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EQUIPPING STUDENTS OF EASTSIDE PRAISE MINISTRY
CHURCH IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY IN BIBLICAL
WORSHIP

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING STUDENTS OF EASTSIDE PRAISE MINISTRY
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I dedicate this doctoral project to my beautiful wife María Cristina for being my constant support. I could not have done it without you! To my sons Adrián, Liam, and Natán Leví for being the reason for all my dedication and effort in life. To my wonderful parents, Gerardo and Clara, who have always been there for me. To my precious church family at Eastside Praise. Most importantly, I dedicate this project to my savior Jesus Christ, the redeemer of my soul, the reason for my song, worship, and existence.

¡A Dios sea siempre la gloria!

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PREFACE

When God directed me to move to Louisville to start a doctoral degree in Christian worship, he never told me about all the obstacles I would face. However, in the middle of many difficulties, I have found God to be faithful and good to my family and me. He has always been there and will always be. Without God's help, these very words could not have been written.

During our first months in Louisville, God placed me in a church where it quickly became a hub of care and love for my family. Eastside Praise Church was crucial in the process of finishing this degree. The worship and youth ministry have become my family. Each brother and sister from these ministries have contributed to the completion of this project. I am forever grateful to Pastor Mike, Pastor Chris, and their families for their continual support.

I am deeply grateful for the blessing of having been part of a seminary that genuinely honors God with excellency. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has now been ingrained in my heart and mind. Lastly, I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Chase Sears. His heart as a pastor and mind as a scholar helped shape and direct my project to its rightful purpose.

May this project bless many generations and impact people's hearts to worship the mighty King of kings. To God be all the glory!

Natán J. Abdala

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People come to church on Sundays for various reasons. Churches are filled with people that do not understand the real meaning behind gathering in one accord as the body of Christ. Some people come because of the church's music, while others come for the pastor's preaching. In today's culture, people may even come because of the coffee and the few pastries they may get in the pre-service. *Want* instead of *need* suppresses the real purpose of gathering the saints. People are not far from idolatry when they attend church to fulfill their *wants* instead of their *needs*—they are making themselves the priority instead of God.

A congregation that does not worship God in their service is not fulfilling God's will for that gathering. When people come together as the body of Christ, they are to worship God alone. That entails the fellowship between brothers and sisters, the singing of songs and the making of music, the preaching and exhortation, the Bible reading, the offering, and the response that one experiences before God. In other words, worship is every act done in reverence to ascribe honor and praise to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Before the Reformation, churches mainly sang Psalms and hymns. Throughout centuries, music became more professionalized, exclusively starting around the twelfth century. After polyphony was developed and improved in compositions, many composers began to write masterful pieces of music for the sole intent of the Church. For example, in the eighteenth century, John Sebastian Bach composed many cantatas and organ fugues exclusively for the gatherings at his church. George Frideric Handel composed an oratorio with a clear message of Christ and his divine nature as the Son of God. Many

churches and orchestras still perform these magnificent compositions because of its musical complexity and elegance. While music serves a significant part in church services, the allotted musical time in service is commonly referred to as *worship*.

One of the main lies people must stop believing is that worship solely implies music making or singing to the Lord. The most critical differentiation one must make is to separate music as the exclusive act of worship before God.

Many Psalms make clear suggestions that we should use musical instruments to worship God (Ps 150). King David well understood that music was not the only way to worship God, but only one of many. King David hungered for God's Law (Ps 25:4-5). He hungered for justice; he longed for God's presence. King David understood that God is after one's heart, not his talent. Christians are to worship God with everything they are and have (Rom 12:1).

Many Christians cannot make a clear difference between worship and music. Countless platforms and altars throughout thousands of churches around the United States are led by people who struggle to make a proper distinction between worship music and biblical worship. Many worship leaders are simply emulating what they see and hear, thus leading churches in song without any solid foundation in biblical worship.

Context

Pastor Michael Smith founded Eastside Praise Church (EPC) in 1990. In 2017, his son, Chris Smith, took the senior pastor role. Before becoming the senior pastor, Pastor Chris served for many years as the worship pastor and helped lead the youth ministry. Because of Pastor Chris's leadership and passion for the worship ministry, Eastside Praise Church has a firm understanding of worship and good taste for various musical genres. In his new role, Pastor Chris has been leading the church with passion and dedication, embarking the church in a new direction—to be an Evangelistic church that stretches its arms to the lost in the city of Louisville. EPC is a medium-sized (200

members) church with various ministries focusing on kids, youth, music, senior adults, and prayer.

A new generation is rising, presenting new challenges and topics yet to cover. Today, youth are more drawn to social media, looking for answers and meaningful connections with people. Churches need to stand and provide opportunities where students can interact with godly men and women. Students need a space in church where they can ask tough questions and get the correct answers. The students need to be led by the authority of the Word—by leaders who understand, follow, and teach Scripture as the inerrant word of God. In other words, churches need leaders willing to preach the gospel, disciple, and pour into the lives of young people.

Worship is a topic that is relevant among students because, in their minds, it connotes music. Still, their understanding (even for older Christians) can be limited and usually distorted because of the propaganda of treating worship leaders like idols and rock stars. Biblical worship is a topic that needs more discussion in our churches, especially targeting those who feel called to worship ministry.

The youth ministry at EPC underwent a significant leadership change in 2019, causing some students to stop attending and others to forcibly adapt to new personalities and leadership styles. The student ministry at Eastside Praise Church ranges from ages 12 to 17 years old. The total number of students in the group averages fifteen. The usual attendance to a student service on Wednesday night is around eight to ten per week.

Strength and Weakness

Like any other ministry in a church, the student ministry at EPC has several strengths and weaknesses. The following strengths are prominent in EPC's youth ministry. First, the youth ministry has a robust biblical background. In other words, many of the students are biblically literate. Most students understand and know the story of redemption through God's chosen people, which starts with Abraham and ultimately

culminates with Jesus and his sacrifice for the world. It is a significant advantage for a leader to have a group that understands and knows the basics of Scripture. The leader can probably engage in more in-depth discussions on a topic and provide different views for a particular passage. However, the leader could face more challenging questions brought up by the students. Ultimately, the leader may need to take the biblical accounts and present more historical and theological explanations instead of simply telling them about what happened in the narrative.

The second strength found in the student ministry at Eastside Praise Church is that it is a small group of students. The dynamic of dealing with a group of 50 students versus a group of 15 is enormous in comparison. The bigger the group, the more leaders (volunteers) the youth pastor needs to help manage the larger group. A very large student ministry could also be seen as a small company where the youth pastor acts as the CEO and manages his student leaders and students instead of pastoring them.

While any youth pastor can fall for managing instead of pastoring with a large or a small group of students, youth pastors with smaller numbers of students have a better chance of connecting with their students. At the same time, a youth pastor with a large ministry may need a different strategy that most likely does not involve himself directly with the students. In large or small youth ministries, the youth pastor's top priority should be to look for effective ways to pastor his students. As mentioned above, with a group of 15, the youth pastor has more room to be intentional and create more opportunities to pour into them individually.

One final strength found in the student ministry at EPC is the students' parents. Parents are a crucial part of a fruitful student ministry. Everything needs to go through the parents of each student. The ministry can become difficult and tedious to navigate if there are many conflictive parents. With godly initiatives and honest, friendly talks, the youth pastor must gain the parents' trust, especially if an outsider is coming in to lead the ministry. Thankfully, most of the students' parents at EPC are very supportive, both

financially and emotionally. Most parents come to Wednesday night services and bring their students with them. Their students benefit from consistently attending Wednesday and Sunday services by having committed parents. Of course, effective ministry should not only focus on two days alone. Nevertheless, Wednesdays and Sundays are the most typical days where church families gather to worship and fellowship; these days become extremely vital, considering that it involves the family and their development as disciples.

Listed above are three main strengths that provide the reader with a better understanding of the ministry's foundation and context inside Eastside Praise Church. This project aims to work on the primary weakness found in the student group, which is their limited view of biblical worship. When students (Christians) hear the word *worship*, they (usually) automatically think about music. One should not necessarily suggest that these two words must never go together. The problem arises when people refer to worship only as singing, playing an instrument, or lifting holy hands.

The notion of mixing worship with music is prevalent in new believers as in mature Christians. The emotions that music creates in one's spirit can be overwhelming, making music the perfect means to experience God. The problem with this way of thinking is that emotions are elevated and exalted to a degree of idolatry, thus making them deceitful and addictive. For example, depending on the mood of the song, one may experience various emotions that could ultimately be misinterpreted as the Spirit of God working in someone's heart, when in reality is their feelings reacting to beautifully played musical notes. While there is a place for emotions and music to be utilized to make people feel a certain way, many churches have abused (intentionally and unintentionally) this way of ministering and making congregations believe that if individuals are not feeling anything, then God is not present at that moment and place. 1 Kings 19:11-13 narrates the following:

And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the

wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”¹

One can see how God was not where many would have expected him to be. Elijah did not hear God’s voice when the strong wind destroyed mountains or when the earthquake was taking place, nor even in the fire. These spectacular events would have indeed made Elijah explode with emotions. He may have felt mixed emotions like fear, joy, and sadness –he was evidently in awe after witnessing all those events. Scripture tells us that God was not in the wind, earthquake, or fire but a low whisper. God does not need people to be supercharged with emotions in order for him to reveal himself.

Music itself can become a means of worship. Like any art, creating music involves direction and purpose, even when the direction aims at the art itself.² Thus, art could become worthy of the artist’s praise (worship). The danger with this concept is that music can trigger certain emotions that could ultimately end in erroneous concepts. To address the issues mentioned above and other worship distorted concepts developed throughout the last decades, biblical worship must be taught in Sunday School classes, preached from pulpits, and disciplined by leaders. Every Christian should have a robust concept of what the Bible teaches about worship and what God expects from his followers to come close to him and worship him freely.

The adolescent demographic is an excellent group to start instructing about biblical worship. Their minds are still malleable and ready to absorb new knowledge. They are beginning to ask hard questions about God, life, culture, and other topics that need attention and sound biblical answers. To have future leaders that care and understand what the Bible teaches about worship, we need to start early and train young

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version.

² Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and The Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 156-57.

men and women to love Scripture and ultimately worship God with their entire lives.

Pastors shape their church. By equipping students at EPC about true biblical worship, we will be training and impacting those called to serve as worship pastors and those called to serve God as missionaries, evangelists, lead pastors, youth pastors, and other ministries. From a Pre-K teacher to a senior church pastor, it does not matter which direction God ultimately gives a person. What matters is that their knowledge of worship is deeply rooted in Scripture and would not be altered by any unbiblical trend of modern worship.

Rationale

As stated above, there is a problem in defining what true biblical worship signifies. As society moves farther away from God and churches start embracing liberal ideas and theologies that contradict Scripture, we have a responsibility to foment a sound, clear, biblical understanding of what God demands and expects in people's worship. This project will serve as a guide to encourage and promote biblical worship in church congregations by solidifying the understanding of biblical worship in the youth ministry at Eastside Praise Church. There are three reasons EPC must address this challenge.

Firstly, we need to invest in the next generation. Leaders must not only prepare students for future ministry but overall Christ-followers that would honor God in everything they do. Paul conveys in his letters to Timothy how important it is for the church to invest in the younger generation. Paul encourages his young *protégé* in 1 Timothy 4:12 to be an example to others in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, and not to let anybody despise him because of his youth. Paul's heart was intentional and dedicated to investing his valuable time into developing Timothy into a pastor, a minister, and ultimately, a follower of Christ.

Secondly, we need future leaders and pastors to be grounded in their theology of worship. It is crucial then to start as early as possible. John 4:23 indicates the new way

of worship, Hebrews 13:15 and Romans 12:1, which talk about the sacrifice of praise in worship. Isaiah 6:1-9 gives us a presentation of revelation and response, Colossians 3:16 communicates the purpose of singing and the styles to observe, Revelation 4:8-11 projects an eschatological view of what worship will be like in eternity, and Psalm 15 presents the ideal worship leader foreshadowing Christ as the primary worship leader (High Priest)—see also Hebrews chapter 8. The heart of a worship pastor needs to make room for these (and many more) essential passages that would point to an excellent start to understanding Christian worship through Scripture.

Churches need worship pastors (leaders) who know and understand God's word. Leaders who will not compromise worship for vanity. The church needs to train, equip, and teach them young. Knowing about biblical worship should be essential to every Christian, not only to worship or lead pastors. Worship is what we do as believers. When we are not worshipping God with what we see, say, think, or do, we fail in our walk as followers of Christ. Christians are to worship God with their entire being and not give in to worldly desires. Sadly, these desires have made their way into the Church. However, by intentionally targeting the new generation, future leaders will rise with a better understanding and ardent zeal to model biblical worship.

Thirdly, worship pastors must bring back a theology of music that would follow its God-given purpose to humanity. In other words, to place music and all its constituents where it belongs. Music plays a vital role in the church, and indeed it should. What we sing matters; what we profess with our lips is of extreme importance. Christians pay close attention to what preachers say, but not so much to the words that come out of their mouths while singing. When people sing as a church body, they are to express and proclaim God's truth. When they sing and play musical instruments together as an act of worship, they are to do it with a humbled heart that cries out for mercy while also knowing that grace abounds because the blood of Jesus has atoned sin.

When a follower of Jesus (young or old) has a limited view of biblical worship,

this person may experience many setbacks that may not permit him to fully mature in Christ and even accomplish what God has prepared for him. One of many reasons for this project is to equip the students at EPC with the knowledge needed to embark on the life journey of true worship unto God. While knowledge is essential, it is certainly not everything required to grasp biblical worship and put it into practice.

Purpose

This project aimed to equip students in biblical worship at Eastside Praise Church, resulting in increased knowledge and understanding of what the word of God instructs and requires for proper worship.

Goals

The project comprised three key goals. These goals will help students achieve a palpable destination within the project and help them get a biblical conceptual understanding of worship, spiritual growth in their walk with Christ, and, lastly, gain practical tools to become active worship leaders. These goals are listed as follows:

1. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge of what biblical worship signifies for the students at Eastside Praise Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum on biblical worship.
3. The third goal was to focus on equipping the students by teaching the six-week curriculum to obtain the understanding which may lead to spiritual disciplines (James 1:22-25) of sacrificial worship (Rom 12:1), which results in conformity to Christ's perfect image (Rom 8:29-30).

A research methodology was created to measure the successful fulfillment of these three goals. This sequence of this methodology is described in the next section.

Research Methodology

The goals mentioned above served as the destination and effectiveness of the proposed project. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and understanding of biblical worship of the students. This goal was measured by giving each student a pre-

survey comprising necessary theological, philosophical, and practical matters about biblical worship.³ This goal was considered successfully met when at least five students filled out the assessment confirming their desire to participate in a verbal and written manner.

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum tailored to students. This curriculum aided the student in grasping the fundamental theological implications of biblical worship and how these concepts affect one's life. The six-week curriculum was developed to train, equip, and teach the theology of biblical worship to the students. This curriculum covered topics such as the image of God; holiness; God's mandates to humanity as seen in Genesis; differences in acts of worship between testaments; Jesus as the center of biblical worship; obedience as sacrificial worship, and worship as our daily response to God. Other topics leaned more toward the practical side of music leading, but it was not the essential purpose. Music-leading topics were, preparing one's heart as a worshiper, leadership in worship ministry, and ministering to God in song. This goal was measured by an expert panel that evaluated the faithfulness of the doctrine taught about worship based on Scripture, the teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was the most practical of the entire project. Each teaching session lasted 45 minutes to an hour, with a 15-minute Q&A section at the end. During these six weeks, the students were exposed to the topics mentioned above and challenged to think critically and theologically about biblical worship and to put into practice the learned concepts. A post-survey measured this goal which the students were instructed to

³ See appendix 1.

⁴ See appendix 2.

take shortly after culminating the six-week course.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre-survey and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Biblical worship. “Biblical worship is the engagement with God based on his proposed terms that provokes a reverential act of submission as a response to his revelation and glory.”⁶

Two limitations will apply to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre-and post-surveys will depend upon the respondents’ willingness to be completely honest to themselves, hence being righteous before God with their provided answers. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents will be promised their answers will remain nameless. Second, the effectiveness of the training will be limited by the constancy of attendance which will also be dependent on the student's parents. If the participants do not attend all the sessions, it will be difficult to measure how beneficial the training has been. To mitigate this limitation, each week of the teaching sessions will be scheduled around the Wednesday night Bible study times.

Two delimitations will be placed on the project. First, the project will address and focus on people ages 25 and under. Second, the project will be confined to a small group of students, not greater than ten, not lower than five on each teaching session.

Conclusion

Worship not only determines our path in life but our eternity. How we speak,

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ David Peterson. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002) 20.

what we think, what we see, how we feel, and how we live our lives are crucial aspects determined by our worship. Whether biblical worship is taught by song, sermon, class, or better yet—by example, it is of utmost importance to diligently and intentionally be pressing into this subject that it is foundational in one’s Christian journey. To conclude, the purpose of the project is to equip and introduce people in their teenage years to understand biblical worship as a way of life. In time, these young lives will have the necessary tools to advance their leadership capacities in ministry and maturity in Christ.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EQUIPPING STUDENTS IN BIBLICAL WORSHIP

God's plan for humanity was to have a relationship with his Creator, rule over God's creation, and have a relationship with each other. In this relationship of creature and Creator, true worship was to take place since God had created them in his image with an ability to worship him. The first humans worshiped God by their relationship with him and by being obedient to him by ruling over the earth and fellowshiping with each other. For example, God instructed Adam to keep the garden, name the animals, and eat from the garden's fruit, except from the tree of good and evil (Gen 2:15-20). One can deduce that Adam obeyed and did what God commanded him to do. He was genuinely worshipping God by being obedient. By Adam being in a close relationship with God, he recognized God's voice and obeyed his orders. Obedience was, and still is, an essential part of true worship. Adam and Eve were fulfilling their innate capacity to worship God. This aspect of worship shows that obedience goes hand in hand with an authentic relationship with God.

Soon after Creation, humanity rebelled against their creator and began to murder, lie, cheat, and indulge in their concupiscence (Rom 1:24-25). In other words, humans willingly refused to worship the true God (Rom 1:18-23). God did not remove his image from humans; however, his image and likeness were distorted by sin in all humanity. Hence people's worship could not be acceptable because of sin (Gen. 4:4-5)—not because of what God ultimately required in the law—but because man's heart had now been tainted by sin and prevented people from having a true relationship with God.

The problem of sin needed a remedy. This remedy would need to create a

bridge between man and God to restore true worship. God's solution to this problem was to send Jesus to die as a perfect sacrifice for people's sin. Jesus's death would act as a restoration of God's image to humanity. Those who now confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior have been transformed and can worship God through a close relationship with the Father, bearing good fruit and obeying God with their hearts.

While proclaiming Jesus as Savior is beneficial, obeying his word is a more genuine indication of God's image restoring to its original stage. Faithful obedience will result in bearing good fruit, which will be evidence of God's image in a person's life. This chapter will demonstrate that biblical worship is (1) a human capability tied to being made in God's image (Gen 1:27); (2) though that image is marred by sin, biblical worship is made possible through the restoration of that image in Christ (Heb 1:1-3); and (3) biblical worship is the goal of obedience as believers are conformed to Christ's image (Heb 5:9).

The Image of God

While Genesis 1:27 mentions the words image and likeness, these two words are interchangeable. The Septuagint and the Vulgate added an *and* making it seem that it may have referred to two distinct qualities. However, in the original Hebrew, these two words carry almost the same meaning.¹ The Hebrew word for image is *tselem*, which means "to cut," meaning that humans represent God. The Hebrew word for likeness is *demūth*, which can be translated as "to be like." Anthony Hoekema suggests that these two words convey that humans are representatives of God who also share similitudes like God in specific ways.²

Humans fall into two categories: creatures and persons. As creatures, people

¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 13.

² Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 13.

are dependent on God; as persons, they have relative independence.³ In other words, as creatures, our physiological and emotional state is governed by the sovereignty of God. However, as a person, one is responsible for his decisions and actions that are executed willingly by the person.

Extremes can be taken about the autonomy of humans and their created-creature status. The Bible is clear in presenting both as equally important. For example, Romans 9:21 depicts humans as clay (creatures), whereas Joshua 24:15 calls to reason to choose what is best for themselves (person).⁴ Understanding these two concepts will help one develop a solid theological foundation of man and discover God's purpose for his ultimate creation—to worship God. Humans can be seen as creatures created by God and as persons created in God's image. There is a very complex and necessary aspect of these two terms (creature and person) that will help one differentiate and set a basic foundation in understanding what it means to be human through the lens of Scripture.

The Bible is the only truthful book that explains God's purpose for man and its true essence. Herman Bavinck states, "To be human is to be an image-bearer of God."⁵ Inescapably, human beings radiate (limitedly) God's attributes. Therefore, while this chapter will not expand on the will of man, it is essential to note that God's sovereignty is above the will of any man, not that God intrudes in it, but is above any choice a man or woman may make.

In Genesis 9, God instructs Noah what to do after the flood. There are two main points to make in this chapter. First, before God institutes the command of capital punishment to those who shed human blood, which in a way, resembles Exodus chapter 21, God gives several ordinances and blessings that echo what God has already said in a

³ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 6.

⁴ Hoekema, *Created in God's image*, 6.

⁵ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. by John Bolt, trans. by John Vrend. (Grand Rapids, Baker Academy, 2004), 530-31.

few chapters before (mainly, the command to be fruitful and multiply). Once again, God gives dominion to humanity over all the animals. This time, humans are now allowed to eat them but without any blood. Second, in verse 6, God's explicit command to be put to death if one sheds someone else's blood can be perceived as the unique status humankind has over all other creatures.⁶ God is very serious about humanity and whom they represent. Hoekema writes, "When one kills a human being, not only does he take that person's life, but he hurts God himself—the God who was reflected in that individual."⁷ God's reflection is in all human beings, and his likeness is embedded in them as well. While sin has devastated and distorted God's image in humanity, as seen above, humans still bear God's image, no matter how sinful that person may be. After the flood, humanity kept sinning and disobeying God. Only a sinless man (God incarnate) bearing the perfect image and likeness of God could be able to redeem humankind, as prophesized in Genesis 3:15.

Adam and Eve were created to enjoy God's company in an unadulterated way. Thus, their worship was pure and uncompromised. Their innate ability to worship their creator was unpolluted. There was no confusion to whom worship was to be ascribed. There was no need for a redeemer, for there was nothing to redeem. The act of obedience was a satisfying daily routine performed by two humans that expressed their worship through it. Unfortunately, all of the joy and perfect communion with God, creation, and each other came to an end when Adam and Eve decided to believe a lie and disobey a direct command by their Creator (Gen 2:17).

Two foundational points will be proposed to understand better what the Scriptures say about humans as bearers of God's image. First, the following section will

⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 1. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 194.

⁷ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 16.

define what it means to be made in the image of God. Second, it will show what it means to live out the image of God.

Some scholars have suggested that the image of God in humans was eradicated the moment sin entered the world. While this proposition may seem logical, it is not scriptural—the Bible states in Genesis 5 that Adam fathered a son in his likeness and image. One can see in verse 1 of the same chapter that the word image is omitted. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, these two words are used interchangeably and should not take away anything from what the verse is imparting. The most significant change is how the verse is now exchanging God’s image for the image of Adam. These verses communicate that God’s image was given to Adam in the creation, and now, God’s image is being transferred to Adam’s offspring. The image of God can then be seen as an inheritance by Adam to all humanity.⁸

Humanity’s actual existence is evidence of God’s image in them; for a man to be alive means that God’s image is at work in him. No person that has ever existed has been without the image of God because his image is essential to that person’s existence.⁹

God’s image can be understood and defined in two ways. First, by looking at how humans enjoyed God’s image before the Fall. Adam and Eve expressed God’s image perfectly during this period. They lived in complete harmony with God, worshipping God through their obedience which resulted in true worship. Hoekema presents two reasons why humans were created: (1) to mirror God on earth; and (2) to be representatives (or ambassadors) of him. The Psalms talk about creation proclaiming the glory of God (Ps. 19), but only through humans, does God becomes visible. This visible act refers to mirroring God in love, kindness, mercy, and goodness.¹⁰ Not only were humans created

⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 127.

⁹ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 66.

¹⁰ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 67.

to mirror God but to represent God. One who mirrors God consequently would also represent God's authority on earth. In other words, humans were created to faithfully represent and stand for truth and promote what God promotes. Simply put, humans were created to carry out God's plans on earth.¹¹

The second way of seeing and defining God's image in man is by looking at it through the lenses of post-fall. It is essential to understand that sin was not only a matter of disobeying God, but it corrupted his perfect image in humans. Hoekema explains that God's image is demonstrated in humans by both structure and function. These two aspects of man are vital in defining and understanding God's image before and after the fall. The element of structure refers, in essence, to what man is. For example, man's ability to think, decide, have an aesthetic sense, create, and ultimately worship.¹² The aspect of function points to what man does. For example, man desires to worship because of the structure, while it is the function's aspect that enables that desire to be fulfilled. In other words, man's functioning could be seen as his worshiping, serving, and ruling.¹³

Gordon J. Wenham presents five different views on what it means to be created in God's image: (1) Image and likeness are distinct. Image may refer to man's personality, while likeness has to do with his ethical behavior. (2) God's image in man can be found in his ability to reason, have free-will, and in his intelligence. (3) The image of God resembles in the physical appearance of a man or a woman. (4) The image of God in man makes him a representative of God on earth. (5) God's image in humanity is what makes it possible for God to relate to people.¹⁴

Herbert Lockyer's definition of God's image can be found in Nelson's

¹¹ Hoekema, *Created in God's image*, 68.

¹² Hoekema, *Created in God's image*, 70.

¹³ Hoekema, *Created in God's image*, 69.

¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29-31.

Illustrated Bible Dictionary as the “ability and privilege of knowing, serving, and loving God.” Lockyer also affirms that the Bible does not explicitly describes what the image of God truly is.¹⁵ Additionally, Wenham argues too that it is challenging to exactly know what Genesis truly means by the image of God. However, he explains that each of these views carry some truth. Nevertheless, he concludes that “the strongest case has been made for the view that the divine image makes man God’s vice-regent on earth.”¹⁶

To summarize, to be made in God’s image is to be human. One cannot be a human and not have God’s image in him. To be human is to be sacred since that person carries the image of God. Also, the image of God is mirrored in humans by obeying his commands and representing him on earth. These tasks are made possible by the aspects of function and structure given to all humanity. It is important to note that both of these aspects worked perfectly before the Fall. After the Fall, the structural part of God’s image in man was kept intact, but man’s functional aspect was distorted and lost because of sin and its detrimental effect.¹⁷

Living Out God’s Image

Man’s need to worship God is indisputable, but one’s worship can be erroneous when directed to something that God has not approved. God created man with three essential relational needs: (1) between God and man; (2) between man and his neighbor; and (3) between man and creation. To live out God’s image and genuinely worship him, one needs to be experiencing all three of these relationships.

First, a person needs to recognize that God is the one who created the world. Everything goes back to Genesis and what happened in creation. By admitting this

¹⁵ Herbert Lockyer, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 502.

¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 31-32.

¹⁷ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 72.

premise, one gives God his righteous place of honor and dominion over humanity and the whole creation. By acknowledging that God indeed created man and woman, one starts to open a door for a relationship with his creator. The psalmist states that his help comes from the Lord and immediately emphasizes that God is the creator of heaven and earth (Ps 121:1-2). Hoekema states that “being human in the truest sense, means to love God above all.”¹⁸ Loving God then is demonstrated by obeying him with righteous acts. In other words, worship starts with God. If a close relationship with God demonstrates worshipful obedience, then obedience is essential to true worship. Matthew 22:37 says: “You shall love your God with your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Loving God first is true biblical worship.

Second, God said that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Apart from the apparent difference of sex between man and woman, God’s purpose behind Eve was to create a companion for Adam. She would complement Adam, and at the same time, Adam would complement Eve. This relationship also implies fellowship.¹⁹ Fellowship not solely applies to husband-wife relationships but friends, sons, daughters, relatives, and one’s neighbors. Paul summarizes part of the Decalogue in Romans 13:8-10 by stating: “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Paul is saying that by treating one’s neighbor with love, patience, compassion, mercy, kindness, and faithfulness, God is being worshiped because his law is being obeyed. Hoekema concludes: “man cannot be truly human apart from others.”²⁰

The final relationship that man has following God’s image is his dominion

¹⁸ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 76.

¹⁹ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 77.

²⁰ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 77.

over creation. Man's dominion cannot only be limited to animals and the earth's soil. Humans are not only to be seen as rulers of this earth but as servants of it. Genesis uses the words *ābad* and *shāmar* to describe Adam's tasks in the garden. These words are translated as to serve and to guard. Simply put, humans are to serve and be good stewards of this earth. True worship then entails people taking good care of God's creation as representatives of God on earth.

When God created Adam and Eve, he created them with "what is often called the cultural mandate: the command to develop a God-glorifying culture."²¹ After the Fall, humanity could only partially fulfill this cultural mandate by procreation and working the soil.²² Today's culture is filled with immoral standards that govern the desires of man and not of God. Humans have not stopped worshiping, but their worship is not directed at God but at themselves and other idols.

God's image and likeness have been implanted in humanity to innately worship his Creator by pursuing the three relational elements discussed above. Because of sin, humans started looking at other things to worship. Daniel Block starts one of his books by stating, "To be human is to worship."²³ If one worships by simply being human, and if God's image correlates to the essence of being human, then that means that all those who are created in God's image are worshippers. Only through the restoration of God's image, humanity's worship can be true and accepted by the Father. All humanity enjoys God's image, but not all have been conformed into Christ's likeness, which is the perfect image of God. Those who follow Jesus are in a constant pursuit to conform to his perfect image by the power of the Holy Spirit that lives within them, which should also testify by their obedience (fruit they bear).

²¹ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 79.

²² Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 70.

²³ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 1.

Restoration of God's Image through Jesus Christ

While humans are God-image bearers, restoration of this image needs to take place to truly worship God. It has been stated that all humans are created in God's image, but at the same time, all fall short of being perfectly conformed to his image and likeness. How can then humans be conformed to the perfect image of God without fault or guilt? Bob Kauflin writes that when a person sins, that particular sin is not counted against another person like us, but against a God who is all-good, all-powerful, sovereign, and holy. God requires justice. Sinful acts need punishment. The author then states, "For that reason, we need to be saved from God's justice. We need to be protected from his fierce jealousy ... and glory ... and what we need has been provided for us in Jesus Christ."²⁴ In other words, Jesus came to this earth to restore God's image in humanity by fulfilling the threefold relationships (God, fellowship with each other, and creation). His death and resurrection opened the door to retake what had been taken away because of sin.

The following section will expound on Hebrews 1:1-3 and explain how Christ fulfills God's desire for humanity to live in a relationship with the Father, each other, and creation. It will also argue that Jesus is the greatest revelation of the image of God to humanity, truly reflecting (as a man) God's image on earth. This section will also explain the theological implications of Christ's death and his eternal reign. Finally, it is essential to note that all three relationships (God, fellowship with each other, and creation) are realized in Jesus, giving human beings a perfect example of how to worship and relate to God.

God Has Spoken

The book of Hebrews starts by asserting that God has revealed himself to humanity. The author of the letter mentions that God has used various methods to convey

²⁴ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 71.

his divine messages. Scholars argue for two ways of seeing God's way of revelation in this first verse of Hebrews. The Greek word *polumerōs* translates to "at many times," and *polutropōs*, "in many ways." The easiest way to compare these two words is to *polumerōs* being quantitative and *polutropōs* as qualitative. David L. Allen explains that the former "can be interpreted as the multiplicity of successive acts, referring to different times (when) and people (through whom) God revealed." The latter could be seen as the many aspects of modality in how the message was delivered.²⁵

The author of Hebrews knows the Old Testament very well. He demonstrates that what God has revealed in the past (our fathers) has led to the new covenant. Donald Guthrie puts it this way, "What has happened in the past has a bearing in the present."²⁶ While the author of the epistle does reference *the prophets*, his prior statement that God has revealed *in many times and many ways*, reassures the reader that God's revelation was not only through prophets, but through his promises, his law, and the psalms. Thus, the Old Testament shares the revelatory nature of God to humanity, but not in its complete splendor.

Jesus is both man and God. Beyond man's ability to reason, think, and do, Jesus mirrored and represented God's perfect image through his relationship with the Father, by loving others, and demonstrating dominion over creation as well. In other words, Christ perfectly fulfilled the relationship between man and God, giving humanity (through his death and resurrection) the chance to get back to the Father and worship him.²⁷

Guthrie writes in his commentary that the Son "perfectly shows all that is

²⁵ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*. The New American Commentary Vol. 35 (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 98.

²⁶ Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008), 66.

²⁷ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 73.

knowable about the Father.”²⁸ If people understood who the prophets were and paid attention to their message, assumedly, they would surely pay attention to what Jesus said because he came directly from the Father (John 10:30-38). The Gospels show a different approach to how Jesus’s message was received and how he was put to death when he publicly revealed his true essence (Luke 22:66-71). Guthrie argues that the author of Hebrews understood that “if men cannot learn about God from the Son, no amount of prophetic voices or actions would convince them”²⁹ The apostle Paul asserts this fact by stating that humans have suppressed the truth because of their unrighteous living, and because of their sinful condition, they exchanged God’s truth for a lie, wanting to worship the creature and not the creator (Rom 1:18-24). Several passages in the Gospels attest to many of Jesus’s rejections. Most happen when he is asked to perform miracles and wonders so people may then believe (Matt 16:1; Mark 8:11-13; John 6:30). Guthrie shows that no one and nothing can equal Jesus Christ because he has superseded all prophetic voices of the past, thus Christ being the culmination of all prophecy in Scripture. Furthermore, if Jesus is the climax of God’s revelation to humanity, every possible revelation (past, present, and future) can be found in Christ.

To truly worship Jesus, one needs not only to know who he was and what he did. One needs to surrender and follow him entirely. To say that one follows Jesus is to say that one follows the God of the Old Testament. The author of Hebrews makes this concept very clear by closing any gaps of misinterpretation. He leads the reader to Genesis and establishes Jesus as the Creator. Guthrie explains that God’s revelation through creation could be seen as impersonal but still revelatory. When God appoints his Son, the impersonal becomes personal. God has now become flesh, and what caused the

²⁸ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 68.

²⁹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 68.

cosmos to exist by his Word (John 1:1) is now living among humans and has become marvelously personal.³⁰ Guthrie argues that the author does not suggest that the Son was never heir. He denotes that Jesus was from the very beginning God, and because of his connection to creation, he already has the dominion and is heir to his eternal kingdom.³¹

In verse 3, the author describes Jesus by stating divine attributes. The sentence, “He is the radiance of the glory of God,” can be compared and perceived as the *shekinah* (visible glory) of God as seen in the book of Exodus.³² In other words, God’s *shekinah* can be manifested by the person of Christ, who is the second person of the Trinity. Allen writes, “Jesus is the effulgence of God’s glory because he shares the same divine nature as the Father.”³³ The preincarnate Christ shared the Father’s divine glory because he has always been part of the Trinity. The incarnate Christ has always shared God’s divine glory because he is the “embodied revelation of God’s essential glory.”³⁴ Simply put, Christ has always been and will always be worthy of praise and adoration because he is the divine Son.

Finally, the author of Hebrews uses the word *charaktēr*, to describe the “exact representation” of God’s nature. This word originally refers to an imprint of seals or coins. The author argues that Christ (while called the Son of God) is the exact representation of (not like human sons, who may resemble some of their Father’s attributes) the Father. Therefore, Christ and the Father share the same divine essence.³⁵

Colossians 1:17 has a similar take to what the author of Hebrews writes when

³⁰ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 68.

³¹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 69.

³² R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (Nashville: B&H, 2017), 10.

³³ Allen, *Hebrews*, 118.

³⁴ Allen, *Hebrews*, 118.

³⁵ Mohler, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 11.

he says: “he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” In the letter to the Colossians, Paul says that Christ is the cause of order in the cosmos. Not only in the present time but as stated above, the preincarnate Christ had everything to do with what we see in the world and universe. He sustains every planet and star, and it is he who brings harmony to everything. It is Christ who controls the universe.³⁶ Lastly, Jesus cannot be seen as a mythical god that is holding planet earth, but as one who is not only holding everything together but at the same time “sustaining and bringing it to its goal.”³⁷ This goal is his eternal kingdom and unending worship performed by his faithful followers.

The final part of verse 3: “After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This verse indicates Christ’s sacrifice and victorious reward in sharing a special place on the throne of the Father. The Hebrews author connects with Psalm 110 in how Jesus Christ has fulfilled it. Guthrie suggests that this Psalm was evidently in the author’s mind since he makes a strong case for it later in the epistle, developing the idea of a new order of priesthood through Jesus.³⁸ New Testament theologian Thomas R. Schreiner writes that the epistle of Hebrews emphasizes Jesus not only ruling as a king but also as a priest. Schreiner explains that “Christology serves soteriology,” meaning Jesus “accomplishes salvation and procures full forgiveness of sins” by acting as a priest-king.³⁹

Sin could only be eradicated by divine intervention; therefore, God does not delay in sharing his plan in Genesis 3:15. The weight of sin was too great for humanity to

³⁶ Jerry Falwell, *New Testament: Liberty Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 591.

³⁷ Falwell, *New Testament*, 668.

³⁸ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 73.

³⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Academy, 2008), 383.

bear, but God graciously opened a way to be searched and found in ways of law and cultic worship. The author of Hebrews wants to make sure the reader understands that God, through Christ, has purified all sin once and for all. Paul Ellingworth writes, “Hebrews views sins and their remedy in cultic terms. The purification of sins by Christ’s sacrifice is related, on the one hand, to the establishment of a new order of relationships between God and humanity, and on the other hand to obedience and moral effort.”⁴⁰ In other words, this new establishment is eternally linked to Jesus and his redemptive work on the cross.

As seen in the synoptic Gospels, the veil in the temple was torn in two, signifying that the temple, for what it was, was no longer needed (John 2:19) as a representation of God on earth (John 4:23). Exodus 26:31 and Numbers 4:5 instruct on some details of the veil (tabernacle in this case), but in Leviticus 16, one can read the labored and detailed commands for high priests to enter the holiest place once a year for the atonement of people’s sins. Christ has fulfilled what was predestined in Genesis 3:15. Jesus acted in a twofold manner: (1) as the offeror (high priest) and (2) the offering (the lamb). David Peterson concludes it this way: “In Hebrews, it is clear that the blood or death of Jesus is what actually removes sin and makes it possible for sinners to draw near to God. Yet, it is because he offered himself as a perfectly obedient and unblemished sacrifice to God that his death has atoning significance.”⁴¹ It is only because of this perfect sacrifice performed by a perfect man that the Son now enters heaven as the incarnate Son and sits at the Father’s right hand.

In Matthew 21:42, Jesus states the following: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our

⁴⁰ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistles to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 102.

⁴¹ David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 229-30.

eyes?”” Jesus is quoting directly from Psalm 118, and this analogy can be traced throughout the New Testament (Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:4-5; Eph 2:19-22). Asserting that Jesus is the cornerstone that holds everything together means that our worship cannot exist outside of Christ. If Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6), our worship most certainly needs to reflect this reality.

Constance Cherry explains that it is God who wills humanity’s worship to the Son. There is no competition in the Trinity; each divine person of the Godhead submits and glorifies one another in “a perfect relationship of love.” People can worship the Father because of Jesus, and it is the power of the Holy Spirit that permits this to happen.⁴² Authentic biblical Christian worship is then possible because the Father willed for his Son to die on the cross for humanity (John 3:16), and after his ascension, left his Holy Spirit to fill people with truth and knowledge to be witnesses of the gospel (Acts 2), bearing good fruit (John 15:5) so that others could testify of God’s goodness and ultimately acknowledge and worship him.

The Son came to earth to vividly represent God, radiate his glory, and unite humanity with the Father. God spoke through the life of Jesus, and Jesus exemplified everything that the Father represented (John 5:19). Jesus’s death on the cross conquered sin and opened a new door to true worship. People can now approach God boldly and confidently, knowing that Christ fulfilled what man could not—complete obedience to the Father. In Christ, one can see the Father’s perfect image. In Christ, one can now truthfully worship the Father. In Christ, one finds the way, the truth, and the life. In other words, in Christ, one’s worship is truly complete.

⁴² Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 22.

Christ as the Fulfillment of the Threefold Relationship

Because of Adam's sin, every person was destined for death (1 Cor 15:22). Sin had marred God's image in all humanity. The only way back to the Father (back to his image and likeness) is through Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29 talks about those predestined by the Father to be conformed to the Son's image. Jesus is the perfect image of the Father, thus mirroring who the Father is and what He desires in people. Also, 2 Corinthians 3:18 talks about being transformed progressively into the Lord's likeness. This transformational process seeks to be conformed to God's perfect image found in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit's work.⁴³

It is imperative to understand that the renewal of God's image in people does not happen because of the person's effort but because of God. This process is usually referred to as sanctification. It starts by confessing Jesus as Lord and allowing man's functional aspect of God's image to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Hoekema describes sanctification as being the "progressive renewal of man in the image of God."⁴⁴

The renewal of God's image in humanity can happen because of what Jesus did on the cross. A man or a woman can now approach God and worship him truly. However, like any process, there is a continuation of changes that need to happen. The apostle Paul presents the juxtaposition of old man versus new man. Paul instructs the Colossians to take off the old man and put the new self in which is being renewed to the image of God.

Simply put, the old man represents a life of sin, while the new is in a state of continual change into the image of Christ. Hoekema states that Christians should see themselves as genuinely new, but not in its totality.⁴⁵ Not in its totality because the

⁴³ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 24.

⁴⁴ Hoekema, *Created in God's image*, 86.

⁴⁵ Hoekema, *Created in God's image*, 26.

perfect image of God will not fully be completed in this life, but in the next in with our glorified bodies in the new heavens. Hoekema adds that “the threefold relationship for which man was created will be maintained, deepened, and infinitely enriched. We shall then love God above all, love our neighbors as ourselves, and rule creation in a whole God-glorifying way.”⁴⁶

The glorious hope and future to come to those who wait on Christ and his second coming should not prevent one from exercising God’s restored image on earth today. Jesus exemplified God’s perfect image in himself by being completely obedient to the Father. He obeyed the Father because of the close relationship with him. Jesus pursued a close relationship with God from a very early age, as he was found in the temple asking questions to teachers of the law and adding answers in amazement to many (Luke 2:41-49).

Jesus’s love is powerfully expressed in dealing with people. Jesus would take time to heal, listen and make provision to people. Jesus would spend time with those who were marginalized, forgotten, and hated by society. Jesus stated that his ministry on earth was one of servanthood (Mark 10:45). Jesus even knelt to wash his disciples’ feet (John 13:1-5), and soon after this act of humility, he would be giving his own life for them (John 15:13).

Lastly, Jesus fulfilled God’s mandate to rule over creation by dealing with creation itself. The book of Mark narrates when Jesus calms the raging winds and the sea, leaving the disciples in awe (Mark 4:35-41). Jesus also defied the natural laws of physics by walking on water, demonstrating that he was in total control over his creation (Matt 14:22-33). Jesus not only controlled natural elements, but he showed to have complete ruling over them. Jesus’s first miracle was to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11). Next, he miraculously made the disciples catch many fish after spending all night trying without

⁴⁶ Hoekema, *Created in God’s image*, 95.

success (Luke 5:1-6). He also multiplied the bread and the fish for more than 5,000 people (Matt 14:13-21). Jesus healed many people, including lepers, blind, lame, and even resurrecting the dead. Jesus showed complete dominion over creation, and he acted in love bringing glory to the Father.

The above supernatural miracles performed by Jesus demonstrated his dominion over nature and all created beings. All of Jesus's miracles were purposefully done to bring glory to his Father (John 14:31). There are two truths to draw from Jesus's complete rule over creation. First, Jesus showed people that worship must be only attributed to God and no one or nothing else. Second, Jesus shows that only in him is the created order restored to its pre-fall condition. Therefore, based on these realities, redeemed humanity is to relate properly to the created order, not by necessarily performing miracles like Jesus, but by worshiping the one true God. Therefore, Paul speaks of unredeemed humanity who suppresses the truth and refuses to worship the one true God (Rom 1:18). By suppressing God's truth, people willingly turn away from worshiping the Creator to worshiping his creation. In other words, the creation rules over them. But Christ has come to restore humanity's relationship to the creation as God intended. Humanity is not to be ruled by created things so that they worship them, but rather the creation is to be seen as a good gift which causes humanity to give thanks to God as Creator and praise him.

In Romans 1:20, Paul explains that creation constantly reminds humanity to acknowledge the Creator. Because humans refused to worship God, he gave them over to their lustful desires. People's idolatry became their source of immorality.⁴⁷ As a result, humanity continues to succumb to sin, falling short of the glorious ideal for which they were created (Rom 3:23). Finally, Paul concludes in verse 25 with the reality of

⁴⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to The Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 78.

exchanging God's truth for a lie, which is worshiping creation instead of the Creator. This deviation of worship occurred from the beginning when Satan used an element (the forbidden fruit) from creation to entice Eve, ultimately making her and Adam sin.

To go after creation instead of the Creator is to abandon God's truth and worship that which one may understand as praiseworthy. John Murray states that instead of "Rather than the Creator," the original Greek suggests "Above the Creator." Murray explains that his worship is automatically eliminated when one worships and serves someone or something above the Creator.⁴⁸ One's worship must always be directed to the Creator, not something created. In worshiping creation, one's heart wanders and becomes immoral (Rom 1:26-27). One's heart will never cease to look for answers (Rom 1:28). Lastly, one's heart will be confused to the point of denying there is a God—a Creator (Ps 14:1).

Jesus demonstrated that he is the perfect image of God by properly functioning in all the facets that relate to God's image in man. In other words, Jesus reflected God's perfect image by "being directed toward God, being directed toward the neighbor, and ruling over nature."⁴⁹ Thus, worshipping the Father and fulfilling God's purpose for man on earth.

Since Christ is the perfect image of God, in Christ, humanity is to be conformed to the image of Christ. By recognizing Jesus as Lord and following him, one begins the process of sanctification in all three relationships aspects of God's perfect image. Biblically and truthfully, one who wants to worship God needs to reflect God's image by (1) directing his worship toward the Father. Practically, he needs to be praying to God, thanking God, loving God with all of his heart, soul, and strength. Giving God

⁴⁸ John Murray, *The Epistle to The Romans*. The New International Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), 46.

⁴⁹ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 75.

his rational powers to think godly thoughts, willing what God wills in him, and using the ability to speak to glorify God with his words. (2) Loving one's neighbor as himself is shown by being ready to forgive them, pray for them, and be greatly concerned for their welfare. Loving one's neighbor also means being concerned for social justice, human rights, and caring for those less fortunate than others. Lastly, loving one's neighbor means including one's enemies.

(3) Those who follow Jesus are now radiating God's restored image, exercising their dominion over creation in a godly way by being good stewards of the earth's resources. This act of stewardship includes being conscious about food distribution to avoid famines, prevent air and water pollution, and maintain the beauty of God's world. Also, as mentioned before, ruling over God's creation means advancing a culture to glorify God with literature, philosophy, and science. The renewal of God's image through the process of sanctification (because of Christ) impacts how we live and worship God, care for and love our neighbor, and rule over God's creation.⁵⁰

To conclude, being renewed in the image of God means that one needs to conform to the image of Christ and less to self. The process of sanctification—restoring God's image in man—is demonstrated by the various acts shown above. The Holy Spirit is at work helping one imitate Christ, but this imitation is also a choice to please God with one's obedience.

So far, this chapter has argued that all human beings are made in God's image. God created people to have a relationship with him, with each other in godly fellowship, and to rule over creation. However, God's perfect image was perverted because of sin, and people's worship could no longer be accepted since their hearts were not in one accord with the Father. To rectify humanity's sin, God sent his Son (Jesus Christ), which is the ultimate revelation of God (perfect image of God in man), to die as a perfect

⁵⁰ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 86-88.

sacrifice so God's image could once again be restored to its original intention—to fulfill the threefold relationships. Those who believe and accept Jesus as their savior are being conformed to Christ's image (which is the Father's image) in the process of sanctification. Worshiping God through obedience is a byproduct of conformity to Christ's image. In other words, those who worshipfully obey God are in the process of being more like Christ, and God's image is evident in their life.

Life of Obedience as God's Image-Bearers

Obedience is worship put into action, and God expects it from all his creation. Various Scripture verses speak about creation worshipping God. The Psalms talk about nature obeying the Father (Ps. 66:4) by singing praises to him and by heavens declaring the glory of God (Ps. 19:1). In Nehemiah 9:6, it is written that the host of heaven worships God. These are all acts of worship performed by nature which ultimately demonstrate obedience to God. If nature obeys and worships its creator, those bearing God's image ought to obey and worship the Father as well.

In Matthew 7:24, Jesus states: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Jesus is emphasizing the verbs hear and do. To know what to do, one needs to hear, but the hearing must propel the person—by faith—to do the action required by the hearing. In John 14:23, Jesus states that one shows love to him by obeying his teachings. Lastly, James 1:22 states: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Obeying God takes willingness, courage, love, and faith. Without faith, true obedience cannot exist; thus, true worship is unfeasible. In other words, those who are being conformed to the image of Christ must obey his commands. By obeying the Son, one obeys the Father, resulting in a life of worship to God.

The act of obedience must go beyond what one can say (Mark 14:31), feel or see (Exod 32:5), or at times, even reasoned (Judg 7:7-8). The Bible describes the dire

consequences of disobeying direct commands by God. For example, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instruction, which ended in sin overpowering the earth and people's hearts. Lot's wife willingly defied God by turning back to see her city destroyed and turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). The Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years because of their disobedient hearts. God punished them by not allowing the first generation to enter the land but to die in the wilderness (Deut 1:19-35). One that willingly disobeys God is destined to dreadful consequences and death (Gen 2:16-17).

In this final section of the chapter, the passage of Hebrews 5:9 will be expounded to showcase that God's desire for man is to live out his image in total obedience to his word. Lastly, this section will show what is expected from Christ's followers and what implications are given to worship God through obedience.

Hebrew's core message is faith and obedience to Christ. Schreiner argues that these two elements of Christianity are inseparable and represent true worship and loyalty to God. Schreiner explains that the true reason for disobedience is a lack of trust in what God has said. He gives the example of the Israelites in the wilderness and how a whole generation did not enter the Promised Land (God's rest) because of their hardened hearts and lack of faith in God who delivered them from Egypt. Schreiner makes the comparison for those who entered the Promised Land as entering God's heavenly rest. In contrast, the generation that died in the wilderness is compared to those who will face God's judgment (because of disobedience).⁵¹ In other words, Schreiner explains that obedience cannot happen without faith. People can truly worship God because of their faith founded in Jesus, which results in worshipful obedience in sacrifice living.

Hebrews 11 narrates how people's faith was the catalyst that ignited their obedience. Hence, their obedience was counted as worship. Schreiner explains that Jesus

⁵¹ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 586.

is the supreme example of obedient faith because of his willingness to endure the cross. The Father was pleased with his Son, which was found obedient in every aspect of life.⁵² Schreiner states that “faith can rely on God’s future promises only because it is grounded in the work of Christ on the cross that has secured complete cleansing from sin.”⁵³ Because of what Christ has done, faith can and should be activated to obey God. Succinctly, faith is the essence behind obedience.

Hebrews 5:9 states, “And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” William L. Lane explains that *being made perfect* “announces the validation by God of the perfect obedience that Jesus rendered as the priestly representative of the people.”⁵⁴ Jesus was found perfect by his Father; his obedience was immaculate, and he never wavered on God’s instructions. Christ learned obedience through his suffering and death on the cross. Jesus did not cling to his divine nature but suffered obedience to the Father until death. It was because of the passion that Jesus experienced that qualified him as the eternal high priest, achieving salvation to humanity.⁵⁵

Mohler indicates that because of Jesus's complete obedience, he became a qualified and sufficient high priest when he endured the cross. In doing so, he gave full access to humanity to worship the Father. Mohler explains that because of Jesus’s sufferings, Christ now stands as the “basis for our salvation.”⁵⁶ This salvation offered by Christ is not for everyone but for those who obey Christ with their hearts and actions. In other words, following Christ needs to be sustained and validated by worshipful

⁵² Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 593.

⁵³ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 590.

⁵⁴ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, World Biblical Commentary, Vol. 47 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 122.

⁵⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 121.

⁵⁶ Mohler, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 76.

obedience. One's life that is being conformed to Christ's image is in the process of pursuing perfection to please the Father with his life (1 Pet 1:13-16).

Lane argues that people who now claim to follow Jesus must be willing to suffer as he did. Just as Jesus obeyed God to the point of death, those who are being conformed to Christ's image need the exact radical worshipful obedience that Jesus demonstrated on the cross.⁵⁷ Obeying God does not only mean going to church, singing songs, or being busy in ministry. It means a total commitment to being conformed to Christ's image, bearing good fruit, and living by faith in complete obedience to the Father (Matt 7:15-20). David Allen concludes by saying, "the key point here is that Christ's obedience is the basis for our obedience."⁵⁸ Moreover, this obedience, which led Jesus to the cross (Phil 2:8), is the reason humanity can obey, be found righteous before God, and bring glory to his name.

Worshipful Obedience

Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 12: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." This instruction is given to those who are being transformed into Christ's image. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, human bodies are essential and seen as reflections of God's image in man. Therefore, Paul is addressing people to present themselves in their entirety to God. Schreiner comments that "the word bodies here stresses that consecration to God involves the whole person."⁵⁹ The whole person alludes to the image of God in man now restored by Christ.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Samuel's rebuke to King Saul emphasizes

⁵⁷ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 122.

⁵⁸ Allen, *Hebrews*, 329.

⁵⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 644.

unquestionably what God truly requires for humanity—obedience over sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22). Paul does not contradict Samuel when he writes that those who are now being transformed into Christ’s likeness need to present their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1). Schreiner explains that living sacrifice cannot exist apart from holy and acceptable to God. He argues that the word living suggests being alive in Christ, hence continually obeying (worshipping) him. In practice, Scripture exhorts people always to rejoice, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess 5:16-18). These actions may seem illogical and unattainable for someone who is not conforming to Christ’s image, but it is vital when obeying Jesus’s teachings. Paul tells the Thessalonians that these are the actions that God wills for those who follow Christ. In other words, these acts of obedience simplify living a life of sacrificial worship unto God.

Schreiner concludes by saying that one who obeys God also needs to do it with his rationality (spiritual worship), “since God has been so merciful, failure to dedicate one’s life to him is the height of folly and irrationality.”⁶⁰ In other words, one who follows Christ (whose image is being progressively restored) needs to worship him with everything he is by obeying all Christ’s teachings, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to continue the restoration of God’s image in him.

Paul gives another instruction regarding obeying God. He writes: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom 12:2). Going back to the story of King Saul and Samuel, one can easily see that Saul sought ways to glorify himself and look important in the eyes of others. Saul’s heart conformed to this world and not God’s will, and his actions demonstrated that he wanted to approach (worship) God on his terms and not by what had been prescribed in Scripture. Paul reminds the Romans that the world will always pull towards a distorted image of God in man, creating confusion and chaos in one’s life. Christ’s followers are then to renew their

⁶⁰ Schreiner, *Romans*, 645.

thinking—an essential part of God’s image in man, to the conformity of Christ’s image in them. Paul addresses both body and mind as requirements to be renewed in God’s image. Both body and mind are to be transformed to worship Christ truly through a life of sacrificial worship, which in essence is worshipful obedience to Jesus, our creator, our savior, our God.

To summarize, faith and obedience are inseparable. One needs faith to enact worshipful obedience. One’s obedience to God can count as worship because of what Christ suffered and experienced on the cross. Those who are saved obey Jesus’s teachings because their image is being conformed to Christ. Obedience is demonstrated by living a life of sacrificial worship not bound to time, place, or emotions but by truth, faith, and devotion to God.

Conclusion

Every man, woman, and child is made in God’s image. Knowing and understanding this concept will help people recognize that humans are both creatures and persons called to live and fulfill the threefold relationships instructed in the Garden of Eden. There were three crucial points discussed in this chapter regarding the essence of true biblical worship. First, though humans carry God’s image and likeness, this image was distorted by sin and is in constant need of restoration. Jesus Christ is the only man that mirrors God’s perfect image and likeness. Because of Christ, God’s perfect image can be restored within them and live a life that would bring honor to the Father. Second, without the person of Jesus, true worship is not acceptable. Because of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, humanity has a bridge back to the Father, and God’s image can be restored in humanity again. Jesus is God in the flesh and was God’s ultimate revelation (perfect image) to humanity. Lastly, from Adam to John’s Revelation, people are expected to obey and fully commit to God. Not only through words but by living a life of sacrifice in worshipful obedience to God.

True biblical worship recognizes God as the only true God. It stresses the restoration of God's perfect image and likeness by the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross, consequently creating a desire for people to obey every command by offering their bodies as living sacrifices.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH A BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

It was concluded in the last chapter that every human being is created in God's image. As God's image-bearers, humanity represents God on earth to exercise his rule in the world in right relationship with him, one another, and all of creation. Lastly, because of sin, God's image in man was marred. Only through Jesus can God's image be restored, making a person whole and acceptable unto the Father again.

Christians need to acknowledge, understand, and internalize the truth that only through the blood of Jesus and his death and resurrection can one have access to the Father. Because of this fact, true worship can happen once again. God the Father has again called humanity (now through Jesus) to worship him. Not to worship in a static, heartless, and legalistic way, but in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Living a life of worshipful obedience to God can look daunting at times. The Bible has many passages that direct the believer in practical ways to carry out a righteous life before God. For example, James 1:19-20, Colossians 3:5, Philippians 4:8-9, Galatians 5:16-26. These and many other passages are examples that confront and call the believer to a higher standard of life—a life that would bring honor to God. Most Christians know what not to do, ignoring the specifics needed to mature in Christ. People are often confused when it comes to practical ways to worship God. In other words, to live a life that expresses daily worship.

Those whom Christ has redeemed will imitate Jesus's life and his ways. This chapter will discuss four characteristics (disciplines) that define a life driven by true worship. These disciplines are based on how Jesus worshiped the Father here on earth,

following the biblical worship pattern of revelation and response. Jesus worshiped the Father by being (1) devoted to Scripture, (2) devoted to prayer, (3) devoted to singing, and (4) loving one's neighbor as himself.

Romans 8:29 states that those redeemed by Christ's blood have been predestined to be conformed to the perfect image of God's Son. This perfect image will not be completely fulfilled until Christ returns and destroys the power of death and sin (Rev 21:4). Until then, a believer is called to follow Christ and his teachings, striving to conform to his perfect image. Succinctly, one is called to live a life of worship (spiritual disciplines) responding to God's revelation. This response is reflected in one's love and passion for Christ based on what God has revealed to his people in Scripture.

Donald S. Whitney writes that Scripture reading, prayer, meditation, and other spiritual disciplines—which are forms of worship—could be seen as a struggle for the believer that does not understand what he may become.¹ In other words, knowing what the future holds in Jesus, Scripture reading, prayer, singing, and loving one's neighbor as oneself should cause tremendous joy and gratification because one is conforming to Christ's image.

Lastly, it is essential to note that it is the third person of the Trinity who acts on one's behalf to want the things of God. Paul writes that it is because of God who works in one that a believer is willing to do what pleases God and not man (Phil 2:14). Whitney states that the Holy Spirit will cause one to have "*holy hungers*." These "*holy hungers*" result in doing things (practical worship) to get one closer to God.²

Scripture Reading as Worship

The word of God is powerful. The word of God produces life and can restore

¹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 2.

² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 3.

death into life (Gen 1:3; John 11:43-44). Psalm 119 is solely dedicated to praising God through his statutes. In other words, one can delight, meditate, and find guidance in God's law (Ps. 119:105). While some people consider rules and regulations problematic because it infringes on their debauchery, Christians must recognize and discern God's law as set boundaries to their benefit. The apostle Paul instructs Timothy that all Scripture is God-breathed—because of it—everything in the Bible can be used to teach, correct, and train other people in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).

It is vital for Christians to understand that when they open their Bibles, they read an inerrant document that is alive and active (Heb 4:12). The word of God does not need any help from any other source, it stands by itself, and it ultimately will last forever (Matt 24:35). One crucial aspect regarding the word of God is to acknowledge that Jesus is the Word that has always existed. The Son of God is the most special revelation from God to humanity. Jesus comes to earth as the Word of God to ultimately redeem people back to himself (John 1:1-5).

To worship God rightly, one must know what God requires and desires. That is why the importance of worshipping God through the lenses of Scripture. Ananias and Sapphira, Cain, King Saul, Judas Iscariot, Samson, and many others tried to worship God on their terms. The result of worshipping God without biblical truth is devastating and can lead to death—eternal death (Matt 25:31-46) and physical death (Lev 10:1-2; Acts 5:1-10).

In the book of *Doxology & Theology*, Michael Bleecker states: “Our biblical theology should inform and propel our doxology.”³ He explains that doxology needs to be driven by daily Scripture intake. One cannot be amazed by something that one does not know. When one diligently reads, meditates, and studies Scriptures, worship is one's

³ Matt Boswell, *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 54.

response because it resonates with the truths found in God’s word. Bleecker explains that feelings and emotions, expressions of outward worship, need to be tethered to Scripture. Furthermore, Scripture will act as a map instructing the worshiper not to do anything outside of what the Bible has stipulated.

A clear example is found in chapter 4 of John’s Gospel. In his book *The Ultimate Priority*, John MacArthur writes that the Samaritan woman had a twofold view on worship—Mount Gerizim and Jerusalem—both erroneous because her understanding of worship lacked truth. Therefore, Jesus told her that she worshiped that which she did not know (John 4:22). Succinctly, Samaritans did not have all the truth because they only considered the Pentateuch as the word of God, ignoring the other books of the Old Testament. MacArthur wants to convey that one cannot worship God with half-truths. Truth needs to be whole; it needs to be complete. In other words, Christians need—and benefit—from the entire canon to worship God rightly. The word of God will guide and teach people what to do to honor God with their lives.⁴

Bleecker suggests that physical expressions of worship must come from a sound understanding of Scripture commands. He lists the following: (1) singing (Ps 9:2); (2) standing (Isa 29:23); (3) shouting (Ps 71:23); (4) praying (Ps 5:3); (5) dancing (Ps 30:11); (6) sitting (2 Sam 7:18); (7) clapping (Ps 47:1); (8) laying prostrate (Matt 26:39); (9) lifting hands (Ps 134:2); (10) bowing low (Exod 34:8).⁵ Bleecker concludes, “Knowing deeply the riches of God should fuel our affections for God.”⁶ Truth must always accompany these expressions of worship, and none of these expressions should be led by emotions alone.

The gospel of Luke narrates the story of when young Jesus stayed behind in

⁴ John MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2012), 153-54.

⁵ Boswell, *Doxology & Theology*, 55.

⁶ Boswell, *Doxology & Theology*, 54.

Jerusalem to learn more about God. It is interesting how a boy of such young age could desire more of God's law in his life. The Bible says that Jesus was sitting among teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. Luke writes that everyone was astonished about the boy's understanding and answers he was giving to them. Jesus knew that in the Temple he could learn more about his Father. Jesus showed a deep, sincere, and passionate pursuit of the things of God.

Jesus was a fantastic teacher of the law. The Gospel of Luke states that when Jesus would teach in their synagogues, he would receive high compliments from the people (Luke 4:15). Jesus had to study God's word to interpret it rightly. When the scroll of Isaiah was given to Jesus, he knew what to look for and how to interpret the prophet's message. Jesus was able to announce himself as the fulfillment of that prophecy because he had studied the word of God (Luke 4:18-21).

Jesus used Scripture to fight temptation. Even though he was the Son of God and could have had other ways to deal with temptations, he decided to fight it by reciting and rightfully interpreting Scripture. In other words, Jesus used Scripture to counter the enemy's attacks (Matt 4:1-11). Scripture was the guide for the entire life of Jesus. He did not only live out the word of God, but he also wholly fulfilled the entire law (Matt 5:17).

In the *Treasury of David*, C. H. Spurgeon comments on Psalm 119:105 by comparing the world to a city. He explains that Christians are commanded to walk into the dark world (dark places in the city). He states: "Let us never venture there without the light-giving word, lest we slip with our feet."⁷ Spurgeon advocates that the word of God should be read habitually, practically, and personally to find direction. He suggests that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the word of God serves and acts as the most efficient guide for one's life. Spurgeon writes: "He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner

⁷ C.H Spurgeon, *Treasury of David* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 342.

or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp of night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness.”⁸

Spurgeon explains that those who are not guided by Scripture can experience doubt and hesitancy because of not knowing what to do. Nevertheless, those who are guided by the word of God find restfulness and peace of mind, knowing that their decisions are being made by the lamp that continually shines their path.⁹

Whitney writes: “No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God’s word.”¹⁰ Whitney explains that reading the Bible is exceptionally important because God presents the story of redemption through Jesus. In Scripture, one can learn about God’s love and purpose for humanity.¹¹ People can find these and many other topics concerning life in the word of God. When a Christian lacks Bible intake, these powerful truths could soon fade from his mind and heart, resulting in walking without light in a darkened world.

Whitney presents three subdisciplines concerning the word of God that can help one with his Scripture intake. First, hearing God’s word. Whitney explains that the most efficient way to do this is to faithfully attend your local church and hear the word of God by the preaching of your pastor. Jesus states in Luke 11 that blessed are those who not only hear the word of God but keep it (Luke 11:28). In other words, while it is essential to hear the word of God, the point of it all is to practice what it says. By keeping and living out the word of God, Whitney argues, one will develop a Christlikeness image.¹²

⁸ Spurgeon – *Treasury of David*, 342.

⁹ Spurgeon – *Treasury of David*, 342.

¹⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 22.

¹¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 22.

¹² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 23-24.

Second, one needs to read God’s word. While reminding people to read their Bibles may seem unnecessary, only two out of ten Christians read it every day.¹³ Paul advised Timothy to discipline (train) himself for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim 4:7). In other words, without discipline or training, one cannot achieve daily Bible reading. When Jesus fought his first temptation, his reply to the devil was that one shall live not only by bread alone but by every word that comes from God (Matt 4:4). Whitney argues that Jesus advocates for the reading of the whole Bible. Since God has inspired every written word in Scripture, it has the power to transform lives (Ps 119:116).¹⁴

Whitney argues for three practical suggestions to create consistency in Bible intake. He starts by suggesting that one simply needs to separate time. Separating a specific time during the day and being consistent with it is the first step to disciplining oneself to read God’s word. Whitney warns about reading small portions before bed since the body is tired and eager to rest.¹⁵

Secondly, Whitney suggests finding a Bible-reading plan for the scheduled time. In doing so, one is bound to its guidelines and the number of chapters to be read per day. The author also advocates finding a plan that includes variety—for example, finding a plan with books from the Old and New Testaments. If one decides to open his Bible randomly, he soon will be frustrated because there is no roadmap to follow. Or, if one tries to read the Bible in order, he could also feel discouraged when reading Leviticus and Numbers.¹⁶

Thirdly, Whitney states: “Find at least one word, phrase, or verse to meditate

¹³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 27.

¹⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 27-28.

¹⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 29.

¹⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 29.

on each time you read.”¹⁷ After separating time and choosing their reading plan, most people skip one of the most crucial parts of Bible intake—meditation. Through meditating on the word of God, it will help one remember and genuinely delight in Scripture. It could become mundane and chore-like if one closes his Bible after reading without meditating.¹⁸ Without proper meditation, the word of God cannot penetrate one’s heart and confront, teach, admonish, or comfort because the word is not being allowed to dwell within the reader. Whitney concludes that one’s understanding of Scripture grows deeper when meditation is exercised after reading God’s word.¹⁹

The last subdiscipline suggested by Whitney is studying God’s word. Studying Scripture takes time and effort, which is why people find it challenging to study the Bible. Many Christians are not willing to commit their time and hearts to study the word of God. Ezra 7:10 states: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” Whitney explains that before Ezra taught the word of God, he had to practice what he had learned. It is important to note that Ezra’s heart was involved in the decision to study God’s word. The significant difference between studying the word of God and reading it is to write down observations, questions, or keywords that have been highlighted in one’s reading. By doing so, one will start to dive deeper into Scripture, eventually searching for different resources to facilitate answers about context, languages, topical studies, and other tools to help understand God’s word more deeply.²⁰

In his book *A guide to Worship Ministry*, Gregory Brewton titled one of the chapters: *Being Above Reproach*. He lists eight guidelines that could help a minister

¹⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 30.

¹⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 30.

¹⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 30.

²⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 31-33.

practice righteous living. The first two guidelines Brewton mentions are (1) constant nourishment from Scripture and (2) separating time for prayer. The other six guidelines are tied to guarding one's heart and other different ministerial situations to avoid.²¹ Brewton notes the importance of having prayer and Bible intake as a must in a Christian walk, especially if one is a minister. Brewton concludes, "Ministers who do not spend daily time in the Word are already drifting."²² Brewton's conclusion is sobering and must be taken to heart.

The essence behind having a constant prayerful life and a daily intake of God's word is to be molded into the image of Christ. A person needs to hear, read, and study Scripture because only there one can find light, life, encouragement, peace, nourishment for the soul, and most importantly, the story of redemption—which is recorded in the whole Bible but emphasized with the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. By reading Scripture, one can foresee the glorious future in the New Jerusalem. While the world seeks fleshly pleasures and materialistic blessings, the word of God proclaims that true blessings come from obeying and delighting in God's law (Ps 119:1).

To conclude, Scripture is direct revelation from God to humanity. God has revealed and appointed Christ Jesus to be the Word of God in the flesh who serves as the cornerstone in redemption (Heb 1:1-2). Christ modeled the law with his perfect life bringing everything to completion (Matt 5:17). Lastly, Scripture's function is to inform one's doxology, fight temptation, and be a roadmap and light in the world.

When Scriptures are read or listened to by people, a proper worshipful response must occur. Constance Cherry writes: "The primary action during the service of the Word is revelation ... revealed truth will suggest needful responses."²³ After the

²¹ Gregory B. Brewton, *A Guide to Worship Ministry: The Worship Minister's Life and Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 36.

²² Brewton, *A Guide to Worship Ministry*, 36.

²³ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant*

people returned from exile in Babylon, they rebuilt the Temple, and during the dedication event, Ezra brought the book of the law written by Moses to be read aloud to all who were present (Neh 8:1). Cherry emphasizes that it was not only read but interpreted by priests.²⁴ This fact is crucial since it implies the need for capable Bible teachers within churches.

A similar event took place many years before but in a royal court. Ten years into his reign, King Josiah sent his secretary to the high priest regarding some money collected to repair the Temple. The high priest finds the book of the law and gives it to the king's secretary. When the secretary read the book of the law in the king's presence, Josiah tore his clothes. Josiah demonstrated humility and deep anguish in concern for what he had heard from the book of the law. In other words, King Josiah was responding to the word of God.

Josiah's response was not only of sorrow but also of righteous concern for sin. Josiah (like Ezra) gathered leaders, priests, and people from Jerusalem to listen to the book of the law. The king renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD, that is, to follow his commands. After listening to the word of God, all the people also pledged to the covenant (2 Kgs 23:1-3). King Josiah made sure the people of Jerusalem would follow this covenant, so he ordered anything idolatrous to be destroyed and thrown away (2 Kgs 23:4-24).

It is not enough to read or listen to Scripture. One needs to respond in a worshipful manner to the revelatory word of God. Cherry argues that Scriptures are informational, but that cannot ultimately be its purpose. Cherry concludes, "Hearing a direct message from God shapes us, altering our viewpoints, our way of looking at God's

and Biblically Faithful Services (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 70.

²⁴ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 70.

kingdom and our world.”²⁵ The purpose of Scripture is then to form people into the image of Christ by correcting, reproofing, and training people in righteousness, as seen in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Prayer as Worship

True worship happens when a person puts God first in his life, acknowledging that worship needs to occur outside of church and be reflected in his everyday life by seeking first his kingdom.²⁶ Worship must go beyond specific times and spaces because it involves a person’s heart responding to God’s revelation. One’s worship must precede a revelation from the Father. Therefore, the following three disciplines will flow from the word of God. One’s worship, as seen above, must be guided by Scripture, so does prayer, which can be seen as worshipful communication with God.

Prayer is another way to respond to God, a way for humanity to communicate with its Creator. The Bible is replete with prayers that moved God’s heart to act according to his perfect will. Elijah prayed a simple prayer, and fire came down from heaven and consumed the altar and its sacrifice (1 Kgs 18:36-37). Hannah prayed in anguish to the Lord, and he responded to her plea (1 Sam 1:11). When Daniel prayed to God, his prayer was answered right away, but (because of spiritual opposition) it took twenty-one days for him to get confirmation from God (Dan 10:9). Praying to God is an act of submission in response to who He is and what He has done for one.

To worship God in prayer is to mimic what Jesus did during his ministry years (Luke 5:16). Prayer is an essential discipline for any Christian that wants to know God better. However, as seen in the examples above, people’s prayers need to be driven by pure hearts. In a call against worldliness, James warns the believers their prayers are not

²⁵ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 70.

²⁶ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 45.

being answered because of their wrong motives (James 4:3). Jeremiah warned people that hearts are deceitful and sick (Jer 17:9). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to scrutinize one's heart before approaching God in prayer.

Timothy Keller explains that prayer is often seen in two categories—“Kingdom-prayer and Communion-prayer.” Kingdom Prayer emphasizes the will of God in man, not looking to dwell in God's presence necessarily but to align oneself to God's purposes. On the other hand, Communion Prayer focuses primarily on being one with God and his presence—to experience peace and “oneness with God.”²⁷ Keller advocates that when a person prays, he needs to converse and encounter God. Moreover, he states that both are necessary; both are required. When a Christian prays, he opens the door to worship the Father. Through prayer, people can approach the God of the universe because Jesus acts and is the ultimate High Priest (Heb 4:14).

Like any discipline, prayer needs to be practiced regularly to become an innate part of a believer's daily worship. The most prominent example of a powerful prayer life is found in Christ. Throughout the four gospels, Jesus is intrinsically described, as seen in Luke 6:12, Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, and Matthew 26:36, as a man who valued personal time with God. Jesus not only spoke to God through prayer, but he also listened to his Father speak to him. While the Bible presents evidence of God's audible voice (Matt. 4:16-17; 17:5-6; John 12:27-30), it is not the norm when it comes to praying to God. Listening is a big part of praying. If one only asks without stopping to hear God's voice for direction, prayer could take a different approach that could misinterpret the real purpose of prayer. Kenneth N. Taylor writes the following regarding listening to God's voice in prayer: “Since there is no voice of God speaking in the room, you need to learn how he speaks in the silence of your heart and mind. I believe this takes practice and

²⁷ Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 2-4.

experience.”²⁸ Listening to God’s voice in prayer requires stillness (Ps 37:7) and wisdom; both are given by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17).

Although prayer could be categorized as a conversation, the Bible teaches much more than that. Puritan minister Matthew Henry (1662-1714) proposed a method for prayer. He outlined prayer in the following order: (1) adoration, (2) confession, (3) petition, (4) thanksgiving, (5) intercession, and (6) conclusion.²⁹ Henry explains that this prayer formula should not be taken as a rigidly prescribed and unbendable method. He was aware that more than following a sequence or method while praying, he argued that a person’s heart and mind would dictate the pureness of her prayer.³⁰

Keller presents four crucial points that, he argues, can help judge the pureness of one’s prayer. He starts by explaining what prayer is. First, the author writes that prayer is a duty and a discipline combined. The author does not ignore the rigorous effort needed to commit to daily prayer. He insists that one must seek to pray whether he may feel like it or not (James 5:13). Keller explains that prayer must be seen as an urgent matter (Matt 26:41) and as a discipline ordered by Christ (Matt 6:7). Finally, he argues that prayer must be persevering and striving.³¹

Second, prayer is a gift of God to humanity. Keller explains that Adam had full access to God by walking with him. They surely talked and fellowship with each other (Gen 3:8). After sin entered the world, these dialogues with God ceased to exist. In other words, direct conversations with God were no more. Humanity could not enjoy the benefits of fellowship with the Father until Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension.

²⁸ Kenneth N. Taylor, *How to Grow: First Steps for New Christians* (Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson, 1985), 55.

²⁹ Matthew D. Haste and Shane W. Parker, *The Pastor’s Life: Practical Wisdom from The Puritans* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 68.

³⁰ Haste and Parker, *The Pastor’s Life*, 69.

³¹ Keller, *Prayer*, 121-122.

Because of Christ, one can approach God through prayer in petitions, thanksgiving, and praise (Phil 4:6).³²

Keller explains prayer as a dialogue in two forms: (1) subjective discernment and (2) Scriptural. Subjective discernment argues Keller, are the impressions one feels after spending time with the Father. God speaks to one's heart while the person meditates in stillness and humbleness. The other approach is to hear God's word by reading it. In other words, praying can be transformed into a reading session, where the Holy Spirit starts to direct and convict one's heart to righteousness living.³³

Following Matthew Henry's prayer method, and the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew chapter 6, Keller states that prayer is a balanced interaction of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and petition.³⁴ R. Albert Mohler explains that the Lord's Prayer is focused on God and not on one's needs. It is all about God's coming kingdom and his perfect will done on earth. Lastly, Mohler concludes that when people pray, they should not think about their comfort but in God's glory.³⁵ Prayer then becomes a way to exalt God and seek his will more than temporary earthly things.

Mohler makes a clear connection with the Lord's Prayer and doxologies. He explains that the Early Church later added the doxology found at the end of the Lord's Prayer. Mohler presents a parallel in 1 Chronicles 29:11 and Matthew chapter six. He also directs the reader to the Psalms and how some start in deep anguish but ends in worship. Lastly, The Didache has a version of the Lord's Prayer on which it ends in doxology. Mohler argues that the Lord's Prayer should make one praise God for his

³² Keller, *Prayer*, 123.

³³ Keller, *Prayer*, 123.

³⁴ Keller, *Prayer*, 124.

³⁵ R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Prayer that Turns the World Upside Down: The Lord's Prayer as a Manifesto for Revolution* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2018), 44.

forgiveness, provision, and deliverance. Mohler states that a believer's response to God should be of gratefulness expressed in doxology because of these truths.³⁶ Mohler concludes: "Indeed, the doxology perfectly and succinctly sums up the character of God as revealed in the Lord's Prayer and does so in the posture of praise."³⁷

To conclude this second section of the paper, one should also know about the perils of not having a prayerful life. Puritan minister John Preston (1587-1628) argues that one should pray twice a day—in the morning and night. This suggestion is given based on 1 Thessalonians 5:17—pray without ceasing.³⁸ People face many obstacles throughout the day that could hinder them from praying. These hindrances could be caused by stress, burnout, sadness, joyful emotions, and other factors that pertain to everyday life events. Preston shares three central areas that hinder prayer: (1) worldly cares and worldly-mindedness; (2) ignorance of the nature of God; (3) the sins one commits.³⁹

Haste and Park argue and provides a more straightforward yet truthful and profound response to these difficulties—inconsistency. There needs to be a resolution to pray, to dedicate oneself to be disciplined through prayer. Haste states that one must take on a pattern of daily, formal scheduling of prayer.⁴⁰ Succinctly, prayer needs to be part of one's daily routine, and it needs to be planned out and put into practice.

Finally, prayer should be seen as a proper way to respond to God in reverence and adoration to his revelation. The words uttered by the apostle Thomas when he encountered the resurrected Christ were: "My Lord, and my God" (John 20:28). This

³⁶ Mohler, *The Prayer that Turns the World Upside Down*, 114-115.

³⁷ Mohler, *The Prayer that Turns the World Upside Down*, 116.

³⁸ Haste and Parker, *The Pastor's Life*, 71.

³⁹ Haste and Parker, *The Pastor's Life*, 72.

⁴⁰ Haste and Parker, *The Pastor's Life*, 73.

brief prayer is filled with exaltation and recognition of Jesus's lordship. Thomas doubted and had trouble believing what the other disciples were telling him about Jesus being raised from the dead. However, when Thomas too experienced the miraculous revelation of seeing Jesus in his glorified body, not only did he express worship in response to such glorious revelation by Christ, but he believed.

Singing as Worship

Psalm 96:1-2 states: "Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day." Many people are unaware that singing is not optional but commanded and ordained by God. Keith Getty even argues that one disobeys God if he decides not to sing.⁴¹ The book of Psalms does not suggest nor propose but directs one to sing. The Psalms are viewed as the voice of the church. The Psalter is also considered the hymnal of the Old Testament since its songs are part of Jewish ceremonies and festivals.⁴² Some Christians only gravitate towards the Psalms to find instruction about praise and adoration. However, the New Testament also promotes singing as a requirement for believers who want to follow and be more like Christ (Acts 16:24; 1 Cor 14:15).

The apostle Paul writes to the Colossians that the word of Christ must dwell in one richly by teaching and admonishing each other in wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16). It is interesting that Paul refers to the psalms first and then to hymns and spiritual songs. Donald P. Hustad writes that psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs can be seen as three distinct genres of music.⁴³

⁴¹ Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, *Sing: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville: B&H, 2017), 13.

⁴² Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music: A Textbook, a Reference, a History, an Essay* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 23.

⁴³ Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1993), 146.

Hustad explains that Psalms are referenced as the ancient Old Testament songs and canticles of Israel in a psalmodic style (strophic). Hymns are songs with a robust Messianic emphasis. In other words, Jesus is the central figure in these songs, presenting and exalting Christ as the Son of God. Lastly, spiritual songs, argues Hustad, are more difficult to explain. He writes that “spiritual songs” may have various connotations—one being towards “breath” or “spirit” since *pneuma* is used for both terms. Hustad also explains that “pneumatic odes” or “spiritual songs” may refer to songs without words, melismatic arrangements, songs of jubilee, or spontaneous songs burst out of spiritual tongues.⁴⁴

The vital message by the apostle Paul found in the verse above is that singing must be exercised for the benefit of the church to grow deeper in the word of Christ. A parallel verse in reference to singing is Ephesians 5:18-20. Paul writes: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is crucial to note that in both verses Paul mentions the word “thankfulness” and “heart.”

Daniel Block writes that both Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:16 are key in understanding the purpose of why Christians sing. Block lists the blessings found when one sings: (1) Provides evidence that one is filled by the Holy Spirit; (2) promotes community and fellowship; (3) expresses thanksgiving; and (4) when music is made with a thankful heart, it brings honor and glorifies God.⁴⁵ Singing, then, must go beyond one’s musical ability and taste, and it must stem from a righteous and humble heart,

⁴⁴ Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 146-48.

⁴⁵ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 232.

understanding that one's voice ultimately belongs to God.

While worship cannot—and should not—be entirely attached to singing, one can find in Scripture outbursts of praise channeled through music in response to God's acts of salvation. The first reference of using music to praise God is found in Exodus 15 when Miriam led all the women in dance and congregational singing alongside Moses. This praise episode was in response to Pharaoh's army being thrown into the Red Sea by the mighty hand of God. The Israelites finally felt saved and freed from the bondage of slavery. God had redeemed his people in a powerful act of salvation. Because of this magnificent act of redemption, the people of Israel could praise and sing to their God.

Getty writes, "Thankfulness is more than saying the words with your lips ... deeply felt thankfulness produces a sound from our voices that is robust and enthusiastic ... how we sing does reveal how we think and feel about something."⁴⁶ God's mighty acts of salvation will result in praise and singing from his people. A more extraordinary act of salvation is found in the person of Christ. God became a man and lived among people to redeem humanity back to the Father. Jesus fulfilled his supreme act of salvation on the cross. With his death, Christ conquered sin and death (John 11:25-26); with his resurrection, he opened a way to the Father (John 14:6); and with his ascension, he demonstrated that he reigns at the right side of the Father (Acts 7:56) and that he will return for his church (Rev 22:12-13).

Constance Cherry titles Christ's redemptive act on the cross as *The Christ Event*. She writes: "The Christ Event now drives worship, for the object of our worship is Jesus Christ, the content of our worship is the story of Jesus Christ, the word proclaimed in Christian worship is the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ... Christian worship, like Hebrew worship, is born out of God's saving action toward his people."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, *Sing*, 18.

⁴⁷ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 8.

Christ is the ultimate reason to sing. God’s act of salvation through Christ unites the church in songs of pure thankfulness.

Though one may understand and sing songs to Jesus, his song is nothing but empty praise if done without the right attitude of the heart. God does not delight when singing is done without a humbled heart. Bob Kauflin writes that every Christian battles idolatry in one way or another. Kauflin explains, “We love our idols because we think they’ll provide the joy that comes from God alone.”⁴⁸ Almost anything can become an idol. For musicians, talent can become dangerous if it is not seen as a gift from God. When one begins to rely on his musical ability, the songs he sings will soon become hollowed because a rightful act of submission before the Lord is not there anymore. Furthermore, one’s voice could become an idol, erroneously thinking that the better the performance, the better the church or people can praise God.

In the book of 1 Samuel, God selects David to be the next king over Israel because he had found a man with a worshipful humbled heart—a heart after God’s own. God has seen the condition of the heart from the beginning. When Cain and Abel brought their offering to God, only Abel’s was regarded. The author of Hebrews simply states that God accepted Abel’s offering because God viewed Abel as a man with a righteous and humbled heart (Heb 11:4). The essence of this passage is the condition of Cain’s heart and the unwillingness to change and offer a gift to God with a humbled heart. Block writes that the author of Genesis suggests that the real problem with Cain was himself, not the actual offering brought before the Lord.⁴⁹

Only two passages found in Scripture directly relate to Jesus singing. These passages are found in Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26. Both verses state the following:

⁴⁸ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 21.

⁴⁹ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 60-61.

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” These verses reference what took place after the Lord’s Supper. Most scholars agree that the sung hymn was one or more of the Egyptian Hallel psalms, comprised of chapters 113-118.⁵⁰ More than singing a hymn, what needs attention is to understand the purpose of why they decided to sing. The ordinance of The Lord’s Supper was taking place at that moment. In response to the fellowship initiated by Jesus at the table, Christ decides to respond in song with his disciples. In other words, the response to the first Lord’s Supper was a congregational hymn led by Jesus. While singing this hymn was a custom within the Jewish tradition, Jesus had given this Passover an entirely new meaning. As the lamp of God, Jesus’s body is seen as the bread of life (John 6:35), and wine represents his blood which has redemption power over sin (Eph 1:7).

In conclusion, based on the passages presented at the beginning of this section, a person must sing because it is commanded by Scripture. If one follows Paul’s directions, one ought to sing God’s word to grow deeper in the knowledge of Christ. The final instruction is to be thankful and to do it with a humbled heart. Nothing done without love means anything to God (1 Cor 13:1-13). One’s singing must come from the knowledge that he has been redeemed by Christ’s act of salvation on the cross. With this understanding, thankfulness will overflow from one’s heart, which results in praise and singing to Jesus Christ.

In his book *Worship by the Book*, D.A. Carson states that even if the music-making is centered on sound doctrine and revelation of Scripture and God, it is not by itself authentic worship. The author explains that music-making becomes actual worship when everything one does becomes an act of worship (Col. 3:23). Secondly, when one’s heart and hands are genuinely connected to the Creator, his song resonates with praise.

⁵⁰ Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 143.

And lastly, corporate singing is not for the delight of the worship leader. It is the sound of the church expressing its gratefulness unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁵¹

Loving One's Neighbor as Himself as Worship

Humans were created to enjoy relationships. These relationships are crucial to following and conforming to Christ's image. First, God created man to enjoy a relationship with the Father. Second, God created man to enjoy relationship with his neighbor. And finally, God created man to enjoy creation. Before going any further, some connections need to be made regarding the image of man, his purpose on earth, and the spiritual disciplines previously discussed.

One can truly connect to the Father and have a sincere relationship with him by prayer and knowing his word. Prayer will connect one to the Creator, and in Scripture, one will find God's statutes and purpose for his life. Through prayer and Scripture, one hears God; hence, proper communication is established, and conformity to Christ's image can develop. The combination of devoted prayer and Scripture intake is vital to growing in relationship with God.

The third discipline discussed above concerns worship and the command to sing to the Lord. While this discipline may not be directly linked to spiritual maturity, it is highly dependent on one's heart condition. Singing goes both ways. One can minister to God with his song and minister to his neighbor. When the church participates in worshipful singing, it creates vertical and horizontal praise that blesses God and his church, as seen in Colossians 3:16, but ultimately is judged by God. God sees the heart and examines man's true motives. Furthermore, singing acts as a neighborly relationship, accomplishing God's mandate to relate to one's neighbor.

The final point in this chapter is about loving one's neighbor. Many people

⁵¹ D. A. Carson, Mark Ashton, R. Kent Hughes and Timothy J. Keller, *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 192.

who want to conform to Christ's image do not find much trouble praying or reading their Bible but loving their neighbor. Scripture is concerned with laws that apply to man and God, but also with man to man. The Decalogue's first five laws are directly connected to one's relationship with God, while the last five are concerned with the relationships with his neighbor.⁵²

Jesus showed love, compassion, grace, and mercy toward those who approached him. Jesus was more concerned about people than rules. The Pharisees were the opposite of what Jesus represented. They would follow all the laws but ignore people's needs (Matt 23:23). Mark L. Strauss explains that Pharisees had two goals: (1) Apply and live out Torah's law daily; and (2) protect their law against any possible transgression.⁵³ Pharisees were good students of the law but lacked understanding of practicing it because their hearts were far from God (John 3:9-10).

The Gospel of Luke narrates the parable about the Pharisee and a tax collector. Before going into the actual story, Luke explains that Jesus told this parable because leaders treated others with contempt (Luke 18:9). In the parable, the Pharisee prays an extravagant prayer of self-righteousness. The Pharisee lists his worshipful acts, which he thinks are accepted by God. In contrast, the tax collector shows great remorse and humility in his meek prayer. Jesus concludes that the tax collector's prayer was accepted and justified by God. The Pharisee's mistake was looking down upon his neighbor and trusting in his daily devotions and righteousness.

One may follow a strict prayer and Bible reading schedule. One may praise God by singing all the songs at church. However, if one does not love his neighbor, one's worship is vain. Leviticus 19:17 states: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart,

⁵² Phil Ryken, *Loving the Way Jesus Loves* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012), 25.

⁵³ Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 132.

but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” God expects his people to love and do good to each other’s neighbors. Jesus reminds people that God is more concerned with one’s relationships than bringing gifts to the altar. (Matt 5:23-24).

When a teacher of the Law asked Jesus about the greatest commandment, he recited the *Shema*, which is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. After loving God, Jesus told the people that one’s love needs to be projected to others. The commandments given by Jesus fit perfectly with the true meaning and real purpose in man’s life. While receiving love is imperative, one fulfills God’s greatest command when love is expressed to God first and then to one’s neighbor. Jesus is the most excellent example in this matter.

God’s design for honest and loving relationships is evident for societies to flourish and function well. The way a child is raised by their parents or guardians will impact the rest of her life. Leo Buscaglia, the author of *Loving Each Other*, states, “In childhood, if we are denied loving encounters with human beings, we wither, fall into psychosis, idiocy, or die. As adults we continue to depend upon our interactions in togetherness for our greater joys and our most significant growth.”⁵⁴ Buscaglia bases his book on a study he performed on 600 people looking to identify the most essential qualities in relationships. Three qualities made it top three: (1) Communication; (2) Affection; (3) Compassion/Forgiveness. On the other hand, Buscaglia also asked for the most destructive qualities in any relationship: (1) Lack of communication; (2) Selfishness/Unforgiven; (3) Dishonesty.⁵⁵ The author explains that for all relationships to grow closer and more robust, the essential qualities must be present and active in one’s

⁵⁴ Leo Buscaglia, *Loving Each Other: The Challenge of Human Relationships* (Thorofare, New Jersey: SLACK, 1984), 25.

⁵⁵ Buscaglia, *Loving Each Other*, 36-37.

behavior and will.

Another way in which the first three essential qualities could be perceived is in serving your neighbor. While not all interactions with people end in actual relationships, serving is loving those around you. Jesus states in Matthew 20:28, “Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus never sought attention for himself or commanded people to serve him. On the contrary, Jesus was always concerned about others and their wellbeing. Jesus served people in many ways. He served many by healing (John 9:6), having mercy and compassion (Mark 6:34), befriending (John 15:15), and ultimately dying for them (John 15:13). Jesus would take the time to explain his teachings in more detail (communicate) with his disciples. He also showed affection by caring for their needs—especially when the disciples were in imminent danger (Mark 4:39-40). Lastly, Jesus demonstrated compassion and forgiveness to many people, even undeserving people like the Samaritan and Syrophenician women (John 4:39-42; Mark 7:28-29).

Serving others does not come easily. Whitney writes that when one serves another outside of the purpose of godliness, one serves himself. One’s acts of service must spring from the love for God and others. Whitney explains that the Holy Spirit should help people evoke more acts of kindness towards their neighbors in pursuit of Christlikeness. However, becoming like Jesus contradicts the desire of the flesh, which leans towards selfishness. For this reason, Whitney argues, serving too should become a discipline.⁵⁶

Like singing, serving is not an option but is expected of every Christian. Whitney argues that there are six motives one should have to serve one another. First, one should serve others out of obedience to God. People show obedience to God by serving others (Deut 13:4). Secondly, one is motivated to serve his neighbor because of

⁵⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 143-144.

gratefulness. God is good, and his mercies motivate others to serve people with grateful hearts (Ps 126:3). Thirdly, one must serve people understanding that it should be done with gladness (Ps 100:2). Knowing that Christians are considered children of God, one must acknowledge that when one serves his neighbor, he is helping a son or a daughter of a King. In other words, serving others should not be seen as a burden but a privilege.⁵⁷

Fourthly, guilt should not be the driving force to serve others. Whitney argues that the forgiveness of sins must provoke one's serving. In Isaiah chapter 6, the prophet experienced an exuberant worshipful event that ended in the redemption of his sins. Afterward, the prophet found himself ready to serve God (Isa 6). Fifthly, hypocritical servants serve to gain recognition. God calls people to serve him and others in humility. Serving others to achieve something in exchange is considered a sin and must be rejected by the believer. When serving, one needs to consider his neighbor as more significant than oneself (Phil 2:3). In doing so, one can indeed start to serve in humility.

Lastly, love must be the engine that motivates one to serve others. Paul writes in Corinthians 13 about what pure and godly love should look like. Most people take this chapter to be only read on weddings. Phil Ryken states the following about the chapter: "When Paul wrote about love in chapter 13, he was not trying to give people something nice to read at weddings ... The 'Love Chapter' is not for lovers, primarily, but for all the loveless people in the church who think that their way of serving God is better than everyone else's."⁵⁸ Unfortunately, most people lack love for God and others, which shows how they treat their neighbors. Ryken concludes by writing that 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is humanly unattainable, only God can offer such love, and he did in Christ. Ryken also argues that The Love Chapter should be seen as a standard for all Christians

⁵⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 144-147.

⁵⁸ Phil Ryken, *Loving the Way Jesus Loves* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012), 19.

who want to be more like Christ. This standard will only be met when one hungers for more of the love of Jesus in constant pursuit of his image and likeness.⁵⁹

Conclusion

In this chapter, attention has been given to the spiritual disciplines of Scripture intake, prayer, singing, and loving one's neighbor. As discussed in chapter 2, people were created to have a relationship with the Father, each other, and creation. Based on this understanding, once a person has accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior, these relationships can be restored. In the process of sanctification, or becoming more like Christ, people must devote themselves to reading, hearing, and meditating on God's word.

Scripture will serve as a guide and light for a believer to not wander in this world. Through Scripture, God reveals his plans to humanity, giving people peace in knowing that God's sovereignty reigns over everything and everyone. Prayer and Scripture reading must be put into one's schedule to be effective. Thus, the reference as disciplines. Finally, out of God's special revelation of Scripture, the discipline of prayer, singing, and loving people flows as the proper response to the revelation of God to humanity.

One can also worship God through prayer in response to his revelation. One can grow in a deeper and mature relationship with God by praying, conforming to Christlikeness. As a result, Block writes: "Through prayer, one expresses submission and homage to God and relinquishes control of his affairs."⁶⁰ Through the worshipful act of prayer, one responds to God in humility, knowing that He is the author of life and death, and no matter the circumstance, He is worthy of all praise.

⁵⁹ Ryken, *Loving the Way Jesus Loves*, 18.

⁶⁰ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 216.

Singing is to be seen as a command by God, and it must come from the heart and be done with thankfulness. While various musical terms and genres were not introduced nor discussed, the essence of singing is found to serve as a tool to encourage other brothers and sisters to grow in Christ's word. Also, it is a natural response of humans to God's gracious acts of salvation. Singing, said John Calvin, is just another way to pray to our Lord.⁶¹

None of the above disciplines could be done without the help of the Holy Spirit. Through God's love, he invites believers to dive deeper into knowing him. In this wondrous love of Christ, one can begin to love others and serve them. Loving one's neighbor is at the epicenter of God's commands to be conformed to the image of Christ. Nothing would make sense in one's Christian walk without God's love. Without God's love, people could not pray and relate to their Father. Without God's love, one would not hunger to hear or read more of his word. Without God's love, praising Jesus through music and singing would mean nothing. Without God's love, one cannot even start to love another human being. Everything good comes from God, and in this love, we have a way to relate to him, his creation, and the people he created.

⁶¹ Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music: A Textbook, a Reference, a History, an Essay* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 155-56.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter describes the different phases of implementing the six-week curriculum in the theology of biblical worship in the context of student ministry at Eastside Praise Church. The project aimed to develop and equip students in biblical worship at EPC to become better leaders for future ministry. This ministry project had three main goals: (1) to assess the current knowledge and practices of what biblical worship signifies for the students, (2) to develop a six-week curriculum on the biblical theology of worship, and (3) to equip the students to gain a proper understanding, to get into habits, and live lives according to Scriptural truths about worship as discussed in the curriculum sessions. The implementation of the project began on April 13, 2022 and continued to June 8, 2022.

Overview

The act of worship is one that was established with the threefold relationships given from the beginning by God to humanity. Worship, then, is God’s invention, not man’s. Worship satisfies people’s spiritual hunger because it is what they were made to do.¹ However, the way to worship God must be according to his ways. In other words, one’s worship must be theologically sound to be acceptable unto God.

When worship is seen as a human invention, one may miss the critical key component of biblical worship—people’s response to God’s mighty acts of salvation.

¹ Benjamin K. Forest, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and Vernon M. Whaley, *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 19.

While some acknowledge that humanity was created to worship God, they may ignore the logic behind the above premise. Biblical worship affirms God as the initiator and sole creator of worship. God acts in creating man; man responds in worship. God delivers Israel from bondage; thus, the nation responds in worship. God sent his Son to redeem humanity. Therefore, those atoned by Christ's blood; must respond in worship by conforming to Christ's image.

Assessment

The planning for the six-week curriculum began in February 2022. The survey and the initial lesson plans were created in conjunction with the Foundations of Teaching seminar, and the weekly meetings with the EPC students. Informal research prior to the official survey was performed by asking students about biblical worship. These questions were mainly asked during their youth service on Wednesday nights. Based on the students' answers, their foundation of worship was scripturally sound but with ample space to learn other theological truths regarding biblical worship.

The official survey designed to obtain data from the students was created while taking the Applied Empirical Research seminar. The survey was peer-reviewed by three doctoral students along with Joseph Harrod—professor of the seminar—who gave the approval to be utilized in the project. The survey consisted of three parts, (1) general information questions, (2) questions regarding matters of biblical worship, and (3) twelve survey items.

After the survey was created, the ethics forms were evaluated and approved on April 14, 2022. That same week, students and parents were notified through a promotional graphic, text, and email that a six-week curriculum on biblical worship would take place on Wednesday nights starting on April 27, 2022.

Parents were notified via email to sign the agreement to participate in the project before completing the online pre-survey. Once their parent or guardian had signed

their forms, each student was asked to complete the online form before the first session. By doing so, the first goal of the project was accomplished. Thirteen people filled out and completed the pre-surveys. Out of the thirteen entries, three were adult youth leaders who were given the opportunity to participate in the six-week worship sessions along with the students.

The next step was to create each lesson based on what had been written in chapters two and three of the project and consider what students had answered in the surveys. The curriculum lesson plan was sent to an expert panel, who unanimously approved the curriculum's content and biblical accuracy. After adding the panel's comments and considerations to the lessons, the curriculum was ready to be taught to the students.

Curriculum Development

Students were instructed to bring a notebook and pen to take notes during the sessions to set a different atmosphere and tone for the six-week curriculum. In doing so, students would retain more of the material taught, which would also help them in the future.

Week One

Every session started with a question to tie in with the topics and concepts discussed during the night's session. In week one, students were introduced to the importance of worship and why it matters to God. The session addressed erroneous definitions of what biblical worship could mean. Then, I proceeded to introduce a concise definition written by David Peterson in his book *Engaging with God*. This definition created the foundation to explain three critical principles of biblical worship. First, biblical worship reflects on God and not on man; second, biblical worship acknowledges that God initiates worship and not man; and third, worship grounded on God is eternal.

The overall session focused on giving God his rightful place in worship. It was

established then that biblical worship flows from God and never from people. The people's part is to respond to God's initiative to move and reveal himself to the world.

Finally, fundamental differences were explained between the old and new covenants regarding one's way to worship. The interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman was used to conclude and demonstrate that people are not bound to a location to worship truthfully. Christ has opened a pathway to the Father because of his work on the cross.

Week Two

The second session had a minor setback. The church experienced a rise in COVID-19 cases on the first Sunday of May. Because of this situation, the lead pastor decided not to have an in-person service that week. This decision was made on Wednesday, May 4; thus, the second session had to be conducted through an online video conference. Most students were able to connect and attend the session, but a few could not make it.

The second week focused on the theology of worship by explaining why people worship. After the initial question and brief discussion between the students, it was established that the image of God in humanity plays a crucial role in how and why people worship. While it was no surprise for the students to know that human beings are created in God's image, the connection between worship and the image of God needed further clarification.

Three fundamental concepts of biblical worship are interwoven with God's image. First, biblical worship is inherent to being made in the image of God. Second, biblical worship is possible because Christ lived and perfectly represented God's image. Finally, one reflects God's image when he lives a life pursuing Christlikeness. The students learned that the purpose of God's image in people is to represent him on earth. Because of sin, God's perfect image was marred until Christ lived and accomplished

what Adam could not (1 Cor 15:21-23).

Lastly, as seen in the narrative of the first chapters of Genesis, students were taught that God created Adam with three essential functions: (1) to have a relationship with God, (2) with his wife (one's neighbor), and (3) creation. These relational mandates are the bedrock of a sound theology of worship. Man's relation with God must go first above anything else. One can also notice the same impression in the Decalogue (Exod 20:3-4). One's relationship with God must likewise flow in love for his neighbor. God is concerned with how one treats and cares for people; this is also a form of biblical worship that is clearly stated throughout Scripture (Rom 13:8).

Lastly, God wants to see humanity flourish as it relates to creation. The concept of the cultural mandate was introduced to the students and discussed as the obligation to care for the earth and foster human creativity (arts and sciences) to bring glory to God ultimately. God wants humanity to worship him through these facets of human characteristics. God clearly does not want people to start worshiping their accomplishments, as seen in Genesis 11 with the tower of Babel.

Week Three

After going over the basics of biblical worship and its theological implications concerning God and his three relation mandates, students were now ready to discuss the centrality of Christ in one's worship.

Students were asked to read Genesis 3:15 and briefly comment on the significance of the verse. It was concluded that this verse serves as the first indication of the coming Messiah to redeem humanity from sin. In other words, they learned that sin caused God's image to be distorted in humanity, and it needed divine intervention to be restored. Other Scripture passages that pointed to Christ were looked at and briefly discussed to show God's plan to restore his image in people again.

The supremacy of Christ was shown by the following Scripture passages: 2

Samuel 7:15-16 and Hebrews 1:1-3. When the prophet Nathan told King David that his kingdom would never end, he implicitly referred to Christ as the one who would reign forever. A king whose kingdom never ends will receive never-ending praise and honor. Secondly, Jesus not only reigns forever but is equal to God, as seen in the first chapter of Hebrews. When the students read this passage, they comprehended that Jesus shone God's glory while on earth. Furthermore, Christ flawlessly walked according to God's law representing the Father and fulfilling all the relational mandates perfectly. Students understood that Jesus was the perfect candidate to die as the ultimate sacrifice for people's sins to be redeemed and for God's perfect image to be restored to humanity.

Students learned that one's worship is biblical and acceptable because of the person of Christ. Because of Jesus' perfect sacrifice, authentic worship and God's perfect image in humanity can be restored once again. Finally, it was concluded that one must not only recognize Christ's supremacy and divinity but obey his commands.

Week Four

The topics discussed in the last three sessions focused on practical matters. In week four, the overarching topic was obedience and the responsibility one has in worshipping God through it. The session started by reviewing the Psalms and realizing that Scripture does not suggest worshipping God but mandates it. The contrast was made between creation and humanity—creation worships the one true God, as seen in Psalms 19:1. Nevertheless, most people opt to worship idols (Rom 1:20-23).

Those whom Christ's blood has redeemed must worship God and show his love through obeying his word. Passages like Matthew 7:24 and James 1:22 were briefly expounded to corroborate the point of obedience. Obedience then indicates being the fruit of a changed heart. Jesus stated in the gospel of John that all who loved him would do as he commands (John 14:23). In other words, those who do not obey Christ are simply not conforming to his image, hence, not worshipping him biblically.

Two final key Bible verses were presented to the students to show them the importance of obedience. First, Hebrews 5:9 explains that Jesus is the High Priest who became the source of eternal salvation to those who obey him. It was clear for the students to see that Jesus's salvation is offered to those who profess and live a life of total allegiance to God; consequently, complete obedience to him is expected. Finally, Paul writes in Romans 12:11 that one should present his body as a living sacrifice of worship. Paul exhorts believers to live sacrificial obedience, rejoicing when trials come, loving enemies, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in persecution. Even by today's standards, these sacrifices may seem irrational, but not to those who obey Christ to conform more to his perfect image.

Week Five

In weeks five and six, the spiritual disciplines related to biblical worship were addressed. The final last sessions addressed two spiritual disciplines to instruct on how to live a life of worship. Week five covered biblical worship through Scripture intake and prayer.

The session began by directing the students' attention to 2 Timothy 3:16. This verse confirmed Scripture as God's special revelation to humanity. Understanding the concept of seeing God's word as his special revelation, students' minds can be open to acknowledging that God has communicated his purpose and future for humanity. Through the Bible, one can know about creation, God's plan of redemption, and the future hope of eternal life with God or in utter damnation. It is through Scripture that one needs to base and understand what God requires to be approached and worshipped. In other words, Scripture is the foundation for living out true worship.

After going over a few verses that suggest various forms of outward worship expression, it was concluded that emotions must never supersede biblical truth. Again, one's worship must be directed by what Scripture teaches. Furthermore, biblical

examples were given to convey what happens when one approaches God on his terms, not considering its consequences. In other words, by reading more Scripture, one can be better equipped to worship God because he will know what He requires.

Lastly, the students were given three essential points to ponder regarding Scripture. First, Scripture is used to fight temptation. Like Jesus in the wilderness, one should also use Scripture to fight the enemy's tactics (Matt 4:1-11). Second, reading God's word to find guidance in life. Students were instructed not to look for complex life situations. For example, finding the proper boyfriend or girlfriend or choosing the right major in college, but for spiritual guidance and wisdom (Ps 119:105). Third, the Bible is the only book that reveals the real purpose of humanity. The word of God reveals and responds to the question of why people exist. Students learned that no other book could respond to one's ultimate purpose in life but the word of God.

To conclude the section on Scripture intake, the students were advised to separate a specific time during the day to read and meditate on God's word. Otherwise, picking up the Bible would be seen as dreadful and hard to do.

The second topic examined that night was prayer. As with Scripture reading, prayer time must also be set aside to get engrained in one's day-to-day activity. Prayer was introduced to the students as another way to respond in worship to God. Prayer is worshipful communication with God as the person shows humbleness by not relying upon his plans but on God.

The students were taught that prayer matters because it moves the heart of God and activates faith and the supernatural. Fascinating miracles are recorded in Scripture after righteous prayers (1 Kgs 18:16-45; 1 Sam 1:10-17; Jonah 2). To worship God biblically, one needs to pray kingdom and communion prayers. This concept helps to differentiate between prayers that are more focused on self and other prayers that are

concerned about what Christ is doing through his Church.²

Jesus is the ultimate example of someone with a tremendous prayerful lifestyle. Jesus's ministry was anchored in the word of God and prayer (Luke 5:16). Jesus valued personal time with his Father. Besides spending quality time talking to Him, he would also listen to Him speak. Students understood that Jesus had a close connection to the Father because of his prayer life.

Finally, a prayer template was given to the students to facilitate their time in prayer. This template was written by the puritan minister Matthew Henry as seen in the book *The Pastor's Life* authored by Matthew Haste and Shane Parker. His points are the following: (1) adoration; (2) confession; (3) petition; (4) thanksgiving; (5) intercession; and (6) conclusion.³

Week Six

In the final session of the curriculum, the topics of music and loving one's neighbor were presented. The first part of the session focused on the act of singing and the importance of worshiping God from a sincere heart.

The session started by posing the question of why Christians ought to sing. In searching for a biblical answer to the previous question, students read part of the narrative when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea while Pharaoh chased them down (Exod 14:15-28). Exodus 15 describes the proper and most excellent response to this marvelous act from God—bursting in song of praise. God's people had witnessed and experienced deliverance from bondage hence their thankful song was in consequence of God's mighty act of salvation. Furthermore, those who have experienced redemption from sin because of Christ's blood should also sing to God as a worshipful response to their savior.

² Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 2-4.

³ Matthew D. Haste and Shane W. Parker, *The Pastor's Life: Practical Wisdom from The Puritans* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 69.

Another point taught about the importance of singing was related to Cain and Abel. The Bible narrates that only Abel's offering was accepted, making Cain very angry to the point of killing his brother. This story was used to show the students that when one brings his worship (singing, acting, dancing, painting, or any other artistic talent) to God, he is more concerned with that person's heart than the actual talent. Cain's offering was not accepted because of Cain's character. When he brought his offering before God, his heart was not in the right place, so his worship was not accepted (Gen 4:5-6).

On the other hand, Hebrews 11:4 states that Abel was a righteous man, so his offering was accepted before the Lord. Some may sing beautifully and attract others with their talents, but God is after the heart, for from it flows life (Prov 4:23). Students were reminded that worship starts with God and not with one's talent or musical gift.

The last topic discussed during week six was loving one's neighbor as oneself. This command is usually perceived to be instructed only in the New Testament, but students learned that from the beginning of creation, God instructed humanity to love each other (Gen 2:21-23). God is a relational God, and he is also very concerned about people's relationships with each other. A key Bible verse used to explain God's concern with neighbor relationships was Leviticus 19:17-19. This verse plainly states not to hate one's brother, to not take vengeance, or even bear a grudge against him. Finally, it states to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Jesus talked much about loving one's neighbor and established that the greatest commandment is to love God and one's neighbor as oneself. In other words, if one prays every day, reads Scripture, tithes, and does many other good things but hates or is holding a grudge against his brother, this person is not conforming to Christ's image; hence his worship is not being accepted.

Finally, those who genuinely love their neighbors will show it in acts of service. It is not sufficient to say that one loves his neighbor if love is not practiced. Loving one's neighbor means serving and caring for his needs. Through the Holy Spirit,

one can be empowered to love like Jesus loved others. 1 Corinthians 13 is a chapter that speaks about sacrificial love. This kind of love is not to be only seen from a married couple's perspective but from a relationship between brothers and sisters in Christ and even those who do not know God.

In conclusion, in all six sessions, students were taught that biblical worship extends beyond music and outward expressions of praise. True biblical worship acknowledges God as the initiator of worship, the sole creator and giver of life. Biblical worship is rooted in God's image in humanity, as found in the three relational mandates in Genesis. Biblical worship is recognizing Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of one's worship because of his sacrifice and priestly status. Finally, biblical worship is lived out daily as a continual sacrifice in response to God while striving to imitate Christ's perfect image.

Evaluation

After the six weekly sessions were finished, students were instructed to fill out the post-survey no later than a week after their final session. Initially, three youth leaders and ten students filled out the pre-survey, but only two youth leaders and eight students completed the post-survey. One youth leader could only attend one session, and the other two students, who missed more than four sessions, were asked not to complete the post-survey. In total, eight students and two youth leaders turned in their pre-survey and post-surveys. The online forms asked for everyone to generate a pin number to match both surveys to study the data. Finally, in the post-survey, there were two added questions. One was regarding attendance, and the other one asked to write one or two concepts learned during the sessions that would help them become a genuine worshiper of God.

There were three main goals stated in chapter 1. The first one was to assess the student's knowledge of biblical worship. This goal was successfully met when eight students completed their pre-survey. The second goal was to create a six-week

curriculum aimed at students in a biblical theology of worship. This goal was successfully met when the expert panel verified the curriculum by evaluating its biblical fidelity, methodology, scope, and applicability in a youth class setting. The third and final goal was successfully met when the teaching sessions on biblical worship took place from April 27 through June 1. After the final session, the post-tests were completed only by those who complied with the required attendance and due dates in filling out the online surveys.

The following chapter will explore an in-depth look at these results, evaluation of the project, and the impact the curriculum had on all those who participated.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT AND CONCLUSION

This project's final chapter will evaluate its purpose, goals, and success. It will also reflect on the project's strengths and weaknesses encountered during the process. Lastly, I will offer a brief conclusion based on what God has taught me during this rigorous process of writing the project and teaching about the theology of worship.

Project's Purpose

The primary purpose of this project was to equip students of Eastside Praise Church, located in Louisville, Kentucky, in biblical worship. This purpose stemmed from a discipleship heart to help the students see worship from a biblical lens. Though six Wednesday nights is not enough time to cover everything about worship, the idea of equipping the youth in biblical worship was to foster a biblical, theologically sound understanding of the reason for one's existence. By getting the fundamentals of worship, students will be better equipped to face worldly challenges. Moreover, those who feel called to ministry will find it extremely necessary to understand biblical worship and put it into practice, which is ultimately the final goal.

The Bible teaches about worship and its importance, but it does not provide a concise definition. The following statements point to the centrality and extent of the purpose of this project. First, worship starts with God (Gen 1:1). Second, God is worthy of everyone's worship, for He alone created the universe and everything in it (Rev 4:11). Third, one's worship needs to be anchored in Christ to be acceptable (Heb 6:19-20). Lastly, one's future in Christ is one of never-ending worship with him in heaven (Rev 5:11-12).

Project's Goals

The project had three main goals: (1) to assess the student's understanding of biblical worship, (2) to develop a six-week curriculum with a biblical theology of worship, and (3) to teach the students and equip them with a solid understanding of a biblical theology of worship.

Goal 1

The project's first goal was to assess the students' understanding of biblical worship. Youth meetings are conducted every Wednesday night for at least an hour. These meetings are special times where students are confronted with truth and disciplined to be more like Christ.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, although ten students filled out the pre-survey, only eight completed all the sessions. These eight students were then instructed to fill out the post-survey. Additionally, two youth leaders participated in the curriculum filling both pre- and post-surveys correspondently.

I have been the Youth Pastor for Eastside Praise Ministry Center for almost three years. Since then, I have endeavored to teach, in some way or another, biblical worship. Based on the students' pre-survey answers about worship, they responded with good biblical insight. For example, in the second part of the pre-survey, a question asks to describe biblical worship. Student 1123E responded with the following statement:

“Biblical worship is a manifestation of the need we feel to respond to God's love. It is performed in various ways, be it music, service, etc., and is done from the heart out of our own free will. We are also called to worship directly by God and to do so to our best ability.”

Student 0129C responded to the same question by stating the following:

“Biblical worship is about giving praise to God and thanking Him for how great He is. It is about recognizing His authority and goodness.” Both answers show a good understanding of biblical worship and what Scripture teaches. While not every response

was as articulate as the ones written above, most answers related biblical worship with thankfulness, sincere heart, and praise.

On the other hand, students showed a lack of understanding of the centrality of Jesus regarding worship. The results below clearly show little comprehension students had of the importance of Christ in their worship. Half the students disagreed that Jesus is needed to worship God. At the same time, only four students agreed on Christ’s work to worship the Father biblically.

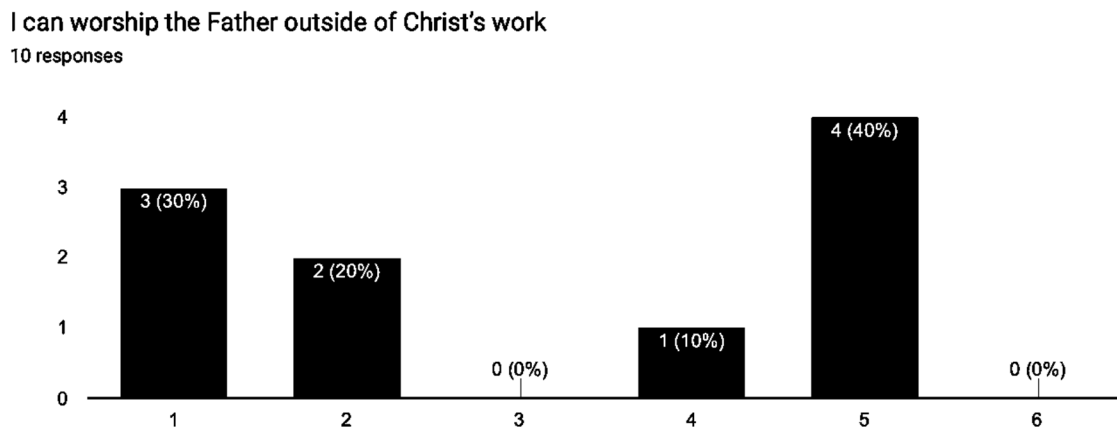


Figure 1. EPC youth pre-survey results on Christ’s work

While students consent to Jesus as their savior who died on the cross for people, the survey showed that most of them did not fully understand the supremacy of Christ and how his death renewed access back to the Father.

A new concept concerning the theology of worship was the image of God. While most students have heard that all people are created in God’s image, they have never heard about a connection between God’s image and one’s worship. The table below shows the inconsistency of answers related to the statement of one’s ability to worship

based on God’s image in people. The randomness of their answers may suggest the topic’s ignorance and theological connection to worship.

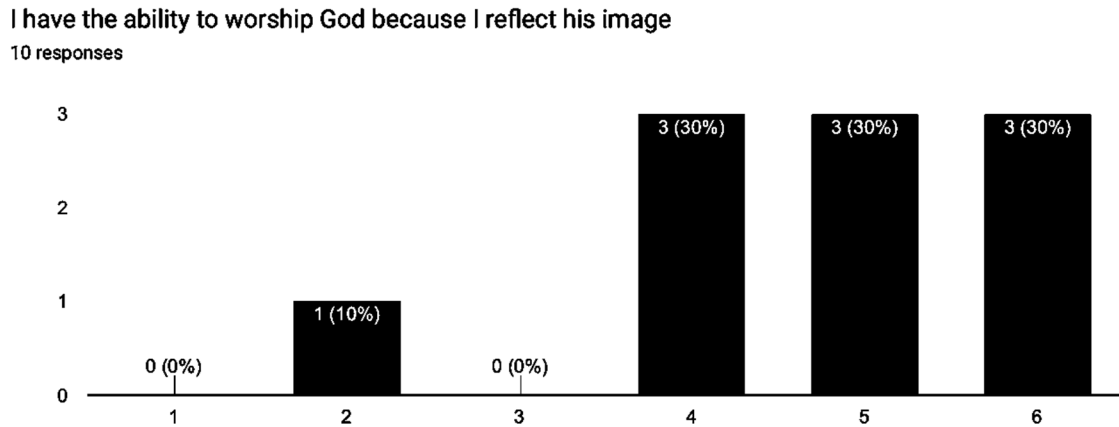


Figure 2. EPC youth pre-survey results on God’s image

While learning about the theology of biblical worship is of utmost importance, knowing what to do with the information is as valuable. In the following table, the students showed a lack of connection between one’s worship and loving their neighbors. Only one student strongly agreed with this premise. It was evident that the students needed to fully understand the importance of genuinely loving one’s neighbor for their offerings to be accepted (Matt. 5:24).

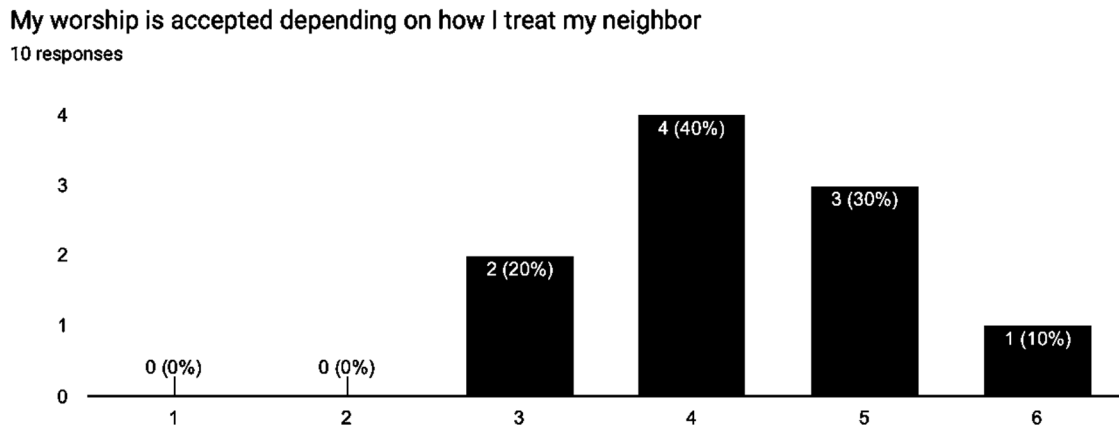


Figure 3. EPC youth pre-survey results on treating one’s neighbor

Goal 2

The second goal of the project was to develop a six-week curriculum on a biblical theology of worship. The foundation of the material used to create the curriculum is based on what was written in the second and third chapters of this project. The assessment results obtained through the pre-survey were also considered in writing part of the six-week session curriculum as it was closer to the scheduled teaching dates. The curriculum sessions were thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter of the project. While initially intended to be an eight-week curriculum, based on time and the project’s audience, the curriculum was condensed to six weeks. In doing so, the topics of Bible intake and prayer were combined, as with singing and loving’s one neighbor.

Throughout the sessions, the students asked questions that were not entirely related to theology or philosophy but practical situations. For example, some of their questions were about different ways and times to pray, how many chapters per day one should read, and how often one should fast. Also, some were questions about evangelism and outward expressions of worship in church settings. Although these topics were not

exclusively part of the curriculum sessions, these were genuine concerns students had about the subjects taught throughout the curriculum.

Before moving into the project's third goal and showing the post-survey data, I want to share a few answers about the curriculum's impression on the students who participated. In the post-survey, a new question was added to gauge the impact of the taught sessions on the students. The question was the following: "Please write 1 or 2 concepts (truths) that you have learned during the past six sessions on Biblical Worship. How will these concepts help you become a genuine worshipper of God?"

I will be sharing three answers. The first one comes from 0122J, a youth leader who answered the following: "Worship is a discipline. It's not necessarily something that we always want to do, but it's a requirement if you want a close personal relationship with God. It's a need to survive spiritually, and not disciplining yourself in this area will leave you spiritually malnourished."¹ Her answer did not come from a specific topic discussed in the sessions, but it shows the reality of biblical worship. A person cannot solely base one's worship on feelings. Worship is striving to be more like Christ while taking up one's cross daily (Luke 9:23). Succinctly, worship is sacrificial (Rom 12:1).

Secondly, student 0122M wrote, "If there is no action, then you aren't following Christ. And you cannot obey God without faith." These are significant observations with solid biblical truth. One speaks about obedience, and the other about faith, which is the axis of that obedience. In other words, this student understood that his worship depends on his obedience to Christ, and this obedience must be acted in faith (James 2:20-26).

Thirdly, student 0311S replied: "One is that we are created in the image of God, and I need to show that to others. Two is that when I come to worship God, it's because God is telling me to." This student's reply focuses on the theology of worship.

¹ The two youth leaders are identified based on their given DOB answers in their surveys.

First, she writes that she needs to show others that she is created in the image of God. This statement is biblically accurate since it speaks about one’s sanctification process in becoming more like Christ. Also, it implies that she now understands that as a child of God, she must represent God on earth (2 Cor 5:20). Finally, she denotes the truth that worship is God’s invention. The people’s part is to respond and participate in God’s divine invitation.

Goal 3

The project’s third goal was to focus on equipping the students to obtain the understanding, to get into habits (put into practice, James 1:22-25), and live (living sacrifices, Rom 12:1) their lives according to biblical worship by teaching the six-week curriculum. This goal was deemed successful after running a t-test for dependent samples demonstrating a significant positive difference in the pre-and post-survey results.

Table 1. T-test results for dependent samples

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	<i>Pre-Test Total</i>	<i>Post-Test-Total</i>
Mean	50.3	54.9
Variance	22.67777778	28.76666667
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.706042741	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-3.709462981	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002424505	
t Critical one-tail	1.833112933	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00484901	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157163	

The table above shows the t-test results for dependent samples given to 8 students and two youth leaders, showing a significant positive change in their

understanding of the biblical theology of worship: $t_{(9)} = -3.709, p < .0002$.

My main concern in teaching the curriculum was for students to understand three main aspects of biblical worship: (1) God’s image in humanity as the innate gift to worship, (2) Christ as the cornerstone of true worship, (3) worship is practical obedience to Christ’s teachings. I will present three more tables demonstrating significant positive changes concerning the above list.

First, figure 2 shows that in the pre-survey, only three students selected “strongly agree” as their understanding of one’s ability to worship as being dependent on God’s image. Figure 4 shows that two additional students marked “strongly agree” as their answer in the post-test to the same item statement.

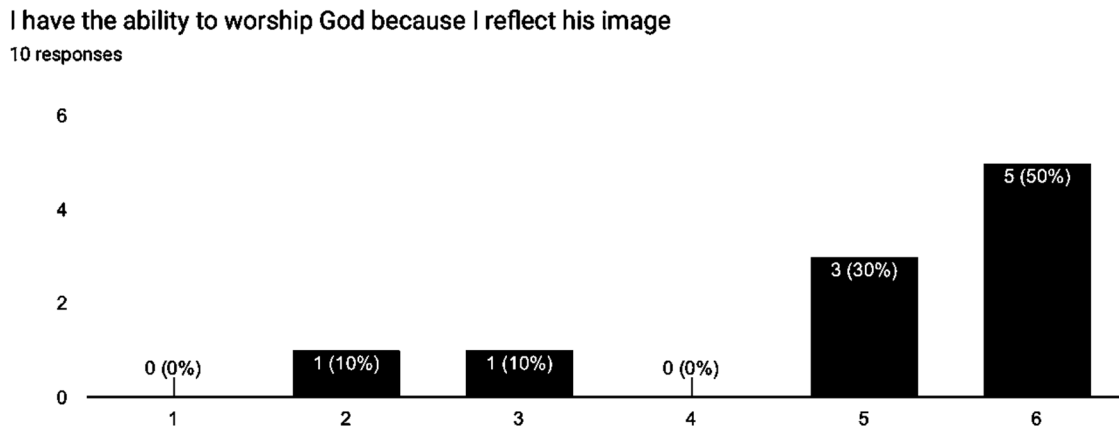


Figure 4. EPC youth post-survey results on God’s image

It is essential to note the complexity of the topic discussed with teenagers. I am sure that some of them were still unsure about some of the items presented when taking the post-survey. However, half of the students grasped the notion of God’s image as very

important in one's understanding of biblical worship.

Second, Jesus Christ is the promised blessing of God to humanity through the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18). It is critical to understand Jesus not only as one's Lord and Savior but as the mediator of one's worship. As seen in table 1, four students agreed with the premise of worshipping the Father outside of Christ's work. Below, one can see that five students understood that one's worship is unbiblical if it is not through the person of Christ. Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, people can now have access to God again. If it was not for Jesus's work, Paul says that our worship would be in vain (1 Cor 15:14). Christ is worthy of all praise and adoration, just as the Father. In other words, Jesus was the executed plan of God, as seen in Genesis 3:15.

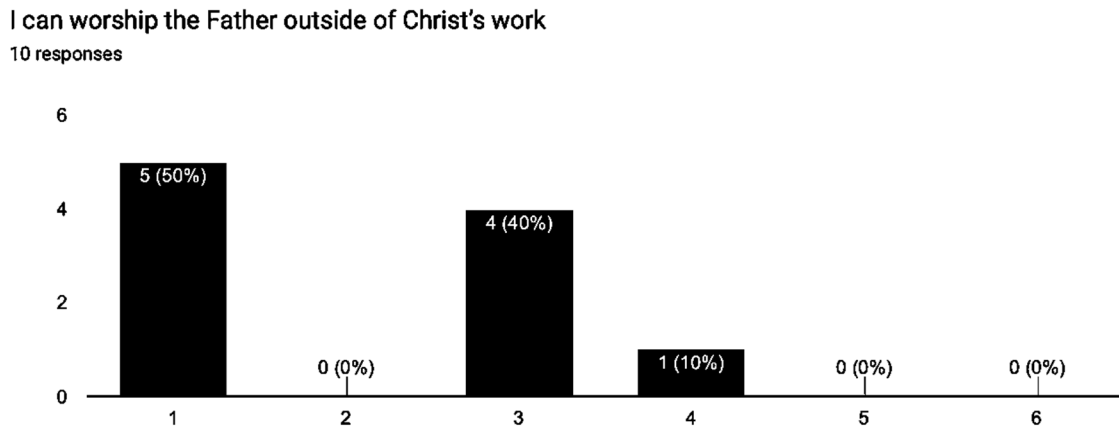


Figure 5. EPC youth post-survey results on Christ's work

Third, one's obedience is essential to worship God biblically. The students had already shown a good understanding of this matter, as seen in table 7. People cannot worship God solely with their lips and expect their worship to be accepted (Matt. 15:8). In other words, obedience is worship in action. Additionally, table 8 shows an increase of

1 student to “strongly agree” as obedience being evidence of biblical worship. While this increase may seem minimal, it was a great reward to witness how the students were getting a better grasp of what true biblical worship signifies.

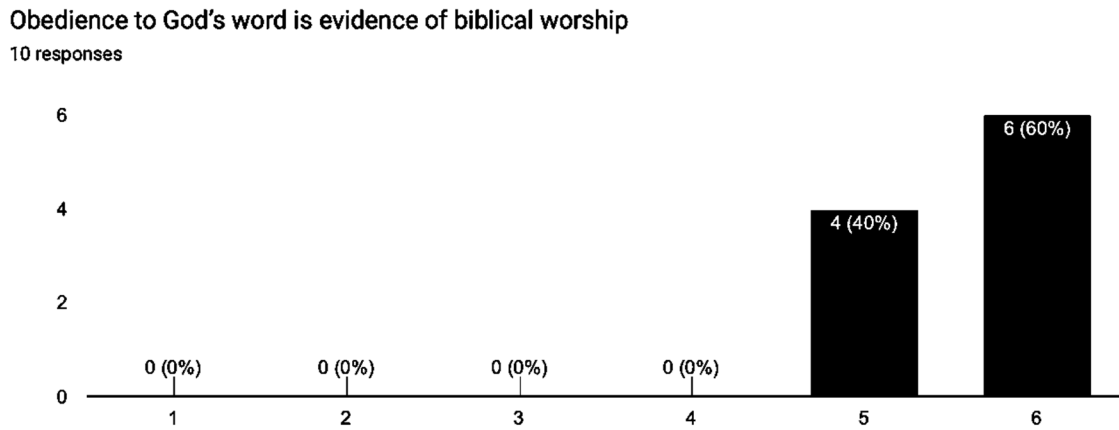


Figure 6. EPC youth pre-survey results on obedience

Obedience to God's word is evidence of biblical worship

10 responses

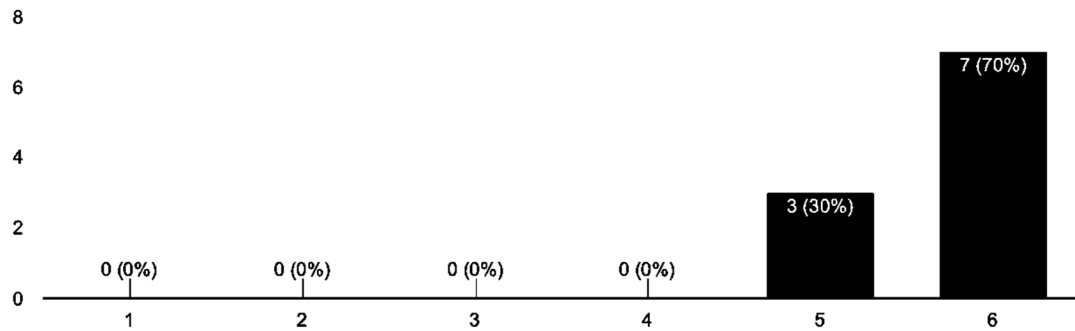


Figure 7. EPC youth post-survey results on obedience

Strengths of the Project

There were several strengths identified in the project. It is essential to note the strong alignment of the word of God with the project's purpose. In ministry, no one can be fully equipped without Scripture. The purpose of teaching the six-week curriculum was to disciple students in understanding the theology of biblical worship. Thus, Scripture was utilized as the project's core to accomplish this purpose. In other words, students learned that worship could not be understood outside of God's word. Furthermore, students learned that God's word is powerful since, through it, (1) the world was created (Gen 1:3), (2) his Son became flesh (John 1:14), and (3) it will never cease to exist (Matt 24:35). Succinctly worship is dependent on God's word.

A second strength identified was the extensive elaboration on the topic of worship throughout the project. I do not pretend to have wholly deflected the students' minds to stop seeing worship solely as a music-making exercise. Since one can worship while creating music, the issue stands in understanding the difference. While many people somewhat comprehend that music-making does not entirely equal worshipping God per se, some would not be able to articulate why. The students who participated could

perceive the depths of worship that go beyond the surface of music and praise. As Harold Best puts it: “God created in us the capability for understanding that we are authenticated in him, not in what we do.”² In other words, this project served the students in understanding what biblical worship is and is not.

Thirdly, this project helped address a deficiency in understanding of biblical worship. Apart from the positive results of the t-test for dependent samples, students have shown greater interest in the topic of worship. In the last few weeks, some students who participated in the curriculum were invited to attend an informal seminar about worship leading. The topics discussed leaned more practical than spiritual, but the enthusiasm was evident as they prepared for a student-led Sunday Service. Three of the eight students who participated in the curriculum led songs and put into practice what was discussed in the seminar.

The six-week curriculum’s sessions served as truth anchors that equipped students in the theology of biblical worship and practical obedience to Christ. Furthermore, God has blessed the youth ministry with deep hunger for His presence. After some students attended a regional youth camp, they seemed more concerned about fasting, praying, and living godly lives. While there is no evidence of the curriculum’s tangible impact on the students’ spiritual life, I have seen a noticeable change in students wanting to live as worship offerings before God.

Weaknesses of the Project

The first weakness of the project was combining two big topics in one session. The last four sessions of the curriculum followed the same method, making the sessions too dense for students to assimilate. The fifth session was on prayer and Bible intake. As explained above, these topics (and the following) needed to be combined in six sessions

² Harold M. Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: HarperCollings, 1993), 14.

instead of eight. The last session was on singing and loving one's neighbor. This session's topics were challenging to transition since their themes were intrinsically distinct. Shifting from music to loving one's neighbor felt somewhat abrupt, leaving little space to answer their questions.

The second weakness of the project was mixing middle and high-school students in all the sessions. High school students were more conversational and asked better theological questions than middle schoolers. Furthermore, middle school students showed little to no interest in topics like the image of God and Jesus as the High Priest. These topics were taught as lectures making it hard for some students to focus on the discussed issues.

Lastly, my biggest regret and most significant weakness of the project was not providing an outlet for the students to practice what they had learned during the curriculum. After I had finished teaching all the sessions, I thought it would have been an immense benefit for all the students to work on planning a student worship service. In the service, students would have to lead and design a service based on what they learned and present opening statements, prayers, songs, and Scripture passages that support their understanding of the theology of biblical worship.

In finding these weaknesses, one can continue to grow as a leader and discipler. While the most prominent tool a minister has is his godly example and influence on others, perfecting a curriculum to help students comprehend biblical truths about worship is also a way to honor God. All one does should be counted as worship since he does it as if it is done to the Father (Col 3:23).

What Would I Do Differently

During each phase of the process of researching, writing, and implementing the project, there are a few things I would have done differently. First, I would have devoted much more time to developing a better comprehensive survey. While the survey was

intended to be understood by minors, there could have been other helpful topics—obeying one’s parents, sincerity in one’s relationships, and servanthood, that would have served them better in their current life stage. The project’s survey had a few items that confused some students in its interpretation. While survey questions were good, they could have also been better articulated to provoke better answers.

Second, while some biblical history was explained during the first curriculum sessions, the students lacked a sufficient comprehension of Christian worship history. The students would have been better equipped if some topics relating to worship history had been discussed. While not essential, knowing some Christian worship history would have given them another layer of appreciation of what the Church has gone through over the centuries. Next time, I will prepare a few articles for students to read before coming to each session.

Finally, the most prominent element of change I would embark on doing is related to weakness number three, as discussed above. I missed an excellent opportunity for students to express their learning by planning and executing a worship service. The service would have been presented as a final group assessment to identify their comprehension of biblical worship.

Amid the project, it is harder to see its deficiencies, but recognizing them can lead to spiritual and academic growth. If God gives me another opportunity to conduct this project, I will take the above suggestions to enhance the students’ experience and knowledge of biblical worship.

Theological Reflections

People are what they want. Their wants become what they love, and what they love eventually becomes what they worship. Author James K.A. Smith explains that when Jesus asked John’s disciples, “What do you want,” he focused his attention on their hearts, not their intellect or belief (John 1:38). Smith states: “We are what we want. Our

wants and longings, and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow. Our wants reverberate from our heart, the epicenter of the human person.”³ In other words, one worships what he wants. Worship is humanly inescapable; if one desires something, she is already responding in worship to that desire by wanting it. The problem with today’s evangelical worship environment is plagued by many worldly wants which overpower the sound theological meaning of true biblical worship.

The antidote to lies is to fight them with the truth. That is why I was inclined to teach and equip the youth ministry on biblical worship from the beginning of this project. While I function as both Worship and Youth Pastor, I devoted my curriculum teachings exclusively on the youth. My reasons for this decision are simple, (1) the need to invest in the next generation of ministers (leaders), and (2) a young heart is more malleable and teachable than one of the adults. God’s word commands those in leadership to train up children in the way they should go (Prov 22:6). Also, Moses instructs the Israelites to teach God’s decrees to their children so they may fear the Lord. (Deut 6:1-2). By teaching biblical worship to my youth group, they will grow up in the fear of the Lord, understanding that worship is more than any song they can sing, or feeling they may experience.

Humans worship because they reflect God’s image. Humans worship because they are the creature, not the creator. While one can end up worshiping himself, any worship that is not directed to God ends in futility and death (Rev 20:15). Understanding the theology of biblical worship reveals man’s ultimate purpose—to worship God. Knowing this purpose, he will gladly conform to Christ’s image and follow his teachings as it points directly and perfectly to the Father.

³ James K.A Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 2.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Wainwright reminds people about man’s most vibrant purpose with eschatological weight by asking the first question found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1646-48): “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” The author supports the answer by directing the reader to Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 10:31, and Psalm 73:25-28.⁴ Finally, the theology of biblical worship could be summarized in the following statement: “The essence of humanity is not found in autonomy, but in right relation to our Creator.”⁵

Personal Reflections

In the early winter of 2018, God spoke to my heart to go back to school. I was serving as a Worship Pastor in an inner-city church in Phoenix, Arizona. My family and I were doing well. We were in the middle of figuring out a plan to purchase our first home. While it had been in my heart to complete a doctoral degree, I did not know how, when, or even where I would do it. Through many series of events, God guided me to come to Louisville, KY and embark on three full-time years of doctoral study work while also serving as a pastor at EPC.

During the process—especially the first year—things were too blurry to see the end. Worry, tiredness, discouragement, and other negative factors pushed strongly against one’s finish line. Today, I can say that my God has been faithful, he has sustained and provided everything for me, my wife, and our three boys to keep moving forward toward God’s plan in our lives. I am deeply grateful to my pastors: Michael Smith and Chris Smith. They have supported me to strive for excellence and achieve this degree for the glory of God.

My understanding of the theology of biblical worship has deepened and greatly

⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 17.

⁵ Benjamin K. Forest, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and Vernon M. Whaley, *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 40.

improved. I want to thank the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, its excellent faculty, and my supervisor Dr. Chase Sears, who helped me become a better writer, thinker, and theologian. I intend to continue to impart this knowledge to others as I seek to grow even stronger in the knowledge of the Lord.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to equip students in biblical worship. After writing chapters 2 and 3 on the theological and practical aspects of the theology of biblical worship, a curriculum was taught in line with the guidelines found in the curriculum evaluation tool used by the expert panel. After the six-week curriculum sessions, a t-test for dependent samples was conducted to extrapolate data from the pre- and post-surveys. The results of the t-test showed a significant improvement in the students' ability to understand biblical worship.

This project explored the topic of worship in alignment with Scripture. All three original goals were successfully met and completed by God's grace. All praise, honor, and glory be forever to our king, Jesus.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL WORSHIP ASSESSMENT

This survey was utilized to assess the knowledge of students of EPC in biblical worship. The survey was given to the students one week before the six-week curriculum course began and again one week after they finished the mentioned curriculum.

BIBLICAL WORSHIP EPC SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

You are being requested to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to identify the comprehension of biblical worship. This research is being conducted by Natán J. Abdala to gather data for a doctoral project. In this research, a person will be asked to respond to questions before the teaching sessions and then respond to questions after the teaching sessions. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name identified with his or her responses.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By signing below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date ____/____/____

Personal Identification Code (To generate your 5-digit pin, please refer to your birthday, (two-digit month and day) and the first letter of your first name. For example, John, January 4th (**0104J**); Lucy, September 15th (**0915L**).

Your PIN: _ _ _ _ _

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing an **X** next to the appropriate answer.

Part I – General Information

1. What is your age group in years?

- A. 12-17
- B. 18-22
- C. 23–35
- D. 35-45
- E. 46-55+

2. What is your gender?

- A. Male
- B. Female

3. What year are you in school?

- A. 6th – 8th grade
- B. 9th – 11th grade
- C. 12th grade
- D. Out of High School
- E. Currently in College

4. Are you currently involved, or would you like to be involved in worship ministry?

___ A. YES

___ B. NO

___ C. Not Sure

4. Do you have a personal relationship with Christ?

___ A. YES

___ B. NO

___ C. Not Sure

Part II – Questions

1. Explain in no more than three sentences what do you think biblical worship is about?

2. When God created humanity, he created them in His image. What do you think this means?

3. Why is Christ's sacrifice so significant for one to worship the Father?

4. List three to five practices that describe a life of worship.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

5. Describe a person who lives a life of worship according to Scripture

Part III – Biblical Worship Survey

Directions: please write an X mark that best corresponds to your response to the following statements using the following scale. *Please only mark one X mark per statement.

Item 1	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Worship starts with my heart						
Item 2	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Worship is a response to God's mighty acts of salvation						
Item 3	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have the ability to worship God because I reflect his image						
Item 4	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sin completely marred God's perfect image in me						
Item 5	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can worship the Father outside of Christ's work						
Item 6	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Jesus's sacrifice was necessary to restore God's image in humanity						

Item 7	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Obedience to God's word is evidence of biblical worship						
Item 8	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I must worship God solely on what the Scriptures instruct						
Item 9	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My prayer life reflects the passion for my worship						
Item 10	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Singing is seen as an optional worshipful act in the Bible						
Item 11	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My worship is accepted depending on how I treat my neighbor						
Item 12	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Worship is an eternal enterprise						

APPENDIX 2
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

This rubric was utilized by the expert panel to evaluate the biblical, practical, and pedagogical fidelity of the lessons from the six-week curriculum course.

Name of Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2= requires attention 3= sufficient 4= exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was theologically sound in its interpretation of biblical worship based on Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithfully accurate to what Scripture teaches about worship.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
The goal of the lesson is clearly stated.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to live a life of worship based on God's stipulations.					
Overall, the lesson was clearly presented.					

Other Comments:

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING STUDENTS OF EASTSIDE PRAISE MINISTRY CHURCH IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY IN BIBLICAL WORSHIP

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. P. Chase Sears

The project's purpose was to equip students of Eastside Praise Church in Louisville, Kentucky, in biblical worship. Chapter 1 presents the context in which the project was implemented, the rationale for the project, and the project's goals, along with the research methodology used in the project. Chapter 2 presents exegeses on three passages (Gen 1:27; Heb 1:1-3; and Heb. 5:9), which supports the chapter's thesis of recognizing that God created humanity to worship Him as he has revealed himself in Jesus, calling people to respond with a humbled heart. Chapter 3 considers the theoretical and practical elements of biblical worship as it relates to Christ as our model for living a life of sacrificial worship. Chapter 4 discusses the development, implementation, and results of the project. Chapter 5 presents a deeper evaluation of the project while concluding with personal insights.

VITA

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