard to liturgical form. The service begins with a welcome and is immediately followed by Scripture reading and prayer. After that, the praise team leads an opening song. Once that song is over, the senior pastor comes up and prays (sometimes before the pastor prays, there is a time for baptism or public testimony.) Once the pastor's prayer is over, the praise team leads two or three more songs. In between songs, Scripture is read to provide the avenue for a responsive reading or call to confession followed by a time of assurance. To serve the congregation in the most effective way, there is variety in the way the liturgy is transacted each week. After the songs are finished, the ushers come forward for the offering. During the offering, MSBC incorporates either videos or special music. In the first service, this may be a choral anthem, solo, or ensemble. In the second service, the choir does not sing as much, but on occasion, the choir attends the 10:50 a.m. service and sings an anthem. Both services typically use the same videos or special music. During special times of the year, like Christmas and Easter, MSBC supports home and international missions by promoting the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering or the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. These special emphases are facilitated during the offering time in their respective seasons.

After the offering is completed, the senior pastor delivers the sermon. The message typically lasts thirty-five minutes and is identical in both services. Sometimes the sermon is abbreviated in the first service due to the turn-around time necessary to facilitate Adult Bible Fellowships.

At the conclusion of the sermon, Jones prays. While he is praying, the team prepares for the closing song. On the last Sunday of each month, the church observes the

Lord's Supper. During the Lord's Supper, the pianist typically plays while the elements are dispersed throughout the congregation. MSBC observes what is known as open-communion: anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their savior and Lord is welcome to join in the Lord's Supper regardless of denominational affiliation. At the end of the service, the pastor closes with a benediction and everyone is dismissed.

Scripture-Informed Worship Design and Practice

The past year two years at MSBC has witnessed quite a change in the culture as it pertains to the worship ministry. After attending a doctoral seminar in July of 2015, I began intentionally placing some form of Scripture proclamation or responsive reading in the worship service each week. I had become accustomed to designing worship a certain way for so many years that any change from that way of doing things forced me to move beyond my comfort zone. A few months after changing aspect of the structure and content of corporate worship, people began to notice the inclusion of the Scripture passages. The first person that said something to me was the pastor. He affirmed that he liked what I was doing and to keep up the good work. Since then, several people from both traditional and contemporary services made a point to talk to me and thank me for using passages of Scripture throughout the service.

A desire for God's Word to be read in the services is transforming the way worship is practiced at MSBC. After reading *Desiring the Kingdom* by James K. A. Smith, I learned that worship and education are not just a means of receiving information (learning and processing data), but rather, they are formational (changing and shaping identity and who one is becoming) in the lives of those receiving the message.[25] The reading of God's Word in corporate worship has become a fundamental and formational practice throughout the entire worship service at MSBC. In the book of Isaiah, the author writes,

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[25]James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa 55:10-11)

A Biblical View of Worship That Moves beyond Stylistic Patterns and Preference

In *Blended Worship*, Robert Webber discusses musical styles, preferences, and prejudices:

> Each church has a prejudice—be it liturgical, traditional Protestant, creative, or praise tradition worship—that biases it against other worship traditions. . . . All of us—and our churches—have dispositions of this sort. It's not that we are intentionally prejudiced. Instead, the environments in which we were raised and in which we have worshiped build within us convictions that we may not even be able to identify.[26]

This powerful statement speaks to the heart of stylistic patterns and preferences. Each person has his own story and background from which he comes. These backgrounds, whether intentionally or unintentionally developed form stylistic preferences in how one views the church, worship, society, culture, and politics.

Like all churches, MSBC has developed a unique worship culture. As noted, the liturgy of MSBC can be grouped into two specific styles; contemporary and traditional. In *Planning Blended Worship*, Robert Webber writes, "Although there are historical rules for the content and structure of the Gathering, there are no fixed regulations for the Gathering's style. Style is always a matter of appropriateness to be determined by particular worshiping communities."[27] Webber is stating that churches and worshipers have freedom in their own personal context as long as they remain true to the biblical and historical principles that have been laid before them. There should be complete freedom in biblical God-honoring worship.

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[26]Robert Webber, *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 6-7.

[27]Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 54.

At MSBC, a frequent song used in both the traditional and contemporary service is entitled "In Christ Alone" by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend.[28] This song points the congregation to the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although the sound of "In Christ Alone" may vary in stylistic presentation between the two different services, the lyrics and message communicate the gospel clearly in both contexts. There is freedom in musical style as long as the congregating body finds it "appropriate" and it honors what the Bible has to say in regard to worship.[29]

Many Styles, but One Bible

The thesis of this section is to articulate the need for MSBC to move past stylistic patterns and preferences to a biblical view of worship that honors God and His church through God's revelation and His people's response. In *True Worship*, Donald Hustad writes,

> An ancient Latin motto, *lex orandi, lex credenda* ("the rule of prayer is the rule of faith"), says that the way we worship determines what we believe. Consequently, while we all may agree that the radical changes in modern culture call for changes in the church's response to culture, we must guard the God-truth that is inherent in the church's two-thousand year, Scripture-based tradition of worship.[30]

Although style and preference are important aspects of worship, MSBC must, as Hustad articulates, "guard the God-truth" as to how the church chooses to worship. In *For the Glory of God,* Daniel Block articulates the need for Scripture-guided worship: "Perhaps it is time to ask what role the Scriptures expect music to play in worship and then reflect theologically on the matter, rather than grounding our decisions on tradition, pragmatics or personal taste."[31] In order for MSBC to move past preference and style as

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[28]Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, "In Christ Alone" (Kingsway Thankyou Music, 2001).

[29]Webber, *Planning Blended Worship*, 54.

[30]Donald P. Hustad, *True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder & Majesty* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1998), 23.

[31]Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 221-22.

a true measure of Christian worship, the church must first study the Scriptures to learn what is appropriate and most honoring to God and His church.

MSBC must look past emotionally exclusive styles of music and seek to worship God biblically. The Bible is the church's source for finding appropriate expressions in which to worship God rightly. When Christians are directed to the Word of God in a corporate gathering, God reveals Himself in a way that calls for believers to respond to what has been heard.

Conclusion

If the history of the church has taught Christians anything, it is that methods might change, but the Word of God and the foundational principles of worship do not. Music styles, church architecture, and even statements of faith, creeds, and confessions have all evolved throughout the history of Christian worship and practice. In spite of the change throughout history, God and His Word have remained steadfast. The writer of Hebrews 13:8 indicated, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." God's Word also says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matt 24:35). Therefore, it is vital for the people at MSBC to sing songs that are bathed in the truths of Scripture.

In *With One Voice,* Reggie Kidd communicates, "We sing because song is a gift that connects us to God—when we sing our theology, we own it more personally."[32] The Lord has given a gift that allows His people to express their praise and devotion. Music gives congregations the ability to remember ideas that may even contain a great deal of complexity. In *Worship by the Book*, R. Kent Hughes writes, "The very act of

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[32]Reggie M. Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ's Song in Our Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 21.

singing God's Word, or singing scriptural truth about God, is intrinsically edifying because music is so easily remembered."[33]

MSBC has a relatively brief history in Georgetown, Texas. It began twenty-seven years ago with a vision to keep a gospel ministry in the downtown Georgetown area. Throughout that time, MSBC has had three men serve as senior pastor and three men serve as either worship pastor or minister of music. In addition, music styles have changed and evolved, buildings were purchased and remodeled, and loved ones came and went on to be with the Lord. At this time in the church's life, MSBC desperately needed to be led and reminded of the vital need for worship services to be Christ-centered and bathed in the Word of God. Worship styles will continue to change, but that does not mean that the One being worshipped will ever change. MSBC has an opportunity to grow in worship response as the Word permeates our song and our sanctuary.

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[33]R. Kent Hughes, "Free Church Worship: The Challenge of Freedom," in *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 168.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The primary focus of chapter 4 is to provide specific details of the project implemented from April 11, 2017, through May 30, 2017, at Main Street Baptist Church. The purpose of this project was to equip MSBC's worship team to develop a continually expanding view and understanding of Christian worship. Instructional classes dedicated to the subject of biblical worship were taught each week on Tuesday evenings for a total of eight weeks. The analysis and description of the project are divided into three sections throughout this chapter. The first section presents a description of the project by providing a detailed account of what transpired throughout the eight weeks of instruction and interaction. The second section discloses the results obtained through quantitative and qualitative methods. The last section includes assessments from the three evaluators that observed the instructional content and methods employed throughout this project.

The Project

In an effort to equip MSBC's worship team to develop a more comprehensive and specifically biblical view of worship, all members of both the choir and praise team were encouraged to attend the instructional classes. Information about the class was advertised in six ways: weekly church bulletin, weekly events email that is sent out to our church population of members and regular attenders, special posters placed in the welcome areas in the church building, church website, word of mouth between church members and regular attenders, and by my own personal invitation. While the target audience for the class was directed specifically to volunteer members of MSBC's worship team, other church members and regular attenders not associated with the worship ministry

were welcome to attend. Staff members, spouses of worship team members, youth, and a variety of others in the church general population were welcomed and actively involved in the weekly discussions.

I developed the curriculum for the class entitled "An Introduction to Biblical Worship" based on class notes taken throughout my studies at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, course reading material assigned through the Seminary program, and my own independent research and Bible study. The lectures were divided into the following primary topic areas: The Rhythm of Worship, Rush to Immanence, Spirit and Truth, Praying the Bible, The Offering, The Primacy of Preaching, The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and Family Worship.

The classes were held on Main Street Baptist Church's campus, in a large gathering area known as the Fellowship Hall. This meeting space consisted of 8-10 large round tables with chairs, a sound system that enabled the use of a microphone, a projector, and laptop setup with a large projection screen at the front of the room. Attendees were allowed to choose any seat in the area and were given a supply of blank paper, pens, and Bibles. Simple snacks and bottled water were also available in the back of the classroom for anyone who cared to partake.

The round table configuration of the room set up was intentionally designed to foster a comfortable environment for the students and to encourage discussion. The placement of the tables also allowed for clear sight paths to the lecturer and the PowerPoint presentation on the screen in the front of the room. The flat surface of the tables also allowed for more comfortable space for note taking. In an effort to encourage as much participation as possible, child care was provided for those who needed or desired the service. There was no cost for the class, although an RSVP indicating each individual's commitment to attend the sessions was requested. Approximately twenty individuals involved in either other choir or praise team initially replied. Although the actual number of persons present at each of the eight-week sessions varied, the average attendance was

thirty people. The classes commenced on Tuesday, April 11, 2017, and ended on
Tuesday, May 30, 2017.

On the evening of the first class, a pre-test was given to all of those who
actively participate in the worship ministry at MSBC.[1] As previously stated, not all
attendees were volunteers in the worship team. Attendees not in the worship team did not
participate in the pre-test or post-test, but were readily encouraged to attend and
participate in discussion each week. For scoring and comparison purposes, participants
were instructed to label their pre-test with a unique personal ID that was also used on the
post-test. It was suggested that they create the unique personal ID by using the first two
letters of their mother's maiden name and the last two digits of their phone number.
Participants were not given any instruction regarding the pre-test, other than to take their
time and answer each question as honestly as possible. It took approximately fifteen
minutes for most people to complete the pre-test. I made it clear that the same test would
be administered again at the end of the eight weeks of instruction. For the accuracy and
viability of the study, three evaluators were chosen and invited to attend each week of the
course in order to assess course content and curriculum instruction. All three evaluators
received a Curriculum Evaluation Rubric at the beginning of each class.[2] Evaluator
assessment rubrics were completed and returned to the instructor at the end of each week.
Details regarding each of these three evaluators is offered given later in this chapter.

Lesson 1

The first lesson of the eight-week series was entitled "An Introduction to
Biblical Worship: The Rhythm of Worship." This lesson concentrated on the biblical

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[1]See appendix 1 for the pre-test. Some in attendance on the first night were not in the worship ministry, and thus, did not participate in the pre-test or post-test.

[2]See appendix 2 for the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric.

pattern seen throughout the Scriptures of God revealing himself to his people and their

responses to him. The fundamental nature of the initial lesson helped provide a

foundation for what we called "the rhythm of Christian worship—revelation and

response." The focus passage for lesson 1 came from Isaiah 6:1-8:

> In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

The class learned that the pattern of *revelation and response* can be observed

not only in this particular passage of Scripture, but throughout the entirety of the God's

Word. Using this passage, as well as supporting quotes from John Stott, Donald Hustad,

and Constance Cherry, I detailed more about the rhythm of worship and the interaction

that occurs when God reveals Himself in Christ and Scripture and one's response to

Christ and His Word. Following the teaching and class discussion concerning Isaiah's

experience with the Lord and how Isaiah 6 clearly reflects the revelation and response

dynamic in worship, I asked class attendees to help generate some definitions of worship.

Many ideas were given, and most contained the core concept that biblical worship is

indeed a response to the revelation of God. I also provided several definitions of worship

from scholars, teachers, and preachers representing a variety of theological perspectives.

For the purpose of clarifying and expounding on the concept that worship is a believer's

response to God, the class was exposed to definitions by Louis Giglio: "My response to

what I value most;"[3] Warren Wiersbe: "Worship is the believers response of all that they are—mind, emotions, will, body—to what God is and says and does;"[4] John MacArthur: "Worship is all that we are responding to all that He is;"[5] Bob Kauflin: "Christian worship is the response of God's redeemed people to His self-revelation that exalts God's glory in Christ in our minds, affections, and wills in the power of the Holy Spirit;"[6] and Allen Ross: "Genuine worship is the natural and proper response to the revelation of the Lord God of glory."[7]

After discussion detailing the positives and negatives of the aforementioned definitions, the class was directed to reconsider Isaiah 6 in light of the order and rhythm of God's revelation and the response of the redeemed during a corporate worship service. The key to this part of the instruction focused on the priority of the public proclamation of Scripture throughout the worship service. To emphasize the necessity for Scripture being the "initial beat" in the rhythm of God's revelation and a congregation's response, instances of public Scripture readings from the Old and New Testament were highlighted and discussed. In Deuteronomy 31:9-12, Moses told the Israelites to read the law aloud at the Feast of Booths. The apostle Paul urged Timothy to be sure the Scriptures were read in public (1 Tim 4:11-13). In Luke 4:16-21, Jesus himself read Scripture aloud in the synagogue. The clear conclusion drawn from these examples is that reading Scripture

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[3]Louie Giglio, *The Air I Breathe:Worship as a Way of Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 10.

[4]Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship: It Will Transform Your Life*, expanded ed. (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson, 1990), 26.

[5]John MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority: John MacArthur, Jr. on Worship* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 147.

[6]Bob Kauflin, "Defining Worship, Pt. 2," November 7, 2005, accessed September 5, 2017, http://worshipmatters.com/2005/11/07/defining-worship-part-2/.

[7]Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 60, emphasis original.

aloud should be an intentional, planned, and meaningful part of corporate worship at MSBC every time we gather. Moreover, Scripture is shared corporately by hearing and reading it together, by singing and praying it, and by expositing it through sermon and teaching. In short, the lecture concluded as it began: affirming that God's revelation through Christ and scriptures deserves our affirmative response.

Lesson 2

The second lesson, "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: Rush to Immanence," also utilized Isaiah 6 as the primary source for the instruction. The teaching in this session concentrated on the concept of transcendence and immanence, and the call to worship. Class attendees were taught that culture has a propensity to rush toward acknowledging and proclaiming God's *immanence* without first, properly acknowledging and proclaiming God's *transcendence.* In doing so, one often misses seeing the majestic holiness and fullness of God and fails to see the depths of His love and His amazing grace. As a biblical illustration of these two terms, we studied Isaiah 57:15.

> For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place [transcendence]. And also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite [immanence].

Furthermore, there is scriptural evidence of God's transcendent majesty found in Isaiah 6:1-6: namely his throne, high and lifted up; the train of His robe filling the temple; the seraphim; the foundations; and smoke; and even Isaiah's response: "Woe is me." Continuing in the same passage, verses 6-7 declare evidence of God's immanent mercy: God is the initiator of mercy, God grants His mercy through purification in a personal way to Isaiah, and His mercy offers an opportunity for restoration and service.

The lecture then transitioned to a discussion concerning the call to worship: its biblical foundations and its place in worship services. Beginning with Isaiah's call to ministry (Isa 6:8) and moving to a passage beckoning worshippers to sing to the Lord and

make a joyful noise (Ps 95:1-8), attendees used Scripture to help inform their view of the call to worship, understanding that the worship leader or leaders do not call the congregation to worship, but rather, it is God who calls His people to worship Him. The *call to worship* is an act of God rather than an act of the people. Finally, to conclude lecture 2, I discussed Five Formative Convictions of Worship: The Purpose of Worship, God's Identity, Our Identity, God's Gathering Act, and Standard Actions.[8] Although all five formative convictions were briefly articulated, much of the time was spent examining the fourth conviction, "God's Gathering Act."[9] It was here that the class explored the view that MSBC's worship leaders and pastors do not call or gather the church together, but instead, God sovereignly calls the church together to worship corporately.

It was clear at the conclusion of the class that many attendees heard new information and saw scriptures in a different light when given the definitions of *transcendence, immanence,* and *call to worship*. This lesson informed not only their current understandings of personal and corporate worship, but also enhanced future worship practices and habits.

Lesson 3

During the third lecture, entitled "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: Spirit and Truth," the story of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well was used to highlight the ideas of worship in *spirit and truth.* The narrative of John 4 proclaimed that God's people are to worship Him in Spirit and Truth through the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Although many theological concepts could have been discussed in relationship to

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[8]These five formative convictions were gathered from the Calvin Institute of Worship,"The Opening of Worship," accessed September 5, 2017, https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/the-opening-of-worship-bible-study-/.

[9]Ibid.

spirit and truth, the study primarily focused on the idea that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of truth (John 14:6) and provider of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). It is only through Jesus Christ that one can appropriately worship God the Father. In *Engaging with God,* David Peterson states, "Spirit and Truth are God's gifts through Jesus, by which he sustains us in genuine relationship with himself."[10] In addition to communicating to the worship team the concept of *spirit and truth,* I also spent time connecting the idea of *revelation and response* with Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

The instruction focusing on appropriate worship through revelation and response in relationship to the woman at the well in John transitioned to appropriate musical responses within the context at MSBC. During this lesson, people began to participate with more freedom. As an introduction to the topic of music, the philosophies of Martin Luther and John Calvin were examined. Because of Luther and Calvin's influence, congregations once again began to actively participate in congregational worship. After contemplating both Luther and Calvin's view on music in congregational worship, the class began a discourse concerning the musical style at MSBC. Several people shared about the emotional aspect of music and why it is important that Christians sing in church. The teaching time ended by noting that whatever style of music MSBC utilizes to worship God corporately, the text in the music must be informed by and rooted in the truths of the Word of God if the people of God are to worship Him appropriately.

Lesson 4

The fourth lesson in the series, "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: Praying the Bible," concentrated on biblical responses in corporate worship based on Scripture-guided prayer. Several people in the worship ministry had never been introduced to the

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[10]David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 99.

concept of praying through the Scriptures, and this new topic initiated dialogue from some of the participants who had remained silent throughout the previous lectures. The lesson began with a time for attendees to reflect on the idea that their personal prayers may become tedious, repetitive, or even boring over time. It was presented that when believers continually rely on their own human intellect to pray about the items important to them day after day, that their words may become tiresome, monotonous, or without meaning. At this point, the concept of Scripture-guided prayer was introduced and presented as a clear remedy to the issue of monotony in personal prayer habits. The practical example of praying through the Psalms over the course of one month was illustrated. On the first of the month, one would pray through five chapters: 1, 31, 61, 91, and 121. The second day of the month, one would pray through chapters 2, 32, 62, 92, and 122, and the pattern would continue, perhaps leaving Psalm 119 for the 31st day of the month. The Psalms easily lend themselves to prayer and may be the best way to begin the discipline of praying the scriptures. However, there is also benefit in praying New Testament letters and narrative passages of Scripture.

At this point in the lecture, participants were given the opportunity to pray through a passage of Scripture of their own choosing. After observing this quiet time of prayer, participants were encouraged to practice this discipline on their own at home.

At the end of the lesson, the topic of spontaneous and written prayers in corporate worship was deliberated. Although spontaneous praying is the most common practice at MSBC, those present were receptive to the idea of writing prayers privately for use in corporate worship. It was noted that this type of praying allows for time of meditation and absorption of Scripture. Supportive evidence from great prayers such as Charles Spurgeon and George Mueller helped illustrate the significance prayer can have in a believer's life. Jesus, Himself, the prime example and perfect standard, prayed scripture as noted in Matthew 27:46 and Luke 23:46. In both instances He quoted text

from the Psalms. In a profound metaphor indicating the potency of scripture, Jeremiah 23:29 compares God's Word to a fire. In sum, this particular lesson presented many new ideas and topics for each attendee to deliberate, carry in their heart, and put into practice at home in a way they might not have done before.

Lesson 5

The fifth lecture, "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: The Offering," centered on the offering element commonly found in modern worship services today. The lecture started by examining the custom of collecting a monetary *offering,* something our church does each week. The lecture began with the reading of Psalm 96 in its entirety. The discussion that followed focused mainly on delving into verse 8, which indicates, "Bring an offering, and come into his courts!" We also discussed John Calvin's thoughts on the offering (oblation) as recorded in Searle's *Commentary on the Psalms.* Collectively, participants began to share their thoughts on the meaning of "bring an offering . . . into his courts." We discussed many details concerning what takes place during the corporate time of offering, such as passing the plate as a means of collecting monetary offerings. Other specifics, such as online giving and dropping off a donation in the church office during regular business hours, were mentioned as well. Verse 8 in this Psalm demonstrates that when members of MSBC come to worship corporately, they are to give not only of their finances as an act of offering, but to give of their lives as an acceptable and appropriate offering to the Lord. Romans 12:1 was referenced to support the claim of a "life offering": "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present you bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Additional scriptures used to support the idea of corporate participation in an offering were Exodus 25:2, Deuteronomy 16:17, Proverbs 3:9, Matthew 18:8, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, and Hebrews 13:16. This array of passages from both New and Old Testaments, including Christ's words, served to demonstrate that the concept of bringing

one's "firstfruits" in an acceptable manner was not only important in the time of the Israelites, but also during Jesus' ministry, and in the early church, which proves the significance it should hold in any time of worship today that seeks to be biblically relevant.

As Christians and worship leaders at MSBC, the participants learned that they are to present their entire lives as an offering unto the Lord. Additionally, it was noted that people who volunteer their time and talents in the worship ministry must not forego making financial contributions to the ongoing ministry of MSBC. Giving of finances is an important act of worship and must not be neglected congregationally, even if they are members and actively participating in the life of the local church.

Lesson 6

The sixth lesson, "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: The Primacy of Preaching," specifically explored *expository preaching* in corporate worship and began with a verse from Nehemiah. "They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading" (Neh 8:8). We discussed expository preaching and used support from Albert Mohler: "Expository preaching is central, irreducible, and nonnegotiable to the Bible's mission of authentic worship that pleases God."[11]

Participants were taught that expository preaching has two functions: illuminating the truth found in Scripture, and applying that truth of God's Word to the life of the listener. The preaching of God's Word must not be reduced or diminished in the minds of those who come to worship God corporately, but instead understood as a

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[11]R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Expository Preaching: Center of Christian Worship," in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship, Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 109.

principle means of communicating the gospel. Those who preach do so not under their own authority, but under the authority that comes from the Word of God. Attendees also learned that expository preaching as worship should have three characteristics: authority, reverence, and centrality.[12] To further illustrate each of these ideas, evidence from Albert Mohler, Martin Luther, and Bryan Chapell were shared. In regard to *authority* and preaching, Mohler articulates, "The authority of the preacher is rooted in this divine call to preach, and the church must respect the preaching office. But in the final analysis, the ultimate authority for preaching is the authority of the Bible as the word of God."[13] The preacher's authority rests not in his own ability to communicate effectively, but rather in the divine and inerrant words of Scripture. In regard to reverence and the preaching of God's word, Luther states,

> Yes, I hear the sermon; but who is speaking? The minister? No indeed! You do not hear the minister. True, the voice is his; but my God is speaking the Word which he preaches or speaks. Therefore I should honor the Word of God that I may become a good pupil of the Word.[14]

Luther teaches that as one listens to the preacher preach, in reality, he is listening to the Word of the Lord. In addition to both Mohler and Luther, Chapell writes this concerning biblical preaching and *centrality*. "The primary goal of the Sermon is not to inform the mind, but rather to confront the mind and heart with biblical truths in order to conform the will to Christ's purposes."[15] Expository preaching should not find its sole purpose in transporting information from one individual to another, but instead challenge both the mind and the heart to conform to the image of Christ.

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[12]Mohler, "Expository Preaching," 115.

[13]Ibid., 117.

[14]Ibid., 119. Martin Luther, sermon on John 4:9-10, preached on September 11, 1540, cited in *What Luther Says,* ed. Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 1125.

[15]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 235.

Near the end of this lecture, the class had the opportunity to hear from MSBC's senior pastor, Ernest Jones. He spoke on the necessity of expository preaching and the methods he incorporates when writing his sermons. Both Jones and I took several questions from participants, and it was a very profitable time, as the class had the opportunity to see the pastor and I collaborate outside of the Sunday morning worship service experience.

Lesson 7

The seventh lesson was "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: The Ordinances," and was dedicated to the topics of *baptism* and *the Lord's Supper* in congregational worship. The first thirty minutes were spent teaching on the ordinance of baptism. Article VII of the Baptist Faith and Message (1963) was shared as a means of describing our belief history as a church. MSBC affirms that only believers in Jesus Christ are to be baptized, by immersion, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. MSBC also believes baptism is something that should be done publically, as a way of declaring faith and allegiance to Christ. The class considered many relevant Scripture passages, including Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16-17 and Mark 1:9-11, Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28:19, and the account of Philip and the eunuch in Acts 8:36-39. Some participants shared that they had been baptized as infants in other denominations, but chose to be baptized by immersion when they were able to make the choice of their own free will. It was encouraging to listen as people felt free to share their own spiritual journey. Along with communicating what Baptists believe about baptism, this lesson also covered what other denominations believe about baptism and the reasons they hold those beliefs.

The final forty minutes were spent teaching through the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. I explained the significance of the Lord's Supper and how it is observed at MSBC. I also described terms such as transubstantiation, consubstantiation, real presence, and memorialism. *Transubstantiation* is the Roman Catholic view of the Lord's

Supper in which the bread and wine *literally* change into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In "Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper," Thomas A. Baima elaborates on the meaning of *transubstantiation*, writing, "after the consecration, the accidents of bread and wine contain the reality of the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ."[16]

Consubstantiation is the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper in which the body and blood of Jesus Christ join the elements. This is different from the Roman Catholic view in that the elements do not change, but rather, Christ's body and blood become present in the Eucharist. David P. Scaer helps define *consubstantiation* by stating, "Along with bread and wine, recipients of the Supper receive Christ's body and blood."[17]

The next view discussed in this particular lecture is often referred to as *real presence* or the *Reformed view*. John Hesselink helps define this view: "The real presence of partaking of Christ's flesh and blood in the Supper should not be interpreted materialistically but spiritually. . . . Christ is present to us in the Supper even though physically distant from us."[18] The Reformed (real presence) view is quite different from the Roman Catholic and Lutheran view as it emphasizes the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper versus the actual body and blood of Jesus.

The last view I discussed and the one that is adopted by MSBC is often referred to as the *memorial* or *Zwinglian* view. Russell Moore helps bring understanding to the memorial view when writing,

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[16]Thomas A. Baima, "Roman Catholic View: Christ's True, Real, and Substantial Presence," in *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper*, ed. Paul E. Engle and John H. Armstrong (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 129.

[17]David P. Scaer, "Lutheran View: Finding the Right Word," in Engle and Armstrong, *Understanding Four Views*, 87.

[18]John Hesselink, "Reformed View: The Real Presence of Christ," in Engle and Armstrong, *Understanding Four Views*, 64.

Many contemporary Christians have thus chafed at the idea of the Supper as a bare means to remembrance—prompting even some Baptists to embrace a more sacramental understanding of the Supper. But the historic Baptist concept of the Lord's Supper serves less as a "memorial" than as a sign—a sign pointing both backward and forward.[19]

I explained to the worship team that when we gather to observe the Lord's Supper, we not only remember all that Christ has done for us, but we also look forward to the great "marriage supper" that is promised to those who are invited (Rev 19:9). It is a time of both contemplation and celebration as we gather collectively to worship around the table of the Lord.

This lesson was profitable, as it cleared up some misconceptions that MSBC people have concerning the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The lesson also sought to give more meaning and importance to both the ordinances and allowed participants to freely question, examine, and think through their own personal convictions and beliefs, as compared or contrasted to the information I provided in the lecture.

Lesson 8

In the final lesson, "An Introduction to Biblical Worship: Worship Inside the Family," the value of family worship in the home was the primary topic of discussion. As important as it is to have a firm understanding of biblical worship in a corporate setting, it is similarly important for believers to apply the concepts of biblical worship in their private worship times. It was imperative to end the teaching project with a lesson that encouraged the worship ministry team members to embrace the opportunity and freedom to worship outside of a corporate context. The majority of those present for the final class had never heard of family worship until that evening. Supporting evidence from Charles Spurgeon, Donald Whitney, and Barna Research was presented in an effort to portray the importance of believing adults modeling personal worship at home for their children to

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[19]Russell D. Moore, "Baptist View: Christ's Presence as Memorial," in Engle and Armstrong, *Understanding Four Views*, 30.

observe. One primary goal of incorporating Christ-exalting, gospel-centered family worship regularly in a home with children is to instill in them a passion for encountering the greatness and glory of God more than a few hours a week at church. Ideally, this habit will impress upon them the desire to pursue God once they have left the shelter of their childhood home, and perhaps even have families of their own. During the lesson, I discussed biblical examples of family worship and how to apply passages of Scripture into daily life. We studied Deuteronomy 6:4-7, which admonishes believers to be diligent in teaching their children—in the home, out of the home, in the evening, and in the morning. In addition, we read Joshua 24:15, Proverbs 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4, which each impart biblical wisdom for parents in raising, training, and leading children. I also shared how my family practices this method of worship at home. Using the example of my three young children, I told the class that it is not always easy to gather as a family and engage in family worship, but it is always worth the time and effort. I encouraged the participants to include three simple elements in their family worship: reading, praying, and singing.[20] Even young children can understand these concepts. Families can read from the Bible, pray as a way to talk to God, and sing songs about God. Families with young children may spend 1-2 minutes on each element, taking care to have the children lead as they are able. Families with elementary students, preteens, and high schoolers can spend more time on each element, even allowing children to choose scripture passages, pray aloud for issues affecting the members of the family and friends, and picking songs to sing together. If time permits, other elements may be added such as catechism, scripture memory, and the reading of other devotional books. This method of family worship can be easily summed up by Matthew Henry: "They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and

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[20]Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 44.

read, and sing do best of all."[21] In all, the class spent approximately forty minutes conversing about family worship. Additionally, I answered questions regarding family worship and allowed for questions pertaining to any of the previous seven lessons.

The last twenty minutes of this final class were spent administering the post-test. Participants who completed a pre-test the first week of class were invited to complete a post-test, using the same personal ID they devised for the pre-test.

The Project Results

I administered and received twenty-one pre-tests on the first night of instruction, April 11, 2017. The pre-test contained a twenty-two-question Likert Scale survey meant to evaluate the participants' knowledge of biblical worship. On the final evening of instruction, May 30, 2017, I administered and received eighteen post-tests. Once the tests were collected, the data from the eighteen coordinating tests were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The type of test used to analyze the data was a t-test for dependent samples. Incorporating this type of quantitative analysis allowed for measurement of significant difference in student understandings based on the project lectures.

To begin the analysis, I compared the means of the before and after scores (pre-test and post-test). The mean of the before score was 90.0555556. The mean of the after score was 97.2777778. Once I deduced that the mean increased, I took the t Stat result (-3.5632372) and compared it to the t-critical two-tail value (2.10981558). Since the t Stat was larger than the t critical value, I then confirmed that the p value was less than .05 (0.00239235).

After completing the data analysis, I confirmed that the teaching of biblical worship to the select group of median adults made a statistically significant difference,

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[21]Whitney, *Family Worship*, 46.

resulting in the increase of their biblical knowledge of worship ($t_{(9)} = 3.563$, $p < .002$).

At the end of the post-test, participants were asked to indicate several helpful and beneficial principles or concepts they had learned over the course of the eight weeks. I also asked them to describe how the class benefited them personally. Following are a few of the responses I received from those in the worship ministry.

Participant RE77 stated,

I have broadened my view of what biblical worship is—not just singing. I always knew worship should occur during prayer, offering, Lord's Supper, preaching, etc., but I think now I understand practically how to do that—how to focus my heart, soul, and mind on God's revelation through each of those elements and elicit the response the Holy Spirit stirs in me.

Participant RE77 demonstrated a clear understanding of revelation and response and why it is applicable in both private and corporate worship.

Participant SD2112 said, "This class outlined/clarified aspects of worship (biblically) and my glorious responsibility as a Christian and a parent. Glad I took notes. It gave me an opportunity to have wonderful discussions with my family." It was refreshing to hear that what was being taught went beyond the classroom and made a positive impact in people's homes and families.

Finally, participant CR36 responded, "Excellent presentation! Should be done again and again for the church." This statement echoed what many participants told me verbally about their desire to see these lectures presented to the entire congregation.

In sum, I received overwhelming positive feedback from participants, not only by their consistent attendance and engagement in class discussions, but also in their verbal and written formal feedback at the conclusion of the eight-week period.

The Curriculum and Strategic Plan Evaluations

I invited three carefully chosen evaluators to attend the eight-week instructional course. Each of the three adults who evaluated the curriculum each week and the strategic plan for ongoing discipleship has a master's degree from an accredited institution of

higher learning. The first evaluator, Ernest Jones, has been the pastor at MSBC for ten years. He holds a B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy from Baylor University. Additionally, he holds an M.Div. in Biblical Languages from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The second evaluator, Gary Smith, is the minister of adults at MSBC. He holds a B.A. from Mississippi College, and an M.S. ed. from Baylor University. The third evaluator, MSBC member Kaye Cummings, is a psychologist in the Austin, Texas, public school district. She holds a B.A. from Howard Payne University and a M.A. in School Psychology from East Texas State University.

At the beginning of each lecture, all three evaluators received a rubric containing eight criteria for evaluation: the relevancy of each lesson, the biblical faithfulness of each lesson, the theological soundness of the material, the clarity of the thesis, the clarity of each point as it supported the thesis, the practical application of each lesson, the thorough coverage of each lesson, and the clarity of the overall lesson. All three evaluators scored each lecture at either a sufficient or exemplary level. These results exceeded my original goal of 90 percent at a sufficient level or above. Ernest Jones wrote on the last evening of instruction,

> John, I thought the seminars were well done and the slides were helpful. This is the sort of material I wish all church-goers were exposed to so that as a church family, we have a similar frame of reference. The class was laid out well. The time of an hour was just right. Overall, the experience was enjoyable. The informal setting enhanced the learning. Good job! Ernest.

On the last evening, I presented a strategic plan for further discipleship among the worship team at MSBC. The plan included implementing regular instruction in the area of worship during Sunday morning adult Bible study classes. I gave the three evaluators an additional rubric to complete on the final evening, which related to my strategic plan for worship discipleship.[22] All three evaluators scored the criteria at either a

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[22]See appendix 3.

sufficient or exemplary level. This exceeded my original goal of 90 percent at a sufficient level or above.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter is a summative evaluation and personal reflection of the project that took place at Main Street Baptist Church from April 11, 2017, through May 30, 2017. To articulate the specific details of each assessment area, this chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section includes an evaluation of the project's purpose and an assessment indicating whether or not the project fulfilled the stated objective. The second section contains an evaluation of the project goals and an examination to discern if the goals were achieved. Section 3 contains evaluations of the project's strengths while section 4 is an evaluation of the project's weaknesses. The fifth section of this chapter includes reflections concerning specific avenues for making changes to the project should an opportunity arise to implement it again. The sixth section includes personal reflections related to the theological aspects of the project, and the seventh and final section contains my personal reflections on the over-all efficacy and effectiveness of the project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

At the outset of my doctoral program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I considered a variety of research options, but my thoughts and desires continually returned to my own local church context. I have been the Pastor of Worship at MSBC for eight years, and over the course of that time, my love for MSBC has been cultivated through the many relationships fostered through the church. Because of my love and devotion for MSBC and its people, I have a compelling vision to see the worship ministry honor the Lord through biblical, gospel-saturated services. To that end,

the purpose of this project was to equip the worship team at MSBC with a biblical view of worship.

As the purpose statement for the project began to take shape, several delivery options for the teaching material concerning biblical worship were explored. Initially, a preaching series for the entire congregation was considered. However, the lack of verbal and relational interaction inherent in that model prompted a strategic decision to deliver the information through classroom instruction. I concluded that I should equip the MSBC worship team by teaching an eight-week course on biblical worship, open to all worship team participants, which included worship choir members, praise team vocalists, and instrumentalists. The instructional series covered eight relevant topics: the call to worship, Scripture reading, prayer, music, offering, expository preaching, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and family worship.

Throughout the eight weeks of instruction, significant dialogue occurred within the classroom setting. Conversations were thoughtful, engaging, and respectful. Having a classroom environment for instruction rather than preaching from the pulpit definitively proved to be a more effective way of leading the worship team toward the goal of the project. There were moments during my lectures when we lingered on a specific point rather then moving on to the next topic. This time of reflection allowed participants the opportunity to ask questions as they sought deeper biblical understandings. The participant demographics were widely varied. Some had been members of MSBC for decades, while others have only attended for a few months. Some had traditional Southern Baptist backgrounds, but most represented a variety of evangelical backgrounds in a variety of church environments. Throughout the project, individual relationships within the classroom were more deeply forged, which positively impacted their ability to work cohesively as a worship ministry team. The traditional service features a worship choir of around thirty members. The contemporary service features a praise team of about twenty rotating vocalists and instrumentalist. While there is some overlap in

service attendance and participation, on the whole, those who serve in the worship ministry in the traditional service do not often worship side-by-side with those who serve in the contemporary service. This is a clear disadvantage to having two different and distinct styles of worship in one church body. The staff at MSBC is aware of this propensity toward "having two churches" and works to overcome it through unifying events. For instance, in the music ministry, Christmas and Easter typically involve extra rehearsals, more challenging music, and worship team members who involve themselves in both worship services. I try to use this phenomenon to help build community in and among worship team members, often encouraging praise team members to attend choir rehearsals leading up to Christmas Eve, or scheduling the worship choir to sing a particularly powerful anthem in the contemporary service on Easter Sunday. In thinking of this diversity in and among the worship team members, I sought to implement this eight-week course in a way that would highlight the common goals in the worship ministry, rather than bring out the differences.

This project initiated a process for fulfilling its intended purpose. Leading the worship team members toward having a biblical view of worship cannot and should not be a one-time initiative. As a pastor of worship who is teaching a worship team, I understand that the process of learning never ends. Just as I have worked to stretch and refine my own ministry through the doctoral program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the worship team should be given opportunities to stretch and refine their gifts, talents, biblical understandings, and theological perspectives as they participate in leading worship at MSBC. In summary, MSBC's worship team has begun the process of being equipped and prepared to lead worship in a more biblically-informed manner.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal of the project was to assess the knowledge and practices of the worship team at MSBC. After deliberating various assessment strategies, it became

apparent that I needed to evaluate not only their understanding of worship, but also their own practices of basic spiritual disciplines. To that end, I developed an assessment survey that was administered to the worship team. This survey (BWLAS) included topics such as biblical and congregational responses in worship and a self-assessment of basic spiritual disciplines. As I began to contemplate and develop each lesson for the eight-week study, I looked to find pertinent and relevant questions that would measure each person's understanding of biblical worship. To that end, I divided the BWLAS into three sections.

The first section contained questions to obtain some demographic information from each participant. This information gave me the opportunity to observe how many people were active in the traditional service and how many were active in the contemporary service. It also allowed me to see how long the participants had been Christians and how long they have been a part of the worship ministry at MSBC. This section proved to be helpful because it demonstrated a balance of those who actively participate in one or both of MSBC's worship services.

The second section was comprised of twenty-two questions that assessed each individual's knowledge of biblical worship. In this section, I incorporated a Likert scale to gauge responses in order to compare data from both the pre-survey and the post-survey using quantitative methods.

The third section of the BWLAS allowed individuals to assess their own practice of the basic spiritual disciplines. This section also proved to be informative as it gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their own practice of spiritual discipline relating to both corporate and private worship.

This initial goal was successfully realized when the worship team completed the survey and the inventory was analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the perceptions and understandings of corporate and individual worship among the worship team at MSBC.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum designed to equip the worship team for more effective worship leadership through deeper biblical insights into corporate worship. The curriculum covered specific worship responses such as prayer, call to worship, music, offering, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, Scripture reading, preaching, and family worship. I chose the aforementioned topics primarily because the church engages in these types of corporate worship responses each week in gatherings (except for family worship).

As I began the curriculum development process, I worked lesson by lesson, using my own research, support from books I read while studying for courses at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and notes I took in these courses. I wanted to make Scripture a priority in each lesson, and typically began each lecture with a passage or verse to help set the tone for the evening. I also sought to present supporting evidence from a variety of pastors and theologians (past and present). Church history, in large part, shapes our Sunday morning worship service experience. I find it important to understand how and why many of our habits and traditions were put into practice. I also used supporting information from The Baptist Faith and Message (1963), which MSBC affirms. Finally, each lesson included at least a few minutes of discussion about how our church currently observes and puts into practice each of the lesson topics. Since we have two services which differ in style, I felt it was important to discuss what remains the same between the two services, and what is different.

After gathering a large amount of source material, I worked to develop my teaching notes and prepared a PowerPoint presentation to highlight the main teaching points. The presentation included text of each scripture I planned to use, quoted text from theologians often accompanied by their image, and occasionally bulleted lists or outlines of important lesson material. These teaching notes and the PowerPoint presentation served as efficient tools in the teaching of the class. I rarely left out any

material during class time, but often added more thoughts or reflections, as prompted by the discussion.

Efficacy of the curriculum was measured by a panel of evaluators who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum, and was successfully obtained when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of biblical worship among the worship team at MSBC. This goal was measured by administering the BWLAS again as a post-survey, which allowed for a comparison of scores indicating biblical knowledge pertaining to worship in the pre-survey. Once each person completed both the pre-survey and the post-survey, I matched the surveys according to their identification number and entered the results in an excel spreadsheet. Twenty-one people completed the pre-survey and eighteen people completed the post-survey. This allowed me to enter eighteen participants into the excel spreadsheet in order to run the t-test for dependent samples. To enter the results and run the t-test for dependent samples, I tallied each individual's score and placed the pre-survey scores in one column and post-survey scores in another column. I proceeded to click on the "data analysis" tab in excel and then click on "t-test: paired two sample for means" and clicked "OK." I then highlighted each column in order to insert each of the columns into the "variable 1 range" and "variable 2 range." Once the scores were placed in their respected variable range, excel analyzed the data.   Table 1 displays the participants' responses.[1]

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[1]Table 1 includes the scores from eighteen members of the worship team who participated in both the pre-survey and post-survey. The three people who took only the pre-survey are not included in table 1 or table 2.

Table 1. Pre- and post-survey scores

Participant	Before	After
7536	96	101
2526	98	97
BR36	79	113
MC89	97	99
8376	91	98
B04417	88	88
WA90	93	109
MO69	80	88
SM70	99	105
SW15	85	88
SD2112	89	94
HO35	89	94
WE94	93	99
FA88	97	99
TO57	80	86
MA23	90	87
CR36	90	100
RE77	87	106

The goal was successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. Table 2 shows the results from the *t*-test for dependent samples.

Table 2. T-test: paired two sample for means

	Variable 1	*Variable 2*
Mean	90.05555556	97.27777778
Variance	38.76143791	62.56535948
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.277985422	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-3.563237153	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.001196174	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.002392348	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

The t-test confirmed that the teaching of biblical worship made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of participant biblical knowledge of worship ($t_{(9)} = 3.563$, $p < .002$).

The last goal of this project was to develop a strategic plan for further discipleship among the worship team members at MSBC. This goal was also measured by a panel of evaluators who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, and the action steps, and was successfully obtained when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. In conclusion, all four goals met the minimum requirements detailed in chapter one.

Strengths of the Project

Throughout the course of this research project, several strengths surfaced. Each session of the eight-week class was open to all members of the worship team, which includes two main subsets: the choir and the praise team. This collaboration was a healthy step for the worship ministry at MSBC, as the aforementioned ministry teams seldom spend time together. There may be several reasons why this is the case, including difference of musical style preferences, generational gaps, and location and times of services. Whatever the reason for the lack of connection points between the two ensemble groups, both volunteers from the praise team and the choir met together in one place to learn about biblical worship. It was encouraging to realize once again that the gospel unites believers as brothers and sisters in Christ. Each may have their own favorite style of music or prefer sitting in a pew rather than sitting in a chair, but when reminded of the biblical priorities of worshiping in spirit and truth, all have a strong commonality in their love for Jesus. As a worship pastor who has a passionate and sincere love for everyone in the worship ministry, it gave me great joy to see this unity for the sake of a common purpose.

The second strength I observed is also not statistically measurable. Specifically, this strength relates to the relationship between the pastor and me. I have served with Ernest Jones for eight years. Together, we have experienced dramatic change at MSBC: seasons of growth, seasons of decline, staff turnover, member fluctuation, and deaths of several dear saints. Through the years of ministry together, a strong bond has developed in our friendship and brotherhood. Directly related to this project, the bond was strengthened even more because of our common commitment to, and understanding of, biblically-based worship. Jones attended each of my lessons, even though I know he had other matters that required his attention. Without fail, he gave me an encouraging word at the end of each lecture. For me, receiving words of affirmation and support from my pastor and supervisor helps spur me on personally and spiritually in ministry.

The last strength I observed in and throughout the eight-week teaching project was the benefit of having a variety of denominational backgrounds represented among the worship team members. I had no idea that there would be such diversity in the participants' church upbringing. The diversity represented made for lively and insightful discussion throughout the eight weeks of instruction. As the lectures progressed, people became more uninhibited to share their own personal histories as they related to the specific topics. One participant shared that she grew up in a Presbyterian church and was baptized as an infant. Another told the class she grew up attending a Brethren church. One man said he had been a deacon in Presbyterian, Methodist, Regular Baptist, and American Baptist churches. Martha Morse, a charter member of MSBC, and the mother of David Morse (MSBC's first minister), told me that her grandfather was the pastor of St. James Episcopal Church in La Grange, Kentucky, from 1911-1921. Mrs. Morse indicated that she had recently found a document dated April 11, 1918, written by her grandfather detailing the worship style at St. James Episcopal. As she shared the information with me, it was fascinating to read what Mrs. Morse's grandfather thought

about corporate worship 100 years ago. The discussion and interaction during the entire teaching series was profitable and I consider it one of the highlights of the project.

Weaknesses of the Project

In addition to the strengths that I discovered over the course of this project, I also noticed some weaknesses. The first weakness concerned the evaluation panel. The three people who volunteered to serve on the panel were fantastic; I had only hoped that there would have been at least two more individuals. My original desire was to have at least five people serve on this panel. I looked for qualified individuals who either attended MSBC or another church. One person I asked to serve has a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in trombone from the University of North Texas. He attends MSBC and is also an active musician and clinician. He desired to be on the panel but recently got married, and was therefore unable to participate. Other people that I invited either had prior obligations or could not commit to the entire eight weeks of instruction. Although not having five members of the panel was a weakness in the evaluative process, I am grateful for the three individuals who executed their roles and responsibilities in an excellent manner.

The second weakness associated with the project concerned course materials. About halfway through the eight-week curriculum, I noticed multiple participants requesting notes from previous lectures. In retrospect, I wish I had distributed weekly lecture outlines that would have aided participants in taking more comprehensive notes.[2] I did provide participants with a Bible, pencil, and paper each week, but a guided outline might have made the learning process more effective by providing a way for participants to more easily record their thoughts and remember topics from week to week.

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[2]After teaching this course, I had the opportunity to teach another course on personal spiritual disciplines. During that class, I distributed an outline of my lecture each week. I noticed a profound difference in participation and engagement. When I teach a course again on the topic of biblical worship, I will be sure to include handouts of the lectures.

The last weakness involves an over-abundance of content. On the first evening of instruction, one of my evaluators made a note on the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric: "Probably too much material to cover in one hour." I believe that statement was correct—I found myself trying to condense ninety minutes worth of material into an hour lesson. On several occasions, I noticed that I spoke too quickly in an attempt to stay within the prescribed time frame. Concerns with too much content and the limited time factor could have been alleviated by extending the project length to ten or twelve weeks. However, due to the delimitation of eight weeks that I initially imposed on the project, the extension was not possible.

Future Changes

The weaknesses described each have clear implications for improvement if I were to offer the course again. One of the first course corrections I would make would be to record each week's lecture. Every Sunday for the past eight years, one of the deacons records the worship services for me to review on Monday. I enlisted this individual to fill this role as a way for me to better evaluate our services. Through the years, I have been able to provide positive instruction and leadership to the worship ministry team in part because of time I spend evaluating our services. This method of self-evaluation can also be utilized in the classroom. If I record the lectures, perhaps I could observe my own methods of instruction and make necessary improvements. The recordings could also be made available for students who might not be able to attend all of the lectures.

An additional change to improve effectiveness would be to use a remote control device in advancing the PowerPoint screens during the lectures. For the eight weeks, I used a volunteer to advance the slides while I was teaching. Although I was grateful for this person's assistance, I should have scrolled through the slides myself. I feel that I would have had greater control of the lesson's content if I had advanced the slides at my own pace.

The final change I would make is having those who attended the class evaluate how consistently and effectively MSBC models the biblical principles taught throughout the class during a typical Sunday service. For example, after teaching the class on the biblical role of the *offering*, I could encourage them to carefully watch what occurs during the time of *offering* on Sunday morning, then reflect and share their observations in the following class. This reflection would have been a positive way to make the classroom environment more practical and relevant. Additionally, I could have used video clips of MSBC worship services to illustrate how we practically incorporate biblical principles and how those elements might be improved. In general, I could have done a more efficient job of connecting what we learned in the classroom to what we experience in corporate worship each Sunday.

Theological Reflections

As I was preparing the first week's lecture, I examined several definitions of biblical worship from a variety of theological perspectives. Each perspective was unique and constructive as it helped facilitate discussion and purpose in obtaining a clear definition. In the study of worship definitions, a clear and recurring pattern was revealed among many theologians and pastors as they referred to the back-and-forth nature of corporate and individual worship as God revealing Himself and His people responding to His revelation. The concept of revelation and response became a point of discussion as the worship team reflected on its meaning using biblical examples. Scripture passages that were used to illustrate the idea of revelation and response in these lectures were Isaiah 6 and John 4. Both passages demonstrate a relationship between God and His people, in which God revealed Himself and His people responded either appropriately or inappropriately.

Revelation and response was an important lesson for the worship because it demonstrates that worship is a lifestyle beyond the Sunday morning experience (Rom 12:1). As I began to teach on all the responses found in corporate worship, I was fearful

that the worship team would only think of worship based on what transpires on a typical Sunday morning. However, revelation and response teaches that worship goes beyond the walls of the church. I enjoyed teaching revelation and response from Isaiah 6 and John 4 because of their similarities and differences. Both passages are similar in that God is speaking to people and they respond. At the same time, Isaiah 6 and John 4 are distinct in that one transpires at a holy temple in Jerusalem while the other takes place outside by a well in Samaria. God can reveal Himself at any time and place of His choosing. This simple but profound truth as revealed throughout the canon of Scripture is something that is both encouraging and challenging to me as a worship leader. I am realizing more and more that I am a moment-by-moment responder to the revelation of God through His Word, His creation, His people, and His Spirit. This realization is encouraging to me and I am thankful that my worship team had the opportunity to examine the extremely important and foundational concept of revelation and response as it relates to the topic of biblical worship.

Another theological concept that generated quite a bit of discussion throughout the eight-week study on biblical worship was the topic of transcendence and immanence. I instructed the worship team (primarily from Isa 6) that God reveals Himself as being both transcendent and immanent in nature. God's transcendent qualities are observed clearly in the first few verses of Isaiah 6.

> In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke (vv. 1-4)

I communicated with the worship team from these first few verses in Isaiah 6 that God *initially* reveals Himself to Isaiah as being a transcendent God; a God who is completely sovereign, majestic, magnificent, and holy. This is a God who is so great and mighty that even sinless beings (seraphim) cannot look at Him (Is. 6:2). After this initial

revelation of God in the temple, Isaiah's response demonstrates that God is not only transcendent in nature, but immanent as well. Isaiah goes on to write,

> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."' And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' (vv. 6-8)

In these few verses, God demonstrates His grace, mercy, and compassion toward Isaiah. I instructed the worship team from these eight verses that God is both transcendent and immanent in nature. He is a God who is both holy and gracious, sovereign and forgiving.

I went on to tell attendees that as Christians and worship leaders at MSBC, we too often focus and dwell primarily on the immanent attributes of God, while overlooking His transcendent attributes. We cannot fully appreciate the immanent qualities of God unless we understand and appreciate His transcendent attributes as well. As I continually reflect on the nature of God, I am reminded that I must worship God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. By doing that, I realize that the attributes of God I find most appealing will possess even greater meaning and fulfillment as I worship the Lord in His totality.

Personal Reflections

As I look back on this project, I would acknowledge that one of the main attributes of God that has become particularly meaningful to me as I have prepared and implemented this research project is that His grace is amazing. As I consider the books I have read, papers I have written, and classes that I have taken to get to this point in my ministry, I see it as a pure demonstration of the grace of God in my life. I am sure I could never have come to this point in my own strength. The Lord has been very gracious to me, as He has afforded me the opportunity to go back to school and therefore participate in something very meaningful and beneficial for our church family. God did not have to use me to accomplish His purposes, but because of His amazing grace, He has chosen me

to be His instrument at MSBC. When I look back at my very first day at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I can confidently see that the grace of God has been at work in my life and ministry.

Not only have I seen the grace of God in my own life, but I have also seen it at work in the life of the church. Throughout this project, I was reminded that God loves MSBC. Each person that attended the eight weeks of instruction was there for a reason, as God has a plan for every one of those individuals. Everyone at MSBC has a purpose to glorify God and spread the gospel message of salvation. I am truly thankful that God has called me to serve these people, and it is an added blessing that they have been supportive of me throughout this entire project. At the outset, I was hoping to have eight or ten people in attendance, and was thrilled when the class averaged between twenty-five to thirty people each week. Most of those in the group were participants in the worship ministry, but several were not in the worship ministry and attended solely because they had a desire to learn about biblical worship.

Last, as I personally reflect on this project, I would articulate that I have discovered the efficacy of God's Word not only in my own life, but also in the life of the church. I have led worship for nearly two decades, but it was only until just recently that I have intentionally incorporated the Word of God in all of our worship services. The spiritual climate at MSBC has changed as a result of placing God's Word at the center of our corporate gatherings. It is now my desire and vision to have our services be completely saturated with Scripture. If, at the conclusion of one of our services, someone departs and they only received one item from that morning's service, my hope and prayer is that they heard from the Word of the Lord.

Conclusion

I am enthusiastically optimistic about the future of MSBC. The worship team understands my vision for worship ministry and the pastor supports it. As a worship pastor, having the support of the worship team and my pastor means a great deal to me.

This project has helped not only give this ministry a vision for the future, but it has also given our worship team a sense of unity and togetherness. I feel much closer and devoted to each participant that I have had the opportunity to serve alongside with at MSBC. Getting to know these people outside of the Sunday morning experience helped shape and form the bonds of friendship between me and this worship team. I am truly thankful for each person who participates in this ministry and for a pastor who continually supports my pastoral ministry in the church. Pastor Ernest has demonstrated time and time again a love for God, His word, and His church. Partnering with Ernest for all of these years has been a blessing to say the very least.

In closing, I submit this Scripture passage as a prayer for the people of MSBC: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (1 Thess 5:23-24). To God be the glory, amen and amen.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL WORSHIP LEADER ASSESSMENT
SURVEY (BWLAS)

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of biblical worship of the participant. John Sullivan is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[ ] I agree to participate personal ID#_____
[ ] I do not agree to participate

Section I
The first section of the BWLAS will obtain some demographic information about the individuals taking this survey.

Directions: Answer the following questions by filling in the blank space provided.

1.   How long have you been a born again Christian? _____

2.   How long have you been a member of MSBC? _____

3.   What is your age in years?
    ___ A. 18-24
    ___ B. 25-34
    ___ C. 35-44
    ___ D. 45-54
    ___ E. 55-64
    ___ F. 65 and over

4.   How long have you been a part of the worship ministry at MSBC? _____

5.   If you are a vocalist, which vocal part do you sing? _____

6. If you are an instrumentalist, what instrument(s) do you play?
    _____

7. How often do you volunteer in the worship ministry? Please circle one.
    Weekly   Bi-weekly   Monthly   Seasonally (Christmas, Easter, Advent, etc.)

Section 2
The second section of the BWLAS will assess your knowledge of the biblical worship.

Directions: Please circle your opinion to statements based on the following scale:
SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,
AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

8. I consider biblical worship to be grounded in scriptural truth.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

9. I consider music to be the primary way in which to worship.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. I consider private worship to be of more importance than corporate worship.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. I consider the Lord's Supper to be a vital component in corporate worship.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. I believe that a historical view of worship should shape corporate worship today.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. I consider the reading of God's Word to be done only during the sermon.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. I consider biblical worship to take place only after God reveals Himself to His
    people.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. I believe that things not expressly communicated in the Bible are allowable and
    acceptable in corporate worship.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. I believe that things only communicated in the Bible are allowable and acceptable in
    worship.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. I consider myself to be a worship leader at MSBC.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. I consider biblical inerrancy to be an important view in biblical worship.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. I believe that God's people should only give of their tithes and offerings during the time of corporate worship

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. I believe it is acceptable to give tithes and offerings during other times besides the corporate time of giving.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. I believe that the ordinance of baptism by immersion is the only acceptable form of baptism.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. I believe that biblical worship must portray the language and style of the culture.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

23. I believe that prayers in worship are an important part of the corporate worship time.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

24. I believe that the reading and singing of Psalms should have a regular place in corporate worship.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

25. I believe that corporate worship should be contoured around the gospel of Jesus Christ.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

26. I believe responsive readings should be a regular part of corporate worship

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

27. I believe that corporate worship would be more appropriate if the Bible would have contained musical notation.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

28. I believe that read prayers are an appropriate expression in corporate worship

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

29. I believe that musical style is an important part of worship

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Section 3

This section is a self-assessment of your practice of the basic spiritual disciplines. Place a check mark beside your answer.

30. I read my Bible (check only one)
    ___ A. more than once per day
    ___ B. once per day
    ___ C. several times per week
    ___ D. once per week
    ___ E. several times per month
    ___ F. Never

31. I meditate on Scripture (check only one)
    ___ A. more than once per day
    ___ B. once per day
    ___ C. several times per week
    ___ D. once per week
    ___ E. several times per month
    ___ F. Never

32. I pray (check only one)
    ___ A. more than once per day
    ___ B. once per day
    ___ C. several times per week
    ___ D. once per week
    ___ E. several times per month
    ___ F. Never

33. I worship privately (check only one)
    ___ A. more than once per day
    ___ B. once per day
    ___ C. several times per week
    ___ D. once per week
    ___ E. several times per month
    ___ F. Never

34. I worship corporately (check only one)
    ___ A. several times per week
    ___ B. once per week
    ___ C. several times per month
    ___ D. Once a month
    ___ E. Quarterly
    ___ F. Never

35. I have family worship (check only one)
    ___ A. more than once per day
    ___ B. once per day
    ___ C. several times per week
    ___ D. once per week
    ___ E. several times per month
    ___ F. Never

36. I fast (check only one)
    ___ A. once per day
    ___ B. several times per week
    ___ C. once per week
    ___ D. several times per month
    ___ E. Never

37. I read books on biblical worship (check only one)
    ___ A. more than once per day
    ___ B. once per day
    ___ C. several times per week
    ___ D. once per week
    ___ E. several times per month
    ___ F. Never

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Biblical Worship Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 1 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issues of worship ministry.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on worship.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 3

STRATEGIC PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC

Strategic Plan for Continued Training in Biblical Worship: Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 1 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The element of classroom instruction improves the overall effectiveness of the worship ministry.					
The element of classroom instruction improves the overall effectiveness of each worship leader.					
The element of classroom instruction helps to indicate the volunteer's readiness for leading worship.					
The information taught is biblical and informative.					
The information taught will be beneficial to current and future worship leaders desiring to volunteer and serve in the worship ministry.					
The information taught keeps in line with the overall vision and mission of Main Street Baptist Church.					
Overall, the strategic plan for further training in biblical worship is clearly stated.					
Expectations for those who desire to continue in worship training are clearly stated.					

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING THE WORSHIP TEAM AT MAIN STREET
BAPTIST CHURCH IN GEORGETOWN, TEXAS,
WITH A BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORSHIP

John Lee Sullivan, D.Ed.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Joseph R. Crider

This purpose of this project is to equip the worship team of Main Street Baptist Church in Georgetown, Texas, with a biblical view of worship. Chapter 1 presents the context and rationale of MSBC while also stating the goals for equipping the ministry. Chapter 2 presents an exegesis of three passages of scripture (Isa 6:1-8; John 4:1-30; and Ps 95:1-8) in order to give Christians a biblical view of worship. Chapter 3 presents a biblical view of worship that moves beyond style of music and trends, while focusing on historical patterns of biblical worship. Chapter 4 goes into the details and description of the project by showing what will happen each week during the twenty-week process. Chapter 5 gives an overall evaluation of the project by analyzing data and reflecting on the strengths and the weaknesses of the project.

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