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DEVELOPING CHRISTOCENTRIC WORSHIP LEADERS
AT SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH SABON TASHA
KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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DEVELOPING CHRISTOCENTRIC WORSHIP LEADERS
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To Rachael, Davita, David, and Damita,
you are models of selfless and unreserved love.

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PREFACE

This project was birthed out of a passionate desire to see worship leaders in Africa (Shiloh Baptist Church) equipped with Christocentric biblical principles of worship as they grow daily unto maturity in Christ and into the fullness of their giftings and potentials. I will build a wall of names if I recognize all those who influenced my life and ministry and ensured I got to this level in my educational pursuit. I was privileged to have Dr. Matthew D. Haste as my faculty supervisor for this project. His willingness to guide and mentor me on this ministry project has been life transforming. His scholarship shaped my writing and challenged my perspective.

Thank “y’all” for pouring into me and making sure I become the minister God designed me to be. What a joy it is to serve the body of Christ at the First Presbyterian Church of Bristol, Tennessee, and King University. I am blessed to serve under the visionary leadership of Rev. Dr. Samuel Weddington, and the entire staff at First Presbyterian. I want to thank the session and members of First Presbyterian Church for giving me the platform to do the work of ministry. I will forever remain grateful for being a recipient of the MEF Scholarship that supported my education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Thank you, Pastor John V. and Jennifer Durham, Pastor Jared Billups, and the leadership at Highland Baptist Church Waco, Texas. I am honored to share in the joy of being your fellow believer in Christ. My joy knows no bounds, and I will forever be grateful for your support and partnership with my ministry during my time at Highland Baptist Church Waco, Texas. Thank you, Shelley and Bruce Spurlock and Raise Your Hand Foundation, for your generous support to me and my family when we least expected it. I pray that the Lord would bless and increase you. Thank you to my sisters.

Aisha and Dorothy; I am honored to be your older brother. Thank you to everyone who encouraged me through this journey. I pray we will change the world for Jesus and sing Christocentric songs that point people to the power of his resurrection.

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Bristol, Tennessee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Worship is God’s gift through Jesus Christ who invites the corporate body to answer God’s personal invitation to reverence his holy name. The task before the worship leader is to invite and lead the corporate body to God in Christ Jesus. The church today has neglected this invitation and has not acknowledged the priority of Christ as the divine agent of worship. Christopher A. Beeley affirms, “Pastoral leaders are moral and spiritual guides in the Christian life, and it is they who are chiefly responsible for leading people towards God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹ Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria, desires to raise, equip, and develop worship leaders. When worship leaders model from the biblical perspective the art of worship and its significance, God’s Word comes alive in their worship. Worship leaders must surrender to the sovereignty of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to lead.

At Shiloh Baptist Church, worship positions the congregation’s posture and attitude of bowing down in total surrender to a God who is alive and active in their lives. People are drawn to the Savior and revere the Savior to help others who want to be like Christ. Monique Ingalls affirms, “Congregational singing is one of the central participatory and experiential practices in the worship of local church congregations, which have long been considered the paradigmatic mode of the congregation.”² The church desires to see worshippers who will worship God in Spirit and truth as they sing hymns, spiritual songs,

¹ Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God’s People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 24.

² Monique M. Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York: Oxford University, 2018), 107.

and psalms to God and one another. It is important to know that worship expresses the covenant relationship between God and man. Worship leaders should be equipped to know it is their responsibility to lead God's flock with Jesus at the center of worship. If corporate worship must point to Christ, then it must lead the corporate body in psalms and hymns that focus on Christ's redemptive purpose. This project intended to search through the book of Colossians to see how apostle Paul challenged the church at Colossae to encourage one another in Christ through the Word and in singing psalms to one another. Knowing the Word and following the commands will help the church present their bodies as a living sacrifice unto maturity in Christ (Col 3:16–17).

Context

Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna (SBC) is shepherded by Reverend Ishaya Adamu Jangado. He is dedicated to declaring God's counsel and challenging worship leaders to lead by example. SBC has been in existence for over twenty years. There is a massive influx of attendees who hunger and thirst after God's righteousness. Adamu's visionary leadership at Shiloh is to reproduce great worship leaders with a passion for God and a heart to lead God's people in Spirit and truth boldly. This project developed biblical, Christ-centered principles of worship to enhance worship leaders at SBC.³

The background of this project is a notion most worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church have when defining their place in corporate worship. Unless the church develops worship leaders to deepen roots in Christocentric principles, there will always be looming friction and misconception of what it truly means to be a servant leader who

³ The passion to develop Christocentric worship leaders began in Nigeria, whereas a worship pastor and a recording artist I witnessed worship leaders who do not have a relationship with Christ and do not live holy lives. They sing and lead songs that do not have a biblical base. For the sake of this ministry project, the context was Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The project intends to be relevant and helpful to worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church and various churches in Nigeria and Africa at large.

points the corporate body to Christ in worship. Churches in Nigeria need to make a recommitment, invest, and place value on the ministry of the worship leader.

The need to train, disciple, and equip worship leaders at SBC was birthed out of my desire to reproduce worship leaders that will be disciplined after biblical principles and the spiritual benefits of edifying the church. If worship leaders are rooted in the Word, then they will rightly divide the Word and lead in spirit and truth. Equipping worship leaders can be accomplished by partnering with members of the congregation. Most of the SBC worship leaders have never attended a music school or do not have a degree in music. They are all gifted worshippers hungry for God and desiring to serve. SBC serves as a worship hub where worship leaders are equipped, and a ground to host worship conferences and worship workshops in the Sabon Tasha Baptist Association. A worship group on WhatsApp was created to follow up for accountability and how worship leaders are progressing. SBC is a Bible-based church, committed to knowing God through his Word, singing songs that exalt, and glorifying him through Jesus his Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Andrew E. Hill affirms, “Knowledge of God is central to biblical worship because covenant obedience, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, is dependent upon an understanding of God’s Words and deeds (Deuteronomy 4:35; Psalm 100:3; Ephesians 1:17).”⁴ For this project I have chosen various encouraging texts, with emphasis on Colossians 3:16–17, to encourage the local community at SBC to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with grateful hearts. The worship conference I helped organize in partnership with Highland Baptist church Waco, Texas in 2018 had over 7,000 people in attendance in Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The worship leaders at Shiloh were in attendance for the training sessions and the aim was to train worship leaders who would understand the true meaning

⁴ Andrew E. Hill, quoted in James R. Krabill, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnology Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 2.

of submitting to God and be proficiently equipped for every good work (1 Tim 3:16–17). This training in 2018 prompted the need for this current project to develop Christocentric worship leaders who would maintain and lead theologically sound, Christ centered songs and point the corporate body to Christ. Ronald P. Byars writes “At worship, we meet an invitation to act on our impulse to offer praise and thanks for gifts not our making—whether or not we recognize that impulse.”⁵ The project examines how the gathering of God’s people is for the glory of God, who invites the corporate body to celebrate the victory in Christ, his death and resurrection.

Under the leadership of Adamu, the church has become the worship hub of Kaduna. There has been numeric growth spiritually and financially, and the church community at SBC has rededicated itself with a commitment to lift their voices passionately and corporately in worship and impact the various underserved communities in Kujama, Chikun local government area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Moreover, the inspiration drawn from Scriptures instructs the worshipping community in ways they should live right with God, being thankful to him for his redemptive grace knowing God created humans in his image and for his glory. Bryan Chapell asserts, “Worship that consistently shapes our understanding and appreciation of Christ’s redeeming work supplies such light and draws God’s people to it.”⁶ When the corporate body is led spiritually with Christ-centered songs, the relevance of Christ’s death and resurrection will draw the worshipping community to his saving grace.

This research drew examples from biblical principles to enhance the worship leaders to challenge themselves to be effective in their place of service. Scholars in worship ministry, such as Robert E. Webber, affirm that “worship is situated in the story

⁵ Ronald P. Byars, *Christian Worship: Glorifying and Enjoying God* (Louisville: Geneva, 2000), 5.

⁶ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 118.

it remembers. It is never about ‘me and my worship,’ Instead, biblical, and ancient worship is always about remembering God’s saving acts of grace in history.”⁷ Not singing Christocentric songs that point the corporate body to the saving grace of Christ is worrisome if the worship leader does not present him or herself as a workman who is humble and called to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).

This project promoted singing Christocentric songs that are fixed on Jesus and his redemptive role through the Holy Spirit who illuminates the human heart to grow unto maturity in Christ. The sole responsibility of the worship leader is to live a life that is exemplary of Christ. Therefore, this project was essential to worship leaders in pointing the corporate body to Christ.

Rationale

The project came as a necessity for worship leaders to understand the importance of biblical, Christocentric worship that glorifies God. This project raises thoughtful questions regarding ways to develop Christocentric biblical principles for worship leaders in SBC: what is the theology of worship?, how practical is the theology of worship in corporate worship?, why should worship leaders exemplify Christ, singing Christocentric songs?, and a fourth question is implicit in the third: are there circumstances where these biblical principles of worship do not adequately fit into the context of the worshipping community? Worship leaders who do not live holy lives in obedience to God’s will and have no knowledge of the Bible or personal relationship with Christ, will not understand the true meaning of why it is important to sing Christocentric songs.

This project sought to answer the first, second, and third questions by developing a written theology of Christocentric worship to serve as a manual for equipping worship leaders at SBC Sabon Tasha. These written principles describe what Christocentric

⁷ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 44.

worship is, what Christocentric worship helps accomplish as a congregation (Col 3:16–17), and what it means to sing to God with gratitude and not to entertain, bringing to light practical ways SBC worship leaders can offer their lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in worship. Leading Christocentric songs challenges worship leaders to be effective as they become ready to be used by the Lord. In addition, the project addressed how Scripture brings to light the basic foundations and methods of Christocentric biblical worship and how it should be utilized within the context of the congregation.

Constance Cherry argues, “Dedicated worship architects must spend their lives pursuing greater understanding of the primary themes and principles pertinent to biblical worship, with the hope of designing and leading services that are pleasing to God. Biblical themes translate into principles that anchor Christian worship and keep it profoundly true to God’s expectations.”⁸ Worship leaders must be architects that draw out a worship plan from a biblical structure centered on God’s act of salvation and sing songs that reveal Christ as the mediator between God and humanity.

The apostle Paul challenged the church in Colossae to sing psalms and hymns to one another. James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”⁹ Thus, this project explored the principles of Christocentric worship and sought biblical principles to encourage SBC worship leaders to see themselves as arrows in the hands of the Father. Worship leaders must discover their identity and calling to be vessels unto honor. The careful thoughts and planning in singing Christocentric songs will bring peace and comfort to the hearts of all who come into the worship service with burdens and pain that need healing and deliverance. The hearts of all who encounter true worship would be satisfied and healed when genuine worship springs forth. Developing a curriculum of worship equips future worship leaders as SBC

⁸ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 5.

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

continues to grow. The curriculum equipped worship leaders to apply the basic principles of the Word of God rooted and centered on Jesus Christ, the one whom worship points to. Worship is not to entertain those being led, but to bring them into the presence of God, who created all of humanity to worship.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Goals

Four goals were established to determine the success of this ministry project to evaluate and accomplish the purpose of the project.

1. The first goal of this project was to assess the knowledge and leadership of the worship leaders in pointing the corporate body to Christ.
2. The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-session curriculum to be taught over Zoom/WhatsApp over the course of four weekends to worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church on why Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship.
3. The third goal of this project was to increase understanding of Christocentric worship by teaching the curriculum.
4. The fourth goal of this project was to develop a ministry plan to raise awareness of the significance of Christocentric songs in corporate worship.

A complete research methodology measured the successful completion of these four goals. The research methodology and tools used to measure the success of each goal are described in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of the goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and leadership of the worship leaders in pointing the corporate body at Shiloh Baptist Church to Christ. This goal was accomplished by administering a pre-project survey to assess the initial knowledge and practices of

singing Christocentric songs.¹⁰ This goal was considered successful when participants completed the pre-project survey.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to be taught over Zoom/WhatsApp over the course of four weekends to worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church on why Christocentric songs matter within corporate worship. This goal was measured by the expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.¹¹ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 85 percent of all the rubric evaluation criterion/criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase understanding of Christocentric worship by teaching the curriculum. The project utilized Zoom and WhatsApp to teach the curriculum due to the rising insecurities and violent attacks on churches in Nigeria. The goal was measured by administering the post-project survey to the same participants who completed the pre-project training survey and the results compared using a *t*-test.¹² The goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test demonstrated a positive, statistically significant increase between the pre- and post-project surveys.

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to create awareness of the significance of Christocentric songs in corporate worship at Shiloh Baptist Church. The ministry plan developed was a robust repertoire/catalog for Christocentric songs to equip worship leaders for corporate worship at SBC. This goal was measured by a panel of SBC pastors, deacons and deaconesses, and associates of worship ministry who utilized a rubric to analyze and evaluate the survey instruments for the pre- and post-project results

¹⁰ See appendix 1. All the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹¹ See appendix 2.

¹² See appendix 5.

to develop a formal plan for raising awareness in the future.¹³ This goal was considered successfully met by providing real-time opportunities for Christocentric songs to be sung and lived out at Shiloh Baptist Church.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Christocentric worship. Cherry affirms that, “When a congregation sees the need to pursue Christocentric worship, there is one sure place to begin: with acknowledging and welcoming the real presence of the risen Lord. . . Nothing is so central to our understanding of biblical worship than Jesus Christ is truly present in the midst of the gathered community.”¹⁴ Christocentric worship is reverencing the presence of Jesus as the central figure of worship. It is worship that welcomes the presence of God.

Christocentric worship retells Christ’s story and declares the mighty acts of God.

Worship leader. John D. Witvliet says,

As worship leaders, we have the important and terrifying task of placing words of prayer on people’s lips. It happens every time we choose a song and write a prayer. We also have the holy task of being stewards of God’s Word. Our choices of Scripture and themes for worship represents a degree of control over people’s spiritual diets, over how they feed on the bread of life.¹⁵

A worship leader is a proclaimer of the sung and spoken prayer, and celebrations of the corporate body. The worship leader is set apart to point the gathered church to Christ and help the gathered church grow in the true knowledge of God. A worship leader is one who lives and leads the corporate body in a unified praise and adoration to God. The worship leaders lead the corporate body to Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring glory to God.

¹³ See appendix 3.

¹⁴ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 25.

¹⁵ John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 282.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the project participants to be authentic in living a life that honors God and sing Christocentric songs. Only worship leaders were tested and surveyed. Second, the project was designed as an eight-session curriculum to be taught over Zoom/WhatsApp over a timeframe of four weekends. To be eligible for inclusion in the project research, participants must have attended 7 of 8 sessions. Insufficient time and access to internet service may be a challenge in the preparation and teaching of these eight sessions.

Conclusion

Shiloh Baptist Church can become a formidable church committed to developing Christocentric worship leaders. God purposed the church to worship him through Jesus his Son, whom he sent as a living sacrifice. Jesus lived a life of obedience to the Father. The training sessions provided much insight into Christocentric worship and how God reveals himself through Jesus's humanity in fulfilling his will. This project trained SBC worship leaders in the essentials of Christocentric worship. The spiritual discipline of singing Christocentric songs that point the corporate body to God rejuvenates the spiritual formation of the church. Singing Christocentric worship songs not only shapes the liturgy of the church but the depth of understanding God's desire for all who come before him to meditate on his Word and be active participants during worship. When the worship leader leads with joy, it reflects the obedience to God's truth through Christ Jesus. N. T. Wright asserts, "Give to this great and loving God the honor, the worship, the love, due to him; celebrate the goodness, the worth, the true value, of the created order, as his gift, his handiwork; and allow that celebration to lift your eyes once more to God himself, to his glory and beauty."¹⁶ Members of Shiloh Baptist Church must

¹⁶ N. T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 13.

worship God for all he is worth and grow in their understanding of singing Christocentric songs focused on Jesus's redemptive grace and his love for humanity.

In the following chapters, clear support is shown for the significance of singing Christocentric songs during corporate worship. Chapter 2 addresses the biblical and theological foundation for Christocentric worship. Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical and practical foundations of Christocentric worship. Chapter 4 addresses the details of the project preparation and its implementation. Chapter 5 addresses the evaluation of the project.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTOCENTRIC WORSHIP

This chapter draws from passages of both the Old and New Testaments, foreshadowing Jesus as “the rock.” John Phillips writes, “In the Old Testament the figure of a rock is never used of a man, only of God. God is as changeless as creation’s rocks. Behind the symbol is the substance: Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and today and forever!”¹ The monarchical and priestly system guided the worship lifestyle of the people until the Word became flesh. Christ-centered worship makes Jesus the center of worship as the church honors the Triune God and grow unto maturity. Since God’s Word is of great importance for the maturity of the believer, it must be meditated upon with a focus on edifying God’s people in corporate participatory worship. The broad idea presents how significant the office of the Levitical priest is in leading worship and challenging people to desire to live a holy life and present themselves as a living sacrifice to God.

Since biblical and theological foundations are significant in developing Christocentric worship leaders, this chapter discusses and examines the role of the Levitical priest in Old Testament worship. After surveying several concepts related to Old Testament worship (Gen 8:18–20; 14:19–19; 26:24–25; 28:11–22; Exod 12:21, 19:5–6, Num 18:20, Pss 89:5; 100:3), Colossians 3. 1 Peter 2. and John 17:17 will be considered

¹ John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 1:211. Phillips’s central argument is that the one to run to when all hope is lost, is the Lord our Rock, the God who is unchangeable and dependable, the one who hearkens to the prayers and supplication of his people. The God who delivers his people from the hands of enemies. He is the Rock of ages, the Rock of salvation. Phillips writes, “The Lord is my Rock! As the becoming One (Jehovah) is the changeless One (the Rock). God is so addressed by David and addressed in such a way that the term ‘rock’ becomes a proper name for God. Jehovah, as a rock, is God in all His glorious changelessness and immutability” (1:211). David says, “his soul finds rest in God alone, his salvation comes from him” (Ps 62:1). When the gathered church always refers to God as the rock of salvation; God becomes a mighty fortress in whom the corporate body will never be shaken.

in detail. These passages will be studied to form the foundation in understanding the significant role in making Christ the object and central character to be glorified, and why Christocentric songs matter within corporate worship.

Old Testament Worship: The Role of the Leader

Worship is sacred and reflects the beauty of God's holiness. Timothy L. Carson affirms,

Liminal existence is located in designated, separated *sacred space*. Isaiah finds himself in the presence of the Lord in the temple of holiness (Isa. 6:1–6), and Jacob's dream floats somewhere in the sacred axis between heaven and earth (Genesis 28:12–19). Sacred time takes place as persons and communities are separated from ordinary chronology and the meaning that it holds.²

These men led their families to worship YHWH by offering to God thanksgiving. In Genesis 8:18–20, the story of Noah narrates how he offered God a sacred burnt offering and how God promised never to curse the earth or the creatures in it. Noah obeyed God's commands. He obeyed God even when it did not make sense by building the ark and an altar of worship after the flood. The same pattern of obedience reflected in the life of Isaac who obediently followed his father Abraham and worshiped with him by building an altar and pitching his tent (Gen 26:24–25). Walter Brueggemann asserts, "The eyes of faith discern the reality of God's blessings in the language of promise. So, the whole chapter is made into a statement about promise. Though, the eyes of the world discern the same reality as prosperity. Promise and prosperity are not different, however. The promise of God is the source of prosperity"³ It is required of the worship leader to display total allegiance to God by showing reverence to him publicly and by living out a life of

² Timothy L. Carson, *Transforming Worship* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2003), 61.

³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 223. Brueggemann continues, "The promise of God is the source of prosperity. Jacob wrestled with the angel of God and named the place 'Bethel.' He built God an altar in Shechem commemorating the 'God of Israel'" (223). Jacob worshiped God and showed reverence. It was a spiritual experience and God promised to be with him so that he could return and worship the Lord again in the promised land. Jacob declared how awesome Bethel was and declared it was none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. Jacob believed God and also saw God as the source of his prosperity.

gratitude and obedience.

Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 12:21 selected lambs to be offered as sacrifice to God when it was time for the Passover. To justify his flight from the responsibility before him, Moses provided spiritual direction for worship to the people. Geoffrey Wainwright asserts, “The God who delivered Israel from Egypt is the true God, being the universal Creator; the handmade gods of the nations are mere idols. The nations themselves are invited to join Israel in worshipping the Lord.”⁴ Exodus 19:5–6 paints a picture of a formal recognition of priesthood developed during Moses’s time. Melchizedek, in Genesis 14:19–19, who was declared as “king of righteousness,” comes to Abraham as the forerunner of Jesus Christ, the Chief High priest. This text reflects YHWH’s ascribing blessing to his people for he is the creator God and the Most High. In the present form of the text, Melchizedek (vv. 19–20) calls God only “God Most High,”⁵

God is worthy of all the worship and Scripture primarily addresses the command to be obedient to his voice and offer oneself as a living sacrifice. This understanding of the Old Testament perspective helps in the development of worship leaders who are determined to bring God glory. Another example is David and how he expressed his skill after being chosen to play in king Saul’s palace (1 Sam 16:14–23). David not only succeeded in using his skills in the palace, but he faced the Philistine giant Goliath, and with a slingshot the giant was slain. It is not surprising to see how David brought skillful men and women to build a house of worship, a temple for God to dwell. Robert E. Webber writes, “Davidic worship clearly demonstrated that Israel’s worship involved more than the sacrificial system. It also illustrated the freedom, joy, and celebrative nature of non-sacrificial worship.”⁶ The art of singing Scriptures to the corporate body of

⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York: Oxford University, 2006), 1.

⁵ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 136-37.

⁶ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 35.

Christ must be one of the goals of the worship leader. Hence, readers must acknowledge God as the Most High and surrender themselves in obedience to his will and worship his holy name.

Old Testament Worship: Response to Redemption

Numbers 18:20 speaks of the Levites and how they are set apart with a specific service or duty. They had no inheritance among the people because they were set apart as God's own. Priests were selected and set apart from the tribe of Levi to help in the reorganizational structure of worship. Set apart as his holy vessels to oversee all those skillful in using their musical talents for worship duties. Bryan Chapell affirms, "God accepts our obedience as spiritual worship (and we delight to give it) "in view of God's mercy" that has made fallible people's praise pleasing to him."⁷ Aaron obeyed God and functioned as a mediator between God and his chosen nation. Samuel E. Balentine defines the priestly duties: "You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach (*lehorot*) the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them through Moses (Lev. 10:10–11; 11:47; 14:57)."⁸ The Mosaic Law (Lev 21:1–9) requires all those in priestly or Levitical duties to live a holy life and follow the rules of the Mosaic Law, free from any blemishes and must not defile themselves. Importantly, the characteristic of the priest is to fulfill the divine plan of God, who made man in his image after his likeness to worship him in the beauty of his holiness. Chapell notes,

The corporate pattern of Old Testament worship also reflects the practice of individual responses to God's glory. When Moses summons the people of Israel to hear their covenant obligations, he rehearses the circumstances that led to their devotion (Deut. 5:1–33). The people faced the glory of God in the fire on Mount

⁷ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 109.

⁸ Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 63.

Sinai. In response, they perceived their unworthiness to confront him and sent Moses to receive God's Word. Moses reminded the people of the grace that released them from slavery and assured them that it still applies because God is maintaining the covenant he made before their obedience. In this context, God gives Israel the instruction of his Word. The people then promise their devotion.⁹

When God is the object of worship, he inhabits the true worship of his people who call his name. Above all, He enables worshipers to exercise their spiritual worship, for he deserves all the glory. When the ark of the covenant was being carried (Deut 10:8), one of the roles of the priest was to lead corporate worship gatherings. While the temple priests led in offerings and sacrifices, the Levites presided in the aspect of worship and music. Robert E. Webber argues that worship is likened to “the image of a bride in both the Old and New Testaments emphasizing the mystery of God's nearness. He is high, holy, and lifted up and so near to his people, the church that their relationship can be described as that of a bride and a groom.”¹⁰ Corporate worship sets the tone and prepares the atmosphere for the various offerings of grain, peace, sin, and guilt to be brought before God during corporate gatherings and worship ceremonies.

Priests and Levites led in the various tabernacle processions as the people followed and obeyed God's voice and kept his commands. The criteria to receive blessing from God was to obey his laws and commands. However, the organizational worship structure surfaced in the book of Exodus prior to establishing the priesthood. Jubal was said to be “the father of all who played the lyre and pipe” (Gen 4:21), while Moses was called to lead Israel out of Egypt. Moses and Miriam sang a song that reshaped corporate worship and celebrated that God is mighty to save at the Red Sea. Dean W. Chapman asserts, “The truest measure of spiritual vitality in a congregation is the level of energy that the congregation devotes to its hymns.”¹¹ The appropriateness of singing corporate songs must define the mighty deliverance of YHWH toward his people. Moses and Miriam

⁹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 103.

¹⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Worship as a Verb* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 115.

¹¹ Dean W. Chapman, *How to Worship as a Presbyterian* (Louisville: Geneva, 2001), 52.

led Israel, “singing to the Lord for he had triumphed gloriously, the horse and its riders he had thrown into the Sea” (Exod 15:1–2).

The role of individuals to lead God’s people in worship that pleases God must be biblical. The New Testament mirrors the Old Testament and highlights Jesus as the center of worship in obedience to the Father, and outlines ways believers must have a balanced scriptural perspective in doing God’s will. The documented events throughout the Old and New Testaments challenge the corporate body to respond to the redemptive grace of Jesus. First Peter 3:18 says, “For Christ also suffered once for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit.” Christ triumphed over death in obedience to the will of the Father, and through his resurrection, eternal life is given to all who believe in him. Amos 5:23 encourages the people to walk toward a life of purity and seek God to restore the nation to the heart of worship.

Christocentric worship must point God’s people to the Triune God who captures the heart of the worshiper by the riches of his love through the death and resurrection of his Son. This Triune God desires his people to know him and have a relationship with him. Miriam understood that whatever happened at the Red Sea was God’s act, she invited the people to sing to God for he has triumphed gloriously over their enemies (Exod 15:1). Miriam is acknowledged as a prophetess and minstrel who played the tambourine and danced to the glory of YHWH (Exod 15:20–27). She was a woman, a prophetess, and a worship leader responsible for restoring holiness among God’s people. Miriam’s song was poured out of a heart full of gratitude for God’s great deliverance and salvation of his children from the hands of Pharaoh and from Egypt, where they were enslaved. God’s act of deliverance gave Miriam a reason to burst into singing and dancing, “for the Lord is good, and his mercy endures forever” (Ps 136:1).

Miriam’s prophetic ministry was fully displayed; her goal was for the people to acknowledge YHWH’s great deliverance. Because Israel has not lived in accordance with

the covenant relationship with God, they as a people failed to acknowledge God's rule and chose to live under a fundamental dependence of themselves. In Deuteronomy 32:1–43, God commanded Moses to write a song concerning the unfaithfulness of his people. Wayne Grudem asserts, “The song was a reminder to the children of Israel of how God delivered them from slavery and brought them into the promised land.”¹² Not only did God show his faithfulness by delivering them, but he also fulfilled a promise he made to Abraham. John Frame writes, “God took them to a land that flows with milk and honey.”¹³ God blesses and prospers Israel a nation by bringing to pass the covenant he made with their ancestors. The fulfillment of this covenant served as a reminder to the people of God's ability to take vengeance if they did not turn from their idolatrous ways.

Moses called the Israelites to repentance, and the cry of every worship leader is to ask God on behalf of the people not to hide his face from all sin and to “create a new heart in him and renew the right spirit within” (Ps 51:7–10). Worship leaders must seek humility and constantly repent of sin with a desire to be reconciled and restored to God the Father. The assurance believers have in Christ is rooted in the promise that God will never leave or forsake his people. Deuteronomy 31:8 says, “It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or dismayed.” T. J. Betts argues, “One must recognize that while David felt like God had abandoned him, God did not abandon David as we will see in verse 24. However, when Jesus cried out these words to his Father, God did abandon him on the Cross.”¹⁴ In view of these observations, this project draws concepts that reveal the necessity for the church to sing Christocentric songs during corporate worship and how understanding the biblical text brings great value in applying worship principles that point the corporate body to

¹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 1994), 267.

¹³ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 148.

¹⁴ T. J. Betts, *40 Days in the Psalms* (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 58.

Christ.

Characteristics of Christocentric Worship

Worship leaders have the responsibility to learn the art of singing Christocentric songs. True worship must come to God from a grateful heart of those he has called in truth, for he desires excellence. The heart must be ready and centered on the glorious deliverance that comes from the Triune God who delights in the praises of his people. Worship must be centered around obedience to God's will rather than sacrifice.

God does not look at the appearance of men, but the condition of their hearts in the place of worship (1 Sam 16:7). Psalm 89:5 reads, "All the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord; your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints." Worship must be unceasing. J. Clinton McCann Jr. asserts, "The title 'Lord God of Host' may also reflect God's sovereignty over other divinities as well as earthly beings; it is associated elsewhere with God's reign."¹⁵ God's Word convicts the heart of the worshiper, and the indwelling of the Word manifests when the worshiper is devoted to singing to God with a heart of thanksgiving by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is important to note that Jesus, in his authority and power, becomes the reconciler of men and women with God and the one who intercedes on their behalf to God. He is the mediator in chief (Col 3:16), revealing the Christocentric essence of why he should be the center of worship because honor and glory are given to the Triune God. God's intention is to make his presence known to all of humanity through his Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵ J. Clinton McCann Jr., "The Book of Psalms," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4, 1 & 2 *Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 1035. McCann continues, "because God's love is eternal and his faithfulness is from generation to generation, attentive readers will notice that God's sovereignty reveals his wonders. God is to be praise because of his faithfulness and sovereignty" (1035). I deduce that the worship leaders must constantly invite the corporate body to dig deep into God's sovereign grace. It is important to note that God asserts divine rule over his children and his victory culminates the proclamation of his sovereign rule. God rules the nations with his mighty arm, and he alone is worthy of worship, his creation must recognize his sovereignty and join his created order in praising his holy name.

Colossians 3:16–17

The apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Colossae, made a clear distinction of what type of Christocentric lifestyle the church should exemplify. G. K. Beale argues on this same premise of Paul’s writing and how it was important for the church to live a new-creational lifestyle with a Christocentric focus. He affirms, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (*ho logos tou Christou*) through ‘teaching and admonishing’ with worship centered around Psalms.”¹⁶ Christ-centered worship enables the worship leader to approach the triune God. Colossians 3:17 harmonizes the human experience in capturing the past, present, and future by acknowledging God’s Son as the center of reconciliation through his redemptive act on the cross. The dominant influence must be the Word that admonishes (*noutheteo*) wisdom in Christ. The Levitical order is fulfilled in Christ, who came down in human flesh and dwelt amongst men (incarnation), bringing salvation and reconciliation with God to all humanity.

Reconciliation with the Father came through the Lord Jesus, which sums up the true character of the Christian life. Paul admonishes believers to “Let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly” (Col 3:16). John Calvin states, “He wants the teaching of the Gospel to be familiar to them, to sing with grace in their hearts, sacred songs to the Lord. He addressed men and women of all ranks to let the Word abide and settle in their hearts that they may increase and advance more and more in their desire to learn God’s wisdom and teach one another in love.”¹⁷ The worship songs the church sings must focus on the life and resurrection of Christ and reveal the gospel of his salvation. Worship must be biblical and make a statement of who the corporate body are in Christ. Jesus Christ is the firm foundation of the church’s worship, and the corporate body must depend on the power of the Holy Spirit, the source of all inspiration and the one who guides the hearts

¹⁶ G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 302-3.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 352-53.

of all who draw near to the Lord of Host.

The church's worship must be centered on thanksgiving in the name of Jesus. Influential worship leaders apply Christ-centered principles and show that all who come before God must be dead to sin and alive in Christ. The church's worship depends on God's Word. True worship leaders desire to pursue Christ by (1) studying the Bible, again and again, (2) being thankful to him, and (3) blessing his holy name. The early church had the Word read. They were admonished to learn to pray and to encourage one another and live a holy life. Paul reminded the church in Colossae to participate in worship with the Word as the central focus of worship. I. Howard Marshal affirms,

They have been forgiven by him and must show forgiveness to other people. They are members of one body, and so they must live at peace with one another. They must let the word of Christ live in them; the teaching is not simply something that they learn and absorb into their minds but perhaps also regarded as having a living force of its own. Whatever they do must be appropriate to being done in the name of the Lord Jesus.¹⁸

When the Word of God dwells within the heart of believers, it shapes how the church sings. David Lemley explains, "As authentic worship brings together the symbols of faith and a church's lived experience, it calls for articulating the relationship between the kingdom citizenship and contextual residence."¹⁹ The church's focus must be on giving glory to Jesus, the center of worship. Christocentric worship leaders must be equipped to lead and sing sacred songs inspired by the Holy Spirit. When God's Word dwells in a person, it allows them to admonish and teach those they lead in truth. Those who the Word has filled will teach and admonish one another in thanksgiving (Col 3:16). Speaking to the church in Rome, Paul says, "So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh" (Rom 8:12).

¹⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 374. The object of worship is Jesus Christ and the recognition of his position and authority stretches back to eternity past. All glory and honor must be given to him because his superiority is grounded in the fact that he is not a created entity.

¹⁹ David Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing: Formation through Contemporary Worship Music* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 223.

Paul's message was clear in Colossians 1. God's Word takes root in a believer's heart "because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you already heard in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you" (vv. 5-6). Believers are continually bearing fruit and increasing when God's Word is rooted in their hearts. Paul challenged the church not to live according to the dictates of the flesh but to bear fruit. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christ's witness will dwell in the heart. What a privilege it is to lead God's people in spiritual songs. This must be done with an attitude of thanksgiving to shift the attention from oneself to God. Paul wrote with a corporate idea that included individual application of God's Word for believers to bear one another's burden and fulfill God's will (Gal 6:2). The corporate body must let the Word of Christ dwell richly amongst them so that they may understand the gospel message. The gospel must be the core and center of all they say and do.

The apostle Paul called believers to live out their faith in Jesus Christ and live a holy life. He commanded them to defend and guard themselves against false teachings. The conduct of how worship leaders live is reflective of the life and witness of Christ. Worship leaders must demonstrate the humility and redemption that can only be found in the lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul provided the church in Colossae with resources on how to be on guard. He reminded them to be imitators of Christ who are compassionate, loving, and forgiving. Paul challenged the church in Colossae to remember that their dependence on Christ increases their faith in him.

Walking in God's truth elevates the mind to constantly look up to him rather than in one's skill, technical ability, or technology. When the reality of Christ is the top priority, then it is known that only faith in Jesus saves, and only in Jesus can the worshiper grow to maturity. The early church sang the promises and truth of God to one another, passing the fact through memorization. The call of the worship leader must be to "teach and admonish through Psalms and spiritual songs" (Col 3:17) that will help people lament, express joy, and give thanks to God for his sovereignty. God's Word is put to

music and melodies teach and admonish the people to find their roots in Christ. Through the cross, God reconciled the mystery of salvation. When people sin, the Word draws them out of that pit into love, kindness, and patience with one another. There must be a hunger and desire for his Word for all who have been called to lead his people.

The centrality of the Word dwelling richly in corporate worship is rooted in the peace of Christ. It allows the church to sing Psalms and hymns to one another. Christopher Ellis affirms, “Hymns singing can be simultaneously both a celebration of the gospel and its proclamation. Indeed, the celebration is a part of what is proclaimed and shared, for it is an expression of good news. This gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, and its incarnational character usually results in a narrative form.”²⁰ When Christ rules in the heart of his followers, the corporate body experience his peace with God and one another. Paul reminded the church in Colossae that they must be aware of the world’s lies. First Peter 2:4–10 must not be studied in isolation as it echoes authenticity as “living stones built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.”

Qualities of Christocentric Worship Leaders

The worship leader must have a desire to grow unto maturity in Christ. This will build the faith of the church body to long for God and desire to meditate on his Word. The church should be centered on raising worship leaders who yearn to “grow in the knowledge and power of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18).

Grow Unto Maturity (1 Pet 2:2)

The Word of God challenges believers to want and have expectations, and to long for spiritual milk that they might grow unto salvation. There must be an aspiration for growth that leads to spiritual development. Believers must work toward perfection. To

²⁰ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM, 2004), 165.

be mature is to be fully developed as a worship leader who desires to be like Christ in character of love and a life that brings honor and glory to God. Paul challenged the church to “grow unto maturity and not be tossed to and fro by the waves of false doctrines, crafty teachings, and schemes of men” (Eph 4:13–15). John Calvin affirms, “As God, by his providence, preserves the world, the power of his government is alike extended to all, so that He ought to be worshiped by all as He also shows to all men without exception, the fatherly care he has about them.”²¹ Scripture demands that the duty of the worship leader is to “edify the body of Christ and be united in his perfection” (Eph 4:11–12). An exceptional understanding of God’s word builds the spiritual life of the worship leader. Learning brings worshipers to the place of instruction and qualifies them to lead by God’s grace. Also, they will instead be armed to speak the truth of the gospel in their worship, growing spiritually in Christ. The mark of one’s identity is seen in consistency meditating on the Word day and night. The Psalmist, David, understood that his worship was to give God praise but also to instruct the people of God.

Maturity in Christ draws the believer to submit to the Lord in faith and always see Jesus as the origin of worship. Attaining maturity does not happen overnight; it takes time and patience. Worship leaders must position themselves to be sanctified and set apart to sing Psalms and hymns to one another so that they may be equipped to teach and admonish members of the congregation to learn how to trust Jesus. John Witvliet highlights that music is food for the soul that is set on a liturgical menu. He affirms the uniqueness of worship, saying, “It is something that is identity shaping, soul forming, and spiritually nourishing.”²²

Furthermore, spiritual growth requires development regarding the worship

²¹ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 401.

²² John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 234.

leader's abilities and lifestyle. There must be a deliberate effort by worship leaders to develop and train their mind to understand the Word of God for the spiritual benefit of edifying members of the body of Christ (Eph 4:14–15). Paul challenged the church to not remain as children but grow unto spiritual maturity. His challenge was for the preservation of the truth and sacred song of the church. Second Peter 3:18 admonishes believers to not only “grow in grace, but to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Passion determines the desire to grow to live a life that will bear much fruit, and lead God's people into his presence. Like David, worship leaders must daily have a repentant heart that will help the congregation stay in the will of God and fulfill the purpose for creation, which is to worship God.

There must be a desire to grow, and a need to maintain that passion to grow spiritually. The worship leader's life goes through a spiritual rejuvenation when the power of the Word daily transforms them. Growing unto maturity helps worship leaders find purpose and depend on the Holy Spirit's truth that makes them inspired to lead. This completeness of the believer is fulfilled when there is obedience to follow and do his will. Spiritual nourishment results from feeding the mind and soul with the Word of God. This nourishes the heart of all those who enter God's presence. Devotion in the study of Scripture will refine the worshiper into becoming a mature Christian who will “rightly divide the Word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). God's Word must be demonstrated in the life of the worship leader daily.

The task of every worship leader is to make Jesus famous and draw others to his kingdom. There must be a desire for spiritual milk and a passionate desire for growth. Believers “grow in God's knowledge and wisdom through the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). Substance and relevance of Christ's resurrection must be achieved in corporate worship. Robert E. Webber affirms, “Biblical worship is event-oriented; the event of Christ is proclaimed in Word and responded to in the thanksgiving offered at the table; and the process of worship includes four acts: entering

into God's presence, hearing God speak, celebrating at the table, and being sent forth to serve."²³ The spiritual growth and rejuvenation of every worship leader are only made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit who brings into effect the grace of God that is sufficient for the worship leader to grow and serve. When the people of God gather, they build their faith in Christ and faithfully continue to "seek the face of a righteous God who has promised never to leave nor forsake all those who look up to him, the author and perfecter of their faith" (Heb 12:2). Only the Word enlightens the heart. If the mind must be fed on the Word, then worship leaders must daily desire to be nourished to grow unto maturity. Worship leaders are to lead in holiness and sing out loud with audible voices to the God of salvation.

The means of growth is diligently walking with Christ in a loving relationship, for he is the center of worship. When worship leaders allow Jesus to dwell in their heart, the fruits of the Word are made manifest, and the corporate body gains access and are partakers of God's divine love and power. The reality of his salvation must be shared, placing Jesus at the center of worship. The genuine moment of worship is in the time of surrender to Christ who "sanctifies the heart of all those who worship him in spirit and truth" (John 17:15–19).

Qualifications of Worship Leaders (John 17:17)

Jesus gave a command with authority as co-equal with the Father. Jesus, the Great High Priest, gave himself as a ransom for sin and was crucified on the cross. The relevance of the corporate worship must be pictured on the implications of Christ's death and resurrection from the grave. Then the people will be sanctified in truth and be renewed to think of what God has done, is doing, and will do in the spiritual walk of the church. F. F. Bruce asserts, "Sanctification in truth is not a prayer for purification. They

²³ Robert E. Webber, *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 36.

are already clean. But it is the truth, the revelation of eternal values, that can both keep them unstained in the world, and provide the burden of their message. This truth is the Word of God, which can bring deliverance.”²⁴ Jesus prays to the Father to sanctify his people in truth and had sent those he loved into the world and had sanctified himself that those whom he loved and called might be sanctified in truth. Samuel M. Ngewa writes, “The second thing Jesus prayed for was the disciples’ sanctification (17:17). He stresses that this sanctification will be brought about by the truth, that is, by their increasing knowledge and understanding of God’s word.”²⁵ Because God’s Word is truth, the knowledge of this truth brings all who lead his people to a place of deep intimacy with God and into a place of sanctification, set apart for exceptional service. The corporate body must sing with grace from the heart, with beautiful melodies and harmonies that are pleasant to the ears and warm to the core—songs to a God who, through his gracious Spirit, inhabits the praises of his people. When the worshiper deeply understands God’s Word, there must be a sense of surrender and submission to the power and authority of Jesus, the one who sanctifies in truth. The example to follow is Christ Jesus who submitted to the will of God the Father.

C. Leslie Mitton writes on the purpose of being equipped and sanctified: “One was to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the other was for the building up of the body of Christ.”²⁶ It is important to note here that the Greek verb *exartizo* means to be

²⁴ F. F. Bruce, *John*, The International Bible Commentary (New York: Guideposts, 1986), 1258.

²⁵ Samuel M. Ngewa, “John,” in *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Adeyemo Tokunboh (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive, 2006), 1289. The disciple’s sanctification brings to light the knowledge of God’s truth and helps guide the worship leader to live an exemplary life in the world and be a witness of the gospel by doing God’s will. There is a need for the Lord Jesus among the various tribes in the African Church as a unifying factor for the people to grow and increase their knowledge and understanding of God through his word. Ngewa stresses that sanctification will be lived through God’s Word (1289). God desires for the gathered church to be one in spirit and to be guided and sanctified in the truth that can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁶ C. Leslie Mitton “The Book of Ephesians,” In *The New Century Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), 151. Indeed, much has been said on being sanctified, but Mitton

equipped, “be complete, to be equipped for every good work” (Eph 4:12). The weapon of warfare for every worship leader is to know Christ to be sanctified in the Word, and to be immersed in God’s Word for good works.

The corporate body must desire to be sanctified daily by God’s Word. Hebrews 10:10 explains that Jesus set himself apart to sanctify and justify man from sin. The Spirit bears witness to the power of the resurrected King. Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice and paid the price on behalf of man once and for all. Worship leaders must be hearers of the Word and submit to its authority and help the worshiper’s experience to surrender to the leadership and Lordship of the Savior, who desires a relationship with all those who call on his name. Through the sanctification of Jesus, men and women have been redeemed unto good works. The sanctification process for the worship leader must be daily. God’s Word is designed to draw his children back to God and when the redeemed devote and spend quality time in his presence, his name is glorified. Prayer and sacraments are powerful means that give worship leaders tools for ministry. They enable worship leaders to pour their heart to the Father, who is a present help in times of need. When worship leaders pray, they fulfill God’s Word and are granted grace to run the race with perseverance.

The symbolism of the sacraments during worship signifies being bought by the blood of the Lamb, crucified, and sanctified in his truth, “buried with him, and raised to walk in the newness of life” (Luke 9:23). Having the knowledge of being sanctified in truth will help the worship leader know that as a witness for Christ, the resurrection has united all who come before God with his Son Jesus who offers forgiveness. When worshipers are unashamed to lead worship, they acknowledge God and recapture the beautiful deeds of all that God has done, is doing, and will continue to do. Being

writes “on being sanctified and marked for the good works of the ministry (*diakonia*)” (151). The worship leader is singled out to sing Christocentric songs that serve and nurture the congregation spiritually. The idea of being sanctified is for the heart of the worshiper to be positioned and set apart to God alone, in Christ Jesus. When the heart is consecrated and dedicated to God, it is sanctified for God’s glory.

unashamed of worship reminds others of the character of God. To be unashamed is to continuously sing to the glory of the Lord Jesus and his ultimate sacrifice on the cross and re-live the power of his saving grace. God's grace is sufficient for all who rejoice in him always.

The corporate body must desire "to know Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection" (Phil 3:10). The church has a role to play in helping worship leaders have a balanced spiritual maturity by equipping them with tools to empower them for ministry work. The purpose of knowing Christ is to mutually teach and admonish God's people to lift the name of Jesus above all else. The goal of every worship leader should be to fulfill God's purpose and not achieve selfish ambition. Jesus intercedes on behalf of his chosen people. Leviticus 11:44 calls the people to be holy for God is sacred, and in verse 45 the command to be holy. Leviticus 19 and 1 Peter 1:15 encourage believers who are scattered abroad to live a holy life. Righteousness must be desired by every worship leader, for that is an attribute of God. Heaven and earth are full of God's goodness, and even in his transcendence he is regal and royal, and requires every worship leader to be "sanctified, set apart to live a righteous life that he or she may be marked as he who has clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps 24:3).

Worship leaders must desire a pure and sanctified heart (Ps 51). Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt 5:8). The opportunity God has given the church is to be sanctified and offer themselves as a living sacrifice to him. The process of sanctification comes from a total surrender of the heart. Holy living and sanctification must be upheld by worship leaders who have been called and set apart for God's service.

Furthermore, worship leaders have been sanctified unto holiness as they become true imitators of Christ. Chapell argues, "God does not simply invite us to a party of friends, or a lecture on religion or a concert of sacred music-he invites us into the presence of the King of the Universe before whom all creation will bow and for all whom

all of the heavens now sing.”²⁷ All have sinned (Rom 3:23) and need a savior whose arms are open wide to welcome all who come before him, willing to be cleansed and made new. One way to express gratitude to God is by seeking forgiveness and singing praise to his holy name.

Worship must have a top priority to glorify God and not just be a performance for self-gratification. Out of the fullness of God in Christ Jesus, believers received grace (John 1:16). In a world filled with evil, there must be a desire to be separated from sin. Worship leaders are to encourage the people not to turn away from the saving grace of Christ. They should pray for open opportunities for the gospel to be stirred in the hearts of all his children and to learn what it means to let His Word dwell in their hearts richly. The worship leader must take time to study and develop his or herself in the Word. They should be humble and open to rebuke and correction when they make mistakes. Christocentric worship must be grounded in humility. Accordingly, everything that the worship leader does should honor God and challenge the worshiping community to mature in Christ.

The worship leader’s role is to lead God’s people with a grateful heart and be filled by the Spirit of God. Being set apart in holiness allows the worship leader to be a witness of the Chief-High Priest (Jesus), who is always there to lead those who surrender to his perfect will. Jesus, speaking to the woman at the well, says,

Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know, we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4:21–23)

The corporate body must make God’s glory the sole goal of worship. Daniel Block affirms, “True worshipers find their inspiration, nourishment, and instruction in the whole counsel of God. Those who have been redeemed recognize that all of life is to be an expression of

²⁷ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 160.

worship and that God delights in wholehearted and full-bodied holiness.”²⁸ Like David says, God not only expects all who confess his name to praise him (Ps 30:4), but like Paul be admonished, teach, and encourage one another in worship (Col 3:16). Chapell affirms, “God is not only the chief audience of our worship; by his Word and Spirit, but he is also the true speaker, singer, and prayer.”²⁹

The lifestyle of the worship leader must be sacrificial with God taking precedence. The worship leader must continuously tell the worshipping community of God’s worth by celebrating his presence and proclaiming the greatness of his love and faithfulness.

Conclusion

God’s Word provides worship leaders the inspiration to lead the corporate body. When worship leaders prepare in prayer, the power of God’s presence is present, and the believers in Christ grow unto maturity. Colossians 1:28 brings to light the beauty of new things God had done through Jesus Christ. To grow in maturity in Christ is to pursue a sanctified life of true worship and obedience. The devotion of every worship leader is to remain a faithful steward in leading the congregation into the presence of God week in and week out. Growing in maturity in worship draws the believer to Christ’s grace. Practicing skills gives room for improvement and is an exercise for righteousness; growing unto maturity helps the believer stay focused in pointing to the one whose manifested glory came down to dwell among men.

When the skill is developed, worship is led with grace through the power of the Holy Spirit. The worship leader is to let Jesus be the center of worship. When the Word of God dwells in the heart, it brings the worshiper to a place of spiritual alertness and fills

²⁸ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 99.

²⁹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 119.

the heart with joy and singing (Ps 100:1–5). Worship must be joyous, uplifting, and make the hearts of all who worship God rejoice. When worship is built around an attitude of thanksgiving, it inspires the church to celebrate their human identity in Christ with Psalms, hymns, dance, and shouts of praise. God’s love must be evident in the expression and freedom to lead worship, which will exemplify Christ–like character.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF CHRISTOCENTRIC WORSHIP

The previous chapter elaborated how priests and Levites were set apart with a specific service or duty. This chapter examines of the role of the priest and the significance of holiness and obedience to God. According to Mike Cospers, “Through all of these steps, the God of Israel extended the invitation to the children of Abraham, essentially saying: I am your God, I rescued you from the chains of your bondage. Now I want to live among you, standing you up as a beacon for the world, a testimony to life as it was meant to be lived.”¹ This ray of hope is ultimately expressed in redemption through Jesus Christ and the ultimate price he paid on the cross. God’s gift to all humanity is closely associated with Christ’s priestly sacrifice. God’s kingdom was made manifest through the incarnational priesthood and redemption of Jesus living a holy life and his sacrifice on the cross. All who believe in him have eternal life through his sacrifice in obedience to the Father. This chapter examines Jesus’s role as High Priest as a foundation for considering the Christian life as a living sacrifice to God, the worship leader’s call to walk in holiness, and the church’s call to reflect the gospel story in corporate worship.

Jesus as High Priest and Perfect Sacrifice

This project aims to develop worship leaders who reflect Christ’s priestly role in their worship. The corporate body is called to be joyful participants of Christ love, submitting to the sovereignty of God’s omniscient rule. Although Christ was humiliated, he was exalted and crowned in glory and honor through his obedience to fulfill the priestly

¹ Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway: 2013), 55.

sacrifice on the cross. David rejoices in God for his mercy and deliverance (Ps 30:3). This event happened when David dedicated the temple and called those who gathered there to join him in praising God for his faithfulness, even when he often complained in his moments of distress. The church is to be a partaker of God's holiness and to gratefully rejoice in his beautiful deeds, fulfilling the works of Christ. Jesus, on behalf of humanity, is the one worthy to intercede for the atonement of sins to God.

A helper is revealed in Psalm 33:20 as the eschatological Messiah. Believers must rely on Jesus as the giver of hope and mercy. David R. Anderson affirms the qualifications of Jesus in (Heb 5:1–10) as the chief High Priest, saying, “God appointed him, he had compassion for God's people and was the Son and Melchizedekian Priest.”² Through the eternal covenant of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross, God pronounced his blessings to all who humbly come before him. Thomas à Kempis imagines what Christ says to the Father,

I gave myself totally to the Father for you. I have given my actual body and blood to be your food, so that I may be all yours and that you may be mine forever. But if you put your trust in yourself and do not give yourself freely to my will, your offering is incomplete; nor can our union be perfect. If you wish to find freedom and grace, the free gift of yourself into the hands of God must precede everything else.³

The eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ atoned for sins of men and his priesthood is rooted in his righteousness and his word. Matthew Barrett gives the significance of Melchizedek's name: “Melchizedek means, ‘King of righteousness,’ in contrast to the wicked king of Sodom who opposed Abraham. As the ‘King of righteousness,’ Melchizedek would foreshadow the king–priest yet to come—that is, the Messiah.”⁴ The Spirit of God is made manifest through Jesus Christ, who in his suffering loved all of

² David R. Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 237.

³ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 99.

⁴ Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 155.

humanity and died for the propitiation of sins (1 John 4:9–10). Therefore, the worship leader must fix his or her eyes and thoughts on Christ. The worship leader must be sensitive enough to remind the congregation of God’s mighty power to save, heal, and deliver through God’s Word and in Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God reconciled all men back to himself. Constance Cherry affirms that Christocentric worship honors God.⁵ All of creation must worship Christ, who lived a life of obedience to the Father.

According to Daniel Block, God invites the worshiping community to himself, “Into this dark world, the revelation of the true God shines like a beacon of glory and grace. Israel’s God has introduced himself by name; Israel’s God has revealed himself in word and deed; Israel’s God has declared the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable conduct; Israel’s God has provided a way of forgiveness that actually solves the human problem.”⁶ The focus of singing Christ-centered song is for the church not to stray away from God’s ordinances but to sing for God’s glory. God’s reign must be expressed through the worship of his people. The worship leader having a good knowledge of God’s Word and his ways (1 Chr 29:10–19) will motivate the corporate body to boldly testify of Christ’s priestly role and the privilege to be his witness to today’s church. Christ draws closer to all who come humbly before him (Heb 4:14–10:31). Jesus Christ is the Chief-High Priest who is transcendent and human and extends an invitation to all people to worship God. Steven S. Tuell asserts, “David’s last words are words of praise to God, and an invitation to the people to join in worship and praise. David declares that he and his people are aliens and transients, without home or hope apart from God’s grace.”⁷

⁵ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 22. The priority of Christ is, first, a fulfillment of God the Father’s intentions. The Father desires the exaltation of the Son. The greater the praise to Christ, the greater is God’s delight.

⁶ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 35.

⁷ Steven S. Tuell, *First and Second Chronicles*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 2001), 110-11.

Through Christ, His passion, death, and resurrection, which became the ransom for many, the hearts of the meek and lowly are drawn closer. Christ's sacrifice was once and for all; it paid the debt of man's sin in full. He sacrificed himself on the cross of Calvary, ascended to heaven, and gathered every people, every tribe, every tongue, and every nation to bow down and worship Him. The salvific mediation of Jesus's priesthood reveals His transcendent divinity. R. J. McKelvey states, "The throne of grace to which the recipient is invited is an antitype to the 'mercy seat' made propitiation on the day of atonement, and extended grace to the people."⁸ The centrality of God's goodness to man is highlighted through the priestly redemptive works of Christ. When the corporate body participates in the life of Christ by worshiping Jesus, who honored God, the beauty of God's holiness is made known.

Jesus is the Chief-High Priest who in the fulness of His resurrection stands in the presence of God as the living sacrifice. The gospel of the divine Savior's redemption must shape the liturgy of the church. According to Bryan Chapell, "There is a need for the worship leader to worship God with the sole aim of furthering the cause of the gospel."⁹ Christ lived an exemplary life and walked in holiness. The worship leader's life must point members of the congregation to Christ, the Chief-High Priest. Ron Man asserts, "Jesus Christ is the first and ultimate Apostle, the climatic and consummate messenger of God the Father to reveal the divine nature."¹⁰

Christ's priestly work reveals his redemptive grace. Worship leaders must follow the footprints of the gospel story and stay focused on a sound approach to liturgy and biblical principles of the life of Christ. While the theme of priesthood and sacrifice was

⁸ R. J. McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest: Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 117.

⁹ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 46.

¹⁰ Ron Man, *Proclamation and Praise* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 4.

developed from the beginning of Scripture, Christ's incarnation illuminates the fullness of these themes. The challenge before today's worship leaders is to be obedient, like Christ was to God the Father, and recognize the significance of their role to lead God's people faithfully. Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, offered himself for the redemption of all God's people. Through the Sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, all who sought God's face obtained access to the Father and received atonement for their sins. The spiritual guidance and counsel the worship leader brings to the place of worship helps worshipers celebrate Jesus (Heb 7:27). David speaks of Jesus in Psalm 110:4 by saying, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Worship leaders must read this Psalm and think of the messianic mystery of Christ as the great High Priest and not David as king over Israel. They must understand Jesus's authority and priestly role from the spiritual point of view as the one who obeyed the Father and made all those who will humble themselves and follow him, for he made all who believe heirs of the "kingdom" and royal "priests" called to be his witnesses (Rev 1:6).

Christ fulfilled his priestly ministry, and his death on the cross gave grace and mercy. According to McKelvey, "Christ in his death is Sacrifice and Priest—a remarkable paradox that is fundamental about his priesthood. The offering up of himself makes it the means to proceed to the mercy seat."¹¹ Living a life of holiness in obedience to Christ plays a vital role in revealing to the worship community the relevance of the priestly office and work of Jesus. He must be seen as the pioneer-priest who ascended to the Father as a sweet offering and has resurrected the church to life. The corporate body must renew and reaffirm its faith by returning to righteousness and the truth in worship that is rooted in Christ Jesus.

Jesus became the source of eternal reconciliation for all who would choose to follow and obey him. The paradigm for worship leaders who desire to live and be like Christ is to constantly look up to the author and perfecter of their faith (Jesus) who

¹¹ McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 36.

admonishes the church to follow and draw near to his mercy seat. Christ's priestly work of salvation reveals his love for humanity and his redemptive purpose to bring man back to God. Confessing faith in God draws the worshiping community to the Father as a reaffirmation of His Triune nature. The true allegiance of the church to God must be to His Son (Jesus) and no other. When the people gather to worship, Christ must be upheld as the trustworthy source of eternal life to all who trust and obey. Salvation can only be made possible through His redemptive grace and the reconciliatory ministry of the Incarnate Son of God.

Christians' Obedience as Living Sacrifices (Rom 12:1)

The New Testament brings to light the life of the apostles and believers who offered their lives as a living sacrifice to God. The apostle Paul admonishes the church, saying, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship" (Rom 12:1). Geoffrey Wainwright and Tucker assert,

In Romans 12, Paul then goes on to describe Christians, with their varied gifts and ministries, as constituting one body in Christ, into which they are incorporated by baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). In that light, Christian worship appears as vocal, corporeal, and corporate, embracing both liturgical assembly and mutual service among the congregation.¹²

Paul challenged the church in Rome to be filled with joy and peace and to trust God so that they may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gifts God has given to believers are an asset to the community of faith. Christians become obedient to God's will when they see Jesus as the author of salvation and the image of God.

Willingness to present oneself as a living sacrifice brings to life Christ's witness, and believers must remind the corporate body that God made man in his image and likeness to be his image bearers and proclaim his Good News. According to Darrell L.

¹² Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York: Oxford University, 2006), 6.

Bock and Buist M. Fanning, “God in his love for sinners has taken an initiative to effect a reconciliation. To ‘reconcile’ an enemy means to remove the hostile situation.”¹³ Only through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was man reconciled back to God. Christ became a model of humility and continued to show reverence to God. The apostle Paul in Romans 12:2 admonishes the church to respond to God’s mercy and seek His forgiveness through Christ “with a reasonable worship [*logike latreia*].”¹⁴ The significance of offering oneself as a living sacrifice expresses the love and passion toward God and points others to Jesus, who receives the praises of his people (Luke 2:37; Phil 3:19; Rom 14:22–23).

The corporate body becomes united as the heart is engaged (Ps 133:1). Christ’s sacrifice on the cross shows his willingness and obedience to follow God’s will. The call for the corporate body is to serve one another, and everyone sets themselves apart to bring glory and honor to God and lift one another in prayer as the cooperate body worships. Paul understood what it meant to pay tribute to God, so he challenged the church to do so through their words, action, and lifestyle in obedience to Christ. The mind must be transformed and conformed into the image and likeness of Christ. I. Howard Marshal asserts, “There is a clear call to Jesus’ followers to be consistent in their way of life.”¹⁵ Love for God must be sincere and come from the heart united with God the Father and a desire to obey and do his will. Bock and Fanning note, “The human response may come as a word to God in confession of faith and in prayers of thanksgiving, petition, and intercession.”¹⁶ The values of Christocentric worship shaped by the biblical structure of Christ’s perfect priestly sacrifice are rooted in the Christian’s obedience as living

¹³ Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 428.

¹⁴ Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament Text*, 6.

¹⁵ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 109.

¹⁶ Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament Text*, 10.

sacrifice. When believers reflect holiness, the worshiping church upholds the gospel of Christ's righteousness.

The response for every worship leader is to adore God and lead the church to confess sins before a God who is faithful and just to forgive iniquities and respond with love. Jesus says, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). Chapell asserts how worship patterns unites the church, "In every age, we worship God to further the cause of the gospel. We know the 'good news' of that gospel as we recognize the holiness of our creator, confess our sin, seek his grace, are assured of his mercy, give him thanks, petition his aid, seek his instruction, and, in loving response to all his mercies, live for him."¹⁷ When worship leaders do not conform to the patterns of this world or live according to the flesh's desires, they transform by the renewal of the mind and understand God's will in ministry. His Word must become the rule of faith and practice of presenting oneself as a living sacrifice. God desires the people's worship because it speaks of his providence, and through his Son the mystery of his divine authority is made manifest.

The task before the worship leader is to proclaim the incarnate Christ and point the corporate body of believers to worship His holy name. When the worshiper offers him/herself as a living sacrifice, the messianic character of Jesus's redemption is made manifest. The worship leader must follow the order and liturgical arrangements and focus on the central object of worship: Jesus.

Paul's call was for the church to follow and obey Christ and fix their eyes on him by living a holy life and doing his will. When worship leaders present themselves to God, they will be given grace and help in times of need. Chapell affirms, "We act with the strength that comes from the simple faith that the Good Shepherd will be true to his Word and will accomplish what is right for us as we obey him."¹⁸ Jesus obediently

¹⁷ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 19-20.

¹⁸ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 247.

offered himself through the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the will of God. The call here is to obey God's command, do his will, and be bold to lead his people. When the believer is no longer bound by fear, "God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).

In the Old Testament, God desired sacrifices and offerings of burnt offerings, but because Christ paid the price on the cross of Calvary, the church today has been given access to bring God the sacrifice of praise. God wants to see his people bring prayers and petitions to his throne of grace. The gathered church during worship must constantly reflect on God's Triune nature. When all these requests go up to God as sacrifices, he pours down his blessings on the gathered church. The church must fix its focus and reflection on God's character is in his Triune nature of love. The biblical text must exemplify the redemptive history of Christ. According to D. A. Carson, "Nor can we ignore great theological structures, including the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead, all that the Cross achieves, and the unavoidable implications of the New Testament eschatology with its unyielding combination of inaugurated and future eschatology."¹⁹ How the biblical text fits into the redemptive history of Jesus Christ becomes critical. The church is called out to offer sacrifice of praise to God. Paul writes in Hebrews 13:15–16, "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

In the Old Testament, animal sacrifice brought a sweet fragrance before God's throne. Leviticus 23:18 reads, "You shall present with bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be burnt offerings to the Lord, along with their grain offering, and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord." The worship leader must understand that, in ancient Israel,

¹⁹ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 226.

sacrifices/temple worship was not centered around sacrifice. The book of Psalms, for example, was part of the liturgy of Israel, both sung and read. Paul agrees that Christ leads the church in triumphal procession, “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor 2:14–15). Indeed, God’s name must be acknowledged, and his glory declares that he alone is worthy, and none compares to him. Fred B. Craddock asserts, “A continual sacrifice of praise is to be offered to God. Both ‘Sacrifice’ and ‘fruit of lips’ were expressions used in Judaism to characterize genuine worship of God, which did not always rely on material offerings (Hos 14:3, Psa. 50:14, 23; 107:22; see also Psa. 34:1; 71:8; 145:21).”²⁰

The corporate body must sing together and become aware of God’s truth and the context that reveals the priestly works of Jesus Christ. The gospel message becomes the source and inspiration and truth for the moral and spiritual formation of the congregation. The beauty of that melody comes from a heart that is humble to God. Through his Son, the church strives toward living a holy life and offers sacrifices of worship that are acceptable before His throne of grace. Man explains, “The grace of God means God providing for us what He requires of us. This is an amazing truth, and one

²⁰ Fred B. Craddock, “The Letter to the Hebrews,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2, & 3 John, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 167. Craddock continues,

The worship leaders’ lifestyle must be of continual sacrifice to God. The sacrificial lifestyle must be viewed from the perspective of worship as seen in one of Paul’s many writings in the New Testament. Unending praise that is characterized as being “through him” (Christ) and confessing his name. The name of the one who has through his suffering provided access to God and there established an altar appropriated for the people of God. The corporate body must not only worship with mere lips but be moved to action by expressing genuine love for God and neighbor. (168)

Paul says, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sister, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). A life of continual sacrifice of praise benefits the body of Christ. The offering of oneself must go before God as a sacrifice that is worth giving to a God, who deserves the worship that comes from his people. There must be a longing to bring God worship that comes from the heart. The corporate body must feel God’s presence, express their love to God, and show gratitude to God who receives the worship of his people as a sweet offering before his throne.

which infinitely distinguishes Christianity from all other faiths.”²¹

The significance of the office of the worship leader is to be humble in holiness and obedience to God. To live in holiness and walk in a covenant relationship with God is to do his will, be guarded in total obedience to his Word, and offer Him the Sacrifice of worship that points the corporate body to God. According to Zac Hicks, “Worship leaders, make no mistake. Your leading of others in worship serves to fulfill the Great Commission.”²² The goal of every worship leader is to be the humble vessel through which God sings and plays. Those called to this role must respond to God’s mercy, be teachable in humility, and become living sacrifices that are alive for God’s service.

The whole duty of man is to be changed and to understand God’s will, to do his will, and to live by his commands. Bob Kauflin asserts why the cross is crucial to worship:

Glorying in Jesus Christ means glorying in his cross. That doesn’t mean looking at some icon or two pieces of wood nailed together. Nor does it imply that every song we sing has the word cross in it. It has little to do with church gatherings that are more like a funeral than a celebration. The cross stands for all that was accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. It focuses on his substitutionary death at Calvary but includes everything that gave meaning to that act. His preexistent state in glory. His incarnation. His life of perfect obedience. His suffering. His resurrection. His ascension. His present intercession and reign in glory. His triumphant return.²³

Jesus must always be worshiped and seen as the mediator and reconciler of man back to God. Worship leaders must remember that they occupy that priestly office and should strive to live a holy life.

²¹ Man, *Proclamation and Praise*, 77.

²² Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 52.

²³ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Letting Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 72. Kauflin presents Jesus as a perfect atoning sacrifice for sin and the focus of worship.

Holiness in the Life of the Worship Leader

The lives of the Old Testament Levitical priests were set apart for holiness. Worship leaders have lives dedicated to serving the people of God by administering sacrifices of worship on behalf of God's people and providing guidance as the people worship God (Gen 8:18–21). Those who were set apart had a duty to live a holy life, obey God's voice, and do his will. Worship leaders must understand the importance of holiness in worship and how being a worshiper means being grafted into the faithful witness of Jesus Christ. The pursuit of righteous and holy living allows God to shape the life of the worship leader to give God glory. Giving glory to God must be top priority for all who worship God. Bruce Shields and David Butzu quoting the Jewish apocalyptic work, the New Testament of Levi on the reality of the presence of God saying,

In the uppermost heaven of all dwells the greatest glory in the Holy of Holies superior to all holiness. There with him are the archangels who serve and offer propitiatory sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of all the sins of ignorance of the righteous ones. They present to the Lord a pleasing odor, a rational and bloodless oblation. In the heaven below them are the messengers who carry the responses to the angels of the Lord's presence. there with him are thrones and authorities; there praises to God are offered eternally. So, when the Lord looks upon us, we all tremble. Even the heavens and earth and the abysses tremble before the presence of his majesty.²⁴

The corporate body must worship God and offer sacrifice of praise to his name for who he is and for his Son Jesus Christ, the foundation of holiness. Worship leaders must understand the true essence of being called to righteous living, which is to be set apart and consecrated for the glory of God. Leviticus 20:26 says, "You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine." Samuel E. Balentine affirms, "Leviticus 18–20 is a literary and theological unit composed of a frame and a center. The frame, chapter 18 and 20, insists that the journey towards holiness goes through the ethics of human relationships. The center, Leviticus 19, insists that how humans relate to one another is the measure of their fidelity with God."²⁵ All of

²⁴ Bruce E. Shields and David A Butzu, *Generations of Praise: The History of Worship* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006), 41-42.

²⁵ Balentine, *Leviticus*, 167.

humanity is called to love God, live in holiness, and love one another. According to Herman Bavinck, “The holiness of God manifests itself in all the relationships in which he has placed himself over against His people. The whole of the law giving in Israel has its first principle in the holiness of Jehovah and has its end in the sanctification of the people. He is holy in all His revelation, in all that proceeds from Him: His name is holy (Lev 20:3).”²⁶ J. Clinton McCann Jr. affirms the significance of God’s Word, saying, “Life resides in God’s word, and it is God’s word that offers strength. God is the teacher and God’s teaching means life. Thus, while the psalmist’s soul clings to the dust, he or she is expressing the intent to cling to God’s revelation.”²⁷ In short, God will teach the people directly (see Jer 31:34), this is a conviction also evident in Psalm 119:12. The psalmist writes on the importance of searching the heart of the righteous saying, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts (Ps 139:23).”²⁸

²⁶ Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary, 2019), 452.

²⁷ J. Clinton McCann Jr., “The Book of Psalms,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4, 1 & 2 *Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 1168-69. McCann writes that God’s Word is life and all who seek God in worship must cling to the power of his word. He argues from Ps 119:9-11, answering the question of, “How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you, do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you” (1168). When the worshiper is grafted in God’s Word, it becomes a shield against unrighteousness. According to McCann, the question of cleanness or purity in v. 9 is answered by reference to another of the eight synonyms: “word” (*dabar*). Verse 11 is reminiscent of Jer 31:33, a verse in which God promises to write “instructions” on the people’s hearts (1169).

²⁸ McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1237. God’s Word causes the worshiper to rise in the morning and offer prayers and worship to God, for God will eagerly hear the voice of all who call on his name. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you and watch (Ps 5:3). McCann furthers his argument based on the psalmist’s plea in Ps 139:23–24. Hence, he reveals,

The psalmist oath of loyalty is sealed by vv. 23-24, where in language recalling vv. 1-3, the psalmist lays himself or herself open to God’s examination. Having been searched (v. 1), the psalmist wants to be continually searched. Having been known (vv. 1–2, 4), the psalmist wants to be continually known. Having been seen (v. 16), the psalmists want to be continually seen. Having experienced God’s leading (see v. 10), the psalmist wants to be continually led. In short, by the end of the psalm, there is no hint of ambivalence. The psalmist fully entrusts her or his life to God, for now (vv. 23–24a) and forever (v. 24b), secure in the conviction that he or she has been, is being, and will be “fully known” (1Cor. 13:12). (1237)

This verse gives the worshiper a glimpse of God’s omniscience and reminds the corporate body that God is interested in every detail of each and every one who comes before his presence.

According to Walter Brueggemann, “True worship and new living require a yielding of self to begin again on God’s terms.”²⁹ When the worship leader focuses on honoring God and living by God’s terms, the Christo-centric nature of Jesus’s holiness is reflected in his life. Making God the center of worship and giving Him all the glory becomes the worship leader’s top priority. Michael Lawrence and Mark Dever assert, “The worship of God must be a reflection of God’s character, not ours. That character is not found by looking to ourselves—our preferences, tastes, and desires. It is found by looking to God’s Word, where he reveals Himself.”³⁰ The human response of Christocentric worship and holy living must be focused on the great High Priest. God’s eternal love is expressed in the place of worship when the worshiper’s heart reflects His infinite excellencies rooted in the redemptive purpose of God’s begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When worship leaders identify and understand the practices of singing songs that are Christocentric, the holiness of Jesus is revealed to the worshiping community. Christ’s righteousness points the corporate body to give all glory to God and worship him for his unending love and share in the suffering. Reggie M. Kidd affirms, “Remembering Jesus’s death in a song helps us take our place in what Paul calls ‘the fellowship of his sufferings.’”³¹ When the worship leader is in right standing with God, and the focus of

²⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 101.

³⁰ Michael Lawrence and Mark Dever, “Blended Worship,” in *Perspectives on Christian Worship: 5 Views*, ed. Matthew J. Pinson (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 233. Lawrence and Dever define Christ-like character in the life of the worship leader as the reflection of God’s character and love. They write that the believer must approach the Father through the Scripture and see the Scripture as a reliable source that points to Christ. The gathered church must worship God through his Word and be daily inspired by the Holy Spirit to have faith in the infallibility and trustworthiness of the truth (233).

³¹ Reggie M. Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ’s Song in our Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 95.

the worshipping community is on the cross, the power of Christ's redemptive grace draws the congregation closer to God.

The worship leader is encouraged through Scripture to strive toward holy living in adoration to God and in obedience to God's will. Holiness draws the worshiper closer to God and reminds the congregation of the necessity to pursue righteousness and walk in fellowship with God, who reconciled all of humanity back to himself through Jesus his Son. The practice of holiness helps the worship leader live a life that brings honor and glory to God. To be holy, the heart of the worship leader must be guarded by God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Roy Zuck asserts, "The truth of God, unknown by people who have not experienced God's salvation, is revealed by the Holy Spirit to those who love the Lord."³²

In the Old Testament, the lifestyle of the worship leader was marked by obedience to God. The Israelites certainly did not always exemplify or live up to these standards of obeying God (Exod 32:1–35). One of many ways to faithfully obey God is in being careful to do all that God commands. God expects the worshiper to pay tribute to His holy name for His unfailing love. God's blessings come upon all who obey his voice (Deut 28:1–68). The way to be obedient is to lead by example and teach invaluable truths of doing God's will by seeking his face and seeking his forgiveness even in weakness and human limitation. Obeying God's will requires hearing his voice through Scripture, responding in holiness, being in total submission, and surrendering to his purpose and plan.

The worshipping church must stand on an eschatological foundation of the kingdom of God that is rooted in Christ Jesus. John 5:24 says, "Whoever hears God's word and believes in God who sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, will not be condemned but have eternal life." When one believes, they must worship and live a life

³² Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 29.

of holiness and obedience to God. When Christ is seen as the mediator, the worthiness of God is revealed. Mark Labberton explains, “The core of a biblical theology of worship is the worthiness of God. Christian worship is only possible as our response to the glory, power, and love of God as revealed most clearly in and through Jesus Christ. The gift of God’s revelation enables humanity to worship.”³³ The church’s obedient worship experience must be rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is calling the worshiper to live a holy life that pleases him. David Peterson affirms,

Jesus’ promise to give his followers the kingdom by way of a new covenant means “making them the people of the Kingdom of God or the people of God who are to share his rule over the world.” Thus, the culmination of his preaching of the kingdom of God in his Last Supper promises about his death being the atoning and covenant-establishing sacrifice through which the kingdom is to become a reality.³⁴

When the worshiper focuses attention on Christ and his kingdom, God’s worthiness, grace, and truth are revealed. The worship leader must be authentic and intentional in living a life that glorifies God. Sandra Maria Van Opstal describes what it means to be authentic and intentional: “It is not synonymous with unintentional. Intentionality is important to developing practices that become organic. In fact, spiritual formation is all about practicing disciplines that shape us.”³⁵

How the Worshiping Church Reflects the Gospel

According to Geoffrey Wainwright,

Christian worship recognizes its own scriptural basis by the fact that the continual reading of the Scriptures is a constitutive part of liturgy: these scriptures narrate the fundamental story, up to and including its awaited consummation; they contain the

³³ Mark Labberon, quoted in John D. Witvliet, *Worship in the Joy of the Lord: Selections from Chip Stam’s Worship Quote of the Week* (Grand Rapids: CICW, 2015), 9.

³⁴ David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 123.

³⁵ Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 46.

promises, commands, and pattern that worshipers take as they play their own part in the story.³⁶

The foundation of worship today is embedded in the good news of the gospel. The worship leader's lifestyle is shaped by understanding the gospel message and the powerful witness it brings to change the lives of all who surrender to God's will. The primary responsibility of the worship leader is to glorify God and offer sacrifices of praise that display Christ's priestly works of grace. The gospel recaptures the wonders of God and the necessity that God is the central point of the worshiping church.

The story of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the risen King's death and resurrection shapes the gathered church's liturgical formations. When the corporate body gathers in worship, there must be an affirmation of faith in Christ. Faith in Christ opens the truth of the gospel message and encourage those who come into the worship space to profess their witness in Christ boldly. The collective responsibility of the church is to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior and declare the assurance of pardon rooted in His priestly role of redemption. The church reflects the gospel by worshiping God in the beauty of His holiness. God gives an invitation to the corporate body to be participants of holiness in the place of worship. The gospel comes alive when the Scripture is read and is primary in worship. The Word becomes the foundation of building and developing a Christ-centered congregation that worships God in the beauty of his holiness with humble hearts. The gospel message of God's love is made known when the corporate body understands that the gathered church comes together to glorify God, who gathers his people in his presence.

The gospel is the good news of God's grace shown to sinners through Jesus Christ. The gospel story expresses love in the name of Jesus, who sacrificed His life on the cross that all may be reconciled with God. Robert E. Webber affirms,

The birth of Christ generated a significant amount of worship literature that praised

³⁶ Wainwright, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, 4.

God for fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies. The keynote of the birth narratives is struck by Mary in the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55). This note of worship is recognized as one of the earliest hymns of the church. The events of Jesus' death and resurrection produced a worship response that stressed the destruction of the powers of sin and death."³⁷

The corporate body must remember the sacrifice of Jesus, who came down to earth in human form, poured His love and affection to redeem humanity. Christopher Ellis affirms, "Arguably, all worship should have a point of reference beyond itself, not only in relation to God, but in relation to the world beyond the church."³⁸ Fellowshiping with the corporate body in Christ reflects the embodiment of the gospel message with Jesus exemplifying that in the breaking of bread with His disciples and urging them to do the same in remembrance of Him. The gospel story speaks of the newness of life found through Jesus Christ. His divine grace is wrapped around the communion table. The ability to proclaim His victory to believers unveils the assurance of eternal life in His resurrection. The church's worship must be rooted in the expression of his love. The gospel upholds the worth and wonder of the Father, revealing himself to humanity through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The gospel enables the church to express their faith in Christ and proclaim His salvation. Prayer, meditation of God's Word, and fellowshiping with other believers strengthens the faith of the worshiping community. Theological liturgies shape and guide the content of today's worshiping church. The Apostle Paul asserts,

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

The gospel message reflects the inner expression of what it means to worship and do the will of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. When congregation members lift their voices

³⁷ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 43.

³⁸ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM, 2004), 65.

to sing hymns and spiritual songs, God's power and redemptive grace is revealed (Col 3:1–4). Jesus came down to dwell among men and offered himself as a living sacrifice. Ron Man quotes John Murray's, "*The living Savior*" saying, "The gospel in distinction, is concerned with what Jesus began to do and teach... Prejudice is done to the work of Christ and our faith in him when we overlook or even fail to emphasize his continued ministry in both doing and teaching."³⁹ The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ realigns the church to offer their sacrifice of praise from the heart of worship to a living Savior who has appointed believers to be His witnesses.

The Spirit of truth reveals the gospel (John 16:12–13) and makes the Word living and active in the worshiper's life. It is therefore essential to be transformed daily by reading and studying the Word, which will renew the mind and help the corporate body to participate in becoming faithful witnesses of His redemptive grace. When the gathered church continues in the breaking of bread and fellowship, they become the instruments of His love and sacrifice on the cross. The Word was read, and believers are encouraged to live a life of purity and integrity as they follow God's will and become more like Jesus daily. He obeyed the Father and sacrificed his life for the world's salvation. The gospel is the joy of the new covenant in Christ. The communal fellowship with one another helps the gathered church to appreciate Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Ellis asserts, "So the devotional concern for sincerity and integrity of life is not only evident in the practice of self-examination and penitence. It is also evident in the encounter with God's costly love in the cross of Christ and the consequent strengthening of a faith which inspires not only devotion, but the sacrificial living which should follow."⁴⁰ Jesus is the righteous one who takes away the world's sins. Through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, the church is dead to sin and raised to walk in the newness of life.

³⁹ Man, *Proclamation and Praise*, 25. Quotes Murray, "*The Living Savior*" 40-41.

⁴⁰ Ellis, *The Gathering*, 195.

Worship leaders must pay close attention to the gospel message and have a desire to disciple those they lead. The gospel shapes the significance of the liturgy and sacraments. Congregation members participate in bringing their sacrifice of praise through singing, prayers, and thanksgiving, which deepens their worship experience and helps revitalize them spiritually to discern God’s will and be obedient to follow his voice. The gospel message transforms the spiritual formation of the worshiper and reveals Christ’s priestly sacrifice to all who come before God by the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. David Lemley writes, “Worship accounts for God’s story and reveals his transformational promise through his one and only Incarnate Son.”⁴¹ The gospel message is strengthened when the worship leader follows the example of Jesus and depends on the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the worship leader can choose songs that create a spiritual diet for the church.

The intentionality to sing Christocentric songs, positions the heart of the worship leader in a posture of dependence and humility to God. The response to the grace received through the Lord Jesus is to be conformed in union with the Father, who strengthens all who depend on Him. The Christocentric message of Christ’s redemptive love is embodied by the corporate body whose radical faith and authentic worship bring the Word of God alive. The centrality of the gospel is reflected in the obedience of Jesus Christ in communion with the Father who desires all who come before him to be restored unto his love and righteousness. God is worshiped for he is the God of creation who sacrificed his Son and sent believers to the world as heirs of his kingdom to serve God and lead the corporate body to repentance from sin, which is an obstacle to worship. The gospel reflects (1) God’s glory (2) the outpour of his love and (3) an invitation to all of creation to be joyful participants in worship.

⁴¹ David Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing: Formation through Contemporary Worship Music* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2021), 28-29.

When the sacrifice of praise is offered to God from a pure and repentant heart, the worship of God becomes an essential part of the lived sacrificial liturgy of Jesus's priestly works to reconcile all men to the Father. The gospel message becomes the crossroad between the priestly work of Christ and those He has called out to do His will and be witnesses of His divine self-love sacrifice. Man explains, "Christ has not only opened the way into the Father's presence, He not only shows us the way, but He also actively leads in worship and leads us to the throne of God."⁴² The church's worship must unceasingly ascend to the Father, through Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son. Cherry affirms, "We worship God the Father, but we do so through the Son, Jesus Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit makes this possible. Authentic Christian worship, worship in spirit and in truth, is filled with Christ who in turn, fulfills the purpose of the Father. When Christ is exalted, God is glorified."⁴³ When the gospel story is shaped by authenticity and Christ's sacrifice, it makes telling the gospel story of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus sweeter. Robert E. Webber affirms, "The story of God is the story of the Triune God, and therefore always the story of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. For example, an image used by the early church fathers was that God always works in the world through his own two hands-the incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit."⁴⁴ When worship leaders prioritize Jesus as the center of worship, the corporate body will be pointed to his grace and mercy. True authenticity and holy living will shape the practical life of the worshiper to be a witness for Christ.

⁴² Man, *Proclamation and Praise*, 37.

⁴³ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 22.

⁴⁴ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 30.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that worship leaders should be developed to have an exemplary Christlike life modeled in righteousness. The worship leader guides the members of the congregation to the hope of glory and the Chief High Priest (Jesus). Worship leaders must seek to honor God by setting themselves apart with an attitude of humility and service to God through Jesus Christ, his Son. The sacrifice of praise of today's church must be authentic even in its expression. Worship must reflect deep devotion to God and point all who come into the worship space to the mission of Christ's love. When God's Word is alive and active, it draws the worshiper's heart to the place of encounter with the great High Priest (Jesus), the Messiah.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter describes the project preparation and implementation. The purpose of this project was to develop Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Four goals were established to execute and evaluate this project: (1) assess the knowledge and leadership of the worship leader in pointing the corporate body to Christ (2) develop an eight-session curriculum to be taught over Zoom/WhatsApp over the course of four weekends to worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church on why Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship (3) increase understanding of Christocentric worship by teaching the curriculum (4) develop a ministry plan to create awareness of the significance of Christocentric songs in corporate worship at Shiloh Baptist Church. The training sessions used a four-weekend curriculum to develop worship leaders' ability to sing Christocentric songs while administering pre- and post-project surveys. The training sessions were originally intended for eight weekends, but after discussing with SBC leadership and with the approval of my project supervisor, the training was shortened to a four-weekend period.

Project Preparation

Preliminary preparation for this project started in spring 2022. An assignment for my *Applied Empirical Research* seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was to design and test a research survey tool that could be used as a pilot for the ministry project. A pre-project survey consisting of ten questions was developed for the purpose of achieving the first goal of the project: assessing the knowledge and leadership of the worship leaders in pointing the corporate body to Christ. I set up an

expert panel who assessed the pre-course survey. The survey was critiqued by members of the class and the professor. Based on the feedback from classmates, the survey was revised and then sent to a group of ten worship pastors outside of Shiloh Baptist Church on April 11, 2022. The training participants took the survey, and I compiled their responses. The pilot group of worship pastors were compiled on May 4, 2022, and led to a revised, third iteration of the survey in late May. The changes included eliminating ambiguous words and phrases and ensuring all Likert-based statements were scalable.

In spring 2022, an assignment for the *Foundations of Teaching* seminar included an eight-week curriculum that could be used for the ministry project. Using chapters 2 and 3 of the project, I wrote and submitted to my faculty supervisor, Dr. Matthew Haste, a preliminary eight-week curriculum as a post-seminar assignment on February 4, 2022. Before the end of the course, an evaluation was given on basic concepts and distinctive features of biblical worship, the role of the worship leader, and the place of worship in the corporate body.

Upon the completion of these two doctoral seminars, the primary research tool and course curriculum for the ministry project began taking shape. Implementation of this project began on August 19 and 20, 2022 and continued through September 9, 2022. Through the mentorship of my faculty supervisor, I continued to develop, implement, and evaluate the ministry project. The training session taught why singing Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship. The curriculum content consisted of the principles of Christocentric worship in light of the Scriptures.

The pre-project survey was designed to assess how worship leaders at SBC felt about Christocentric worship pointing congregants to Christ. I was encouraged that 22 of the 25 worship leaders who participated “agreed somewhat” with item 8: “Christocentric worship is primarily about pointing the congregants to Christ.” This item was important in establishing whether the worship leaders would take the worship training seriously when being equipped to grow unto maturity in Christ. Nineteen of the 25 participants at

least “agreed somewhat” with item 9: “Worship is a matter of the heart that is defined by the heart.” The desire of the participants is to know God and live a life that pleases him. I was not surprised that 22 participants at least “agreed” with item 4: “My desire for Shiloh Baptist Church is to sing Christ-centered songs during worship.” The survey data helped guide me in analyzing the lesson content regarding living a holy and authentic life and point the worshiping community to Christ.

There were two noticeable differences when comparing the mean attitude score under “holiness” and “obedience to Christ.” The mean score on the “attitude” portion of the survey was noticeably higher for those who agreed holiness is key to being an authentic worship leader. Additional data revealed that 100 percent of the participants “strongly agreed” with item 8: “Christocentric worship is primarily about pointing the congregants to Christ.” Ninety-eight percent indicated they “agree” on item 7: “All Scripture points worshippers to Jesus Christ.” With 90 percent “agree” with item 5: “I believe singing Christocentric songs challenges the congregation to worship in spirit and in truth.” However, this affirmation does not translate into the significance of singing Christocentric songs. If Christocentric singing is not rooted in God’s Word and the worship leader is not set apart to live a life of holiness, it will reveal a lack of relationship with God, a lack of obedience to God, or both. It is fitting that participants are willing to be trained and equipped as a reflection of this project, which aimed to develop Christocentric worship leaders at SBC.

Curriculum and Training Session Evaluators

The SBC leadership team were the evaluators of the curriculum and training sessions. They gave helpful feedback after assessing the impact and success the training had on the worship leaders and the church in general. A three-person leadership team, consisting of two pastors and a lay female deacon, reviewed the curriculum and used a rubric to assess the viability of the lesson plan. The leadership team had the opportunity

to read the project and curriculum and participate in the training sessions, but they did not take the pre- and post-survey instruments. The leadership team listened to the teachings during the training sessions, filled out the curriculum and evaluation form using the developed rubric.¹ They returned the completed rubric the next weekend. The rubric focused on the following issues:

1. The material is clearly relevant on singing Christocentric worship.
2. The material is biblical and theologically relevant.
3. The material includes vital information on developing Christocentric worship leaders to point the corporate body to Christ.
4. The material clearly laid out principles to be used to train future worship leaders on singing Christocentric songs.
5. The points and items of the material supports the purpose outlined in the thesis.
6. The lesson contains practical applications on Christ-centered songs.
7. The lesson is detailed in its presentation of the material.
8. The lesson is clear and could be communicated and taught by another person.

Project Implementation

Promotion and recruitment for this project started on July 31, 2022. Six objectives were be accomplished in the first two weeks of the project: (1) reaffirm the expert panel's willingness to participate in the project, (2) reaffirm the panel's role in accomplishing goal 2, (3) distribute the eight-session curriculum to the expert panel, (4) submit ethics forms for review, (5) receive approval to begin the survey process with participants, and (6) begin promoting the pre-assessment survey.

After the recruitment for Christocentric worship leaders training, twenty worship leaders completed a written request of participation. I communicated the details of the worship leaders training program over Zoom/WhatsApp group study. I sent screen shots and voice notes on WhatsApp to worship leaders of Shiloh Baptist Church who

¹ See appendix 3.

were unable to attend due to internet or technological difficulties, so they could participate in the training. All participants completed and signed a commitment form, documenting their willingness to participate in the worship leaders training. The training content was based on teaching the basic principles of Christocentric worship and to narrow it to the biblical foundations of worship. The curriculum content consisted of the principles of Christocentric worship and the spiritual discipline of singing songs that point the corporate body to Christ.

The participation of the worship leaders was encouraging from the first day the pre-survey was administered. The classes were offered on Fridays and Saturdays of the four weekends for thirty minutes and a Q & A session of thirty to forty-five minutes gave the participants the opportunity to seek more clarity on the topics covered. All twenty-five participants were invited to attend the training session virtually and twenty-two participated. The survey was sent out on Friday August 12, and the participants took the survey on Thursday August 18, and the results of the survey effected changes in the curriculum. I planned on having ten to fifteen worship leaders in the class but ended up having twenty-five sign-ups with twenty-four consistent participants throughout the four-weekend training. Participation was commendable since 80 percent of the participants attended 7 out of the 8 training sessions. The first trainings began on August 19 and 20, 2022, and ended on September 9 & 10, 2022.

Delivering Training Sessions

“Christocentric Worship” was the title of the training series. I wanted participants to be equipped with principles that would develop them as worship leaders in the church. The following is a summary of each session of the four-weekend training.

Weekend 1

The first and second training focused on the meaning of Christocentric worship. I offered a definition of Christocentric worship which must be understood as structured, sacred, and holy as it welcomes the Lord’s presence and points the worshipper

to acknowledge the risen Lord. I emphasized the need for worship leaders to see Jesus as central to leading biblical worship and grow unto maturity as Christ continues to be present in the gathered community. Participants also offered their definitions which were discussed. I introduced the participants to biblical and theological foundations of Christ-centered worship through a twenty-minute lecture according to Colossians 3:16–17. Following the lecture, I engaged the participants to a ten-minute warm-up discussion of the central idea of the lesson. The central idea was that biblical and theological foundations are significant in developing Christocentric worship leaders.

Each participant was given the opportunity to share their worship experience and how it impacted them. I provided participants with working definitions of Christocentric (Christ-centered) worship that conforms to the redemptive work of Christ and expresses the power of God. After discussing the definition, I challenged participants to consider their worship lifestyle of living a holy life and point the corporate body to Christ. This concluded the first day of training on August 19, 2022.

During this training session I responded to the question, why is it important to develop Christocentric worship leaders at SBC? I noted the worship leader's relationship with God in preparation, planning, and prayer, in pointing the corporate body to Christ. Other subjects of the first weekend's training included Old Testament worship and the role of the worship leader's grasp of Scriptures, Old Testament worship and the response to redemption, and the characteristics of Christocentric worship.

The session concluded with a thirty-minute question-and-answer time to ensure participants had a proper understanding of the lesson content. Following the thirty-minute lecture, worship leaders engaged in a warm-up discussion about the big idea of the lesson. I challenged participants to explain why there is need to prepare, plan, and pray. After this discussion with the participants, I elaborated how the training curriculum reveals that planning and praying is important because it is a fundamental component of growing unto maturity for the corporate body. I gave biblical examples such as Acts 2:42, which says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to

the breaking of bread and to prayer.” I was able to draw practical examples of how one of my worship professors at The Southern Baptist Seminary, Dr. Greg Brewton, in my first doctoral seminar “Leadership Dynamics in Worship Ministry,” influenced me to daily examine my devotion to God. I challenged participants to hunger and thirst for deep intimacy with Christ and be willing to walk daily with God—then, the corporate body will worship and reflect the Lord Jesus Christ.

The training curriculum explained the importance of the biblical discipline of meditating and praying as it prepares the mind of worshipers to fix their hearts toward Christ. By the end of this weekend, participants were able to identify the spiritual discipline of singing Christocentric songs from a biblical point of view with a goal of the applying the principles in their lives. The first weekend training was an introduction to subsequent training, and by the end of day 2’s training session on August 20, 2022, participants were able to identify the fundamental principles of Christocentric worship and they expressed their gratitude for the training session.

Weekend 2

The third and fourth training focused on theological characteristics of Christocentric worship. I noted the importance of Christocentric worship in response to redemption. I challenged participants to relate biblical worship to the sacrifice of Christ. Other subjects of the training for weekend 2 were qualities of Christocentric worship leaders and the various ways the worship leader points the corporate body to Christ using Scripture. I offered participants various practices of singing Christocentric songs that point the worshipping community to Christ. I gave examples from the Bible and historical perspectives and how Scripture influences and reflects the life of Christ in the worship of the church. To be precise, singing Christocentric songs during corporate worship matters and in understanding its significance, there must be specific biblical themes and examples in place to point the worshipping community to grow in a loving relationship with Christ and give all the glory to the Triune God.

In training session 4, on August 27, 2022, I focused on Christocentric worship and the worship leader fixing his or her eyes on the Triune God who desires the hearts of his worshipers to be focused on his glorious deliverance. I offered to the participants how important Christ's priesthood must be the central theme of corporate worship, and the centrality of his priesthood is rooted in God's goodness to man. The curriculum also provided participants with modeled practices of preparation and prayer. This session concluded with a question-and-answer time that centered on the paradigm for worship leaders to desire to live and be like Christ.

This lecture covered an exegetical analysis of Colossians 3:16–17. When the Word of God dwells in us, it shapes how we sing, what we sing, and points the corporate body to whom we sing. I challenged participants to focus their worship on Christ, using the training curriculum to explain how believers become witnesses of Christ by obeying and doing the will of God. Obedience to God's will develops the worship leader to grow unto maturity and in the power of the Lord Jesus lead songs that point to his redeeming love. Furthermore, I utilized the training curriculum to explain how true worship connects the worshiper with God through holiness and strengthens the fellowship between God and human beings.

Weekend 3

The fifth and sixth training focused on theoretical and practical foundations of Christocentric worship. I continued to examine the role of the priest and the significance of holiness and obedience to God. Biblical examples of Jesus as High Priest and the Christian's obedience as a living sacrifice in response to Christ's redemption were utilized. The lecture also covered how worship leaders must live a holy lifestyle. I challenged participants to see Jesus as High Priest and live in obedience to his will by presenting themselves as a living sacrifice in response to his redemption. A biblical example was given from Hebrews 4:14–10:31. I challenged participants to see holiness in Christ as one of the priorities of Christocentric worship. Because our faith depends on

Jesus, his holiness makes the determination and not that of the worship leaders. The holiness of the Savior must be the desire of the corporate body to have excellent worship.

I taught participants to see Jesus as the source of eternal reconciliation for all who choose to worship, follow, and obey him, and offer their lives as a living sacrifice. This lecture covered an exegetical analysis of Romans 12:1. The willingness to present oneself as a living sacrifice brings to life Christ's faithful witness. I urged participants to examine what it means to be a living sacrifice. The training session concluded with a question-and-answer time about how worship leaders can ensure that their practice of offering a Christocentric living sacrifice of praise can be achieved as they become instruments for the glory of God.

Training session 6 focused on increasing the knowledge and understanding of Christocentric worship. By the end of weekend 3, I admonished participants on the need to see Jesus as the High Priest and perfect Sacrifice worthy of worship. I used Romans 12:2 as an anchor Scriptures to teach that worship leaders must not conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewal of their minds to understand God's will: to express gratitude to God in worship. The warm-up discussion that followed engaged participants by examining their practice of sacrificial praise. The session concluded by providing biblical insights of how the worship of God's people must be shaped by authenticity. A question-and-answer session revealed that many participants expressed a desire to become more committed to offering to God a sacrifice of worship for his glory.

Weekend 4

The seventh and eighth training focused on how the worshiping church reflects the gospel. I noted how the corporate body are called to be a community who continuously offer sacrifice of praise to God. Participants through this lecture were able to analyze how worshipers must daily offer themselves in total surrender to God. Other subjects utilized was a pursuit for holiness and the uniqueness and authenticity of Christocentric worship. Teaching these important topics gave me the opportunity to challenge participants to

write down personal strategies of accountability that would keep them in check. In doing so, I encouraged participants to daily seek biblical and Christ-centered revitalization through God's Word.

Training session 8, on September 10, 2022, was the last lesson and was designed to review and conclude the training sessions. This teaching session explained how Christ is the center of worship and how worship leaders must be equipped to point the corporate body to Him. This teaching session encouraged worship participants to seek practical ways to faithfully engage the Word of God during corporate worship services. The training session concluded by allowing participants to express their thoughts and ideas through a time of questions and answer. The content of this lesson helped participants wanting to improve their efforts in singing and leading Christocentric songs that point the corporate body to Christ.

By the end of weekend 4, participants were able to apply the fundamental principles of Christocentric worship toward a process aimed to edify members of Shiloh Baptist Church to pursue Christ and his righteousness.

Post-Project Survey Instrument

The post-project survey differs from the pre-project survey in the number of questions on the instrument and how it was structured.² However, there are certain similarities. For example, the first ten questions on both surveys focus on assessing the knowledge and practice of Christocentric songs for corporate worship. The post-project survey being different from the pre-project survey came about after a phone conversation I had with a prominent gospel musician in Northern Nigeria, Peculiar Ibrahim, over the need to address the pressing questions worship leaders are asking, to find a solution to raising Christocentric worship leaders. In line with my supervisor's counsel, I made corrections and sent the survey to the expert panel.

² See appendix 2.

The expert panel suggested I include hybrid questions in the survey to test participants on the principles they learned during the training sessions. I then added the hybrid questions to evaluate the impact and success of the curriculum and the four weekend training sessions. The post-project survey instrument was sent to participants online to complete; and upon completion participants returned the surveys online or sent me a screen shot of their responses via WhatsApp on the last day of the training session. Due to not having good access to internet, most participants were not able to complete their post-project survey online, and as a result I administered the survey instruments to participants after the training session was over.

Only participants who took part in the pre-project survey were allowed to fill out the post-project survey. Using the last five digits of the participants mobile numbers, it was easy to figure out those who were in attendance from the very first week of the training session. Upon completion of the post-project survey instruments, I gathered the data from twenty-four participants who took the pre-project survey instruments with one other participant who did not make it to the last training session due to work or family commitment.

Curriculum and Training Session Evaluation

The curriculum and training evaluation form was developed and sent to the evaluators, the SBC leadership team. They assessed the evaluation form and approved it. Upon completion of the four-weekend training, the evaluation team was reached a week later, to turn in their evaluations. This was done to assess if the curriculum and training sessions were successful in meeting the ministry project goals. The evaluation forms were faithfully reviewed by the evaluators, using four criteria for evaluation: insufficient, requires attention, sufficient, and exemplary.³ Four evaluators gave the teaching sessions and resources positive feedback by marking every evaluation item as either “sufficient”

³ See appendix 2.

or “exemplary,” except for item 1 (“The material is relevant on singing and leading Christocentric songs and point the corporate body to Christ”), which was marked “requires attention” by one evaluator. Feedback and suggestions were also given by the evaluators toward improving the training sessions in the future on item 6: “The training will benefit more worship leaders if the material supports the purpose outlined in the thesis with much time allocated to each lesson.” Another evaluator marked item “sufficient” on item 7, saying, “Having more precise answers in relation to the questionnaire could better communicate the idea of the teacher.” Another evaluator also marked “sufficient” on item 8 and commented, “The lessons were clear and could be taught by another person but there was not enough time to digest the content of the lessons presented.” I agree that time allotted to teach the lessons was not enough, and technology and lack of constant electricity and good internet connection was a challenge, which was a factor on this item. Table 1 includes the evaluation results.

Table 1. Completed curriculum and training evaluation

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
The material is relevant on singing and leading Christocentric songs that point the corporate body to Christ	0	0	0	4
The material is biblical and theologically consistent	0	0	1	3
The material includes vital information on how to utilize Scripture during worship services	0	0	0	4
The material laid out principles to be used to train future worship leaders on Christocentric worship	0	0	1	3
The training should focus more on practical applications of contextualized Christocentric songs in relation to the corporate body	0	0	2	3
The training will benefit more worship leaders if the material supports the purpose outlined in the thesis with much time allocated to each lesson	0	1	2	2
Having more precise answers in relation to the questionnaire could better communicate the idea of the teacher	0	0	4	1
The lessons were clear and could be taught by another person but there was not enough time to digest the content of the lessons presented	0	1	3	1

The evaluators appreciated the efforts put in toward the presentation and training materials for the participants to learn principles of singing Christocentric worship songs. I appreciated the evaluators for their faithfulness in the entire training. I learned from the various feedback from the participants and church leadership. I brought in practical applications and more teaching time for future training. I encouraged participants to remember these words of Robert G. Rayburn:

Let us remember that when we say that we offer all acceptable worship to God in and through Jesus Christ we must understand that this means Jesus Christ in all the fullness of His being and His work. We must see Him as the incarnate Son of God, as both the man Jesus and God's Anointed One, the Christ. In our worship we must always remember that the Eternal Word became a man in order that He might deliver man from the bondage of sin and accomplish on the Cross all that was necessary to save believing man, the elect, from all the guilt and corruption of his sin and from death itself.⁴

Conclusion

This chapter described the project preparation, and I feel honored and privileged by God for the knowledge I acquired through this ministry project. For the exposure to the needs of worship leaders in Nigeria, and to the many insights I gained from my faculty supervisor, books, and resources during this research. The final step is the evaluation of the project and consideration of lessons learned.

⁴ Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 112.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The desire to see worship leaders sing Christocentric songs and point the corporate body to Jesus as the center of worship has been my burden. My prayer has been that every worship leader at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria, would grow unto maturity as they help the members of the church body understand why singing Christocentric songs matter. The leadership of Shiloh Baptist Church has done a great job in teaching and preaching God's truth to the corporate body, and the local congregation has a desire to know Christ and be his witnesses. This chapter presents the evaluation of the project's purpose and goals, its strengths, and weaknesses, and what could have been done differently to impact the effectiveness of the project.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria. My burden to train worship leaders in singing Christocentric songs started many years ago while I was a youth and worship pastor in my home state Kaduna, Nigeria. The lack of resources for most worship leaders has given room to indiscipline and unequipped worship leaders who do not plan or spend quality time with God to prepare for worship. Due to lack of resources, it was apparent that training and developing Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church was necessary. The leadership at Shiloh believes that biblically and theologically sound worship leaders sing with authenticity, which reveals the power and resurrection of Jesus and helps congregation members grow unto maturity. In preparation for my Project Methodology course in the spring of 2019, I was required to assess the needs and

weaknesses in my current ministry context. After carefully considering the need for worship leaders to point the corporate body to Christ, it became clear that training and developing Christocentric worship leaders to lead and sing biblical and theologically rooted songs to the corporate body would be profitable. The pastor and deacons at SBC believe that the worship leader must be equipped from Scripture to (1) be humble and grow unto maturity and (2) live a holy life that is exemplary of what it means to be a witness for Christ. The SBC leadership believes that training and equipping worship leaders is necessary to point the corporate body to Christ. They also agree that there is a need for authenticity in the lifestyle of worship leaders that must be a top priority in the spiritual formation of the church.

Teaching on Christ-centered worship to the worship leaders became a source of encouragement to participants as they used the principles taught during this training. After completing the four-weekend teaching sessions, I believe the project fulfilled its purpose. The worship leaders had the opportunity to be equipped to lead and sing Christocentric songs in obedience to God who accepts the worship of all who come into his presence with a humble heart. When worship leaders are intentional in singing Christocentric songs, the congregants will be pointed to Christ and be spiritually edified. This ministry project ensured that the various principles of biblical and Christ-centered worship would impact the worship leaders to apply what they had been taught in the context of Shiloh Baptist Church and beyond.

Evaluation of Project Goals

Four goals were established to support the purpose of the project. This section evaluates the success and completion of those goals. The goals of this project aligned with the purpose of the project to develop Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the knowledge and leadership of the worship leaders in pointing the corporate body to Christ. This goal was accomplished by distributing a pre-project survey to gather demographic information to understand current worship practices of singing Christocentric songs for corporate worship.¹ The goal was achieved when the pre-course survey was administered to twenty-five participants and the results were reviewed. The responses on the pre-course survey indicated that the worship leaders had some knowledge of Christocentric worship, but there was a need for more development and training.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-session curriculum to be taught over Zoom/WhatsApp over the course of four weekends to worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church on why Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship. The curriculum was developed as a post-seminar assignment in my *Foundations of Teaching* course. The feedback received from my supervisor and fellow classmates proved helpful. Upon approval of my Ethics committee forms, I made changes to the curriculum and submitted it to my expert panel. The panel used the curriculum evaluation rubric to critique the training.² The rubric evaluated three specific areas of the curriculum: methodology, scope, and applicability. A minimum score of “3” on a six-point scale was required for each part of the curriculum and lesson plan in order to meet the goal. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 85 percent of all the rubric evaluation criterion/criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level and based on their recommendations, changes were made prior to the first training session.³

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

³ See appendix 5.

The curriculum was developed to train worship leaders of Shiloh Baptist Church over a period of four-weekends on why singing Christocentric songs matter. The assignment for *Foundations of Teaching* seminar at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary helped me develop a curriculum. Relevant books and resources in the course were recommended by Dr. Matthew Haste, which helped in evaluating the teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of this ministry project curriculum.

In addition, the Q & A session in weekend 4 gave participants the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. Participants appreciated the training, especially how Scripture was used to lay a foundation of how significant the role and life of the worship leader is. Some recommendations from the participants included (1) more training time, (2) in-depth teaching on practical principles of worship, (3) more worship applications, and (4) identifying ways to keep the corporate body singing Christocentric songs. These suggestions will be helpful if the class is offered again in the future.

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to increase the understanding of Christocentric worship by teaching the curriculum. This goal was implemented by teaching the four-weekend training curriculum that covered various aspects of Jesus as High Priest and the Christian obedience as living sacrifice. This goal was measured by administering a post-survey, which was identical to the pre-survey administered under goal 1.⁴ Twenty worship leaders participated in at least seven of the eight training session and were qualified to take the post-survey.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the participants' survey results before and after the training sessions. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-project training survey scores. The results were ($t_{(24)} =$

⁴ See appendix 1.

0.07, $p < .003$) in the pre- and post-survey scores ($m = 160.8$, is greater than the mean score before ($m = 159.12$). The statistical difference is further demonstrated in the paired-sample t -test.⁵ I was encouraged to see the four-weekend study impact the participants not only to grow in singing and leading the corporate body in Christocentric songs.

In addition to the overall results, an analysis of the several key questions asked by the participants were enlightening as I examined and identified specific needs and the aspect of the training sessions that impacted participants during the training sessions. The members of Shiloh Baptist Church now see it as a collective responsibility to equip and train those who lead corporate worship. The training challenged the corporate body to seek a biblical worship practice that highlights Christ and his sacrifice on the cross in obedience to God. However, it is my hope that as worship leaders begin to put into practice the principles they learned, they will continue to point the corporate body to the center of worship, Jesus, at Shiloh Baptist Church.

The goal was to increase understanding of Christocentric worship by teaching the curriculum. The goal was measured by administering the post-survey to the same participants who completed the pre- project training survey and the results compared using a t -test. The goal would be considered successfully met when the t -test demonstrated a positive, statistically significant increase between the pre- and post-project surveys.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to raise awareness of the significance of Christocentric songs in corporate worship. I drafted a future ministry plan and provided it to the leaders of Shiloh Baptist Church for future implementation. This goal was measured by the expert panel of SBC who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical

⁵ See appendix 5.

faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the plan. The evaluation helped me to develop a formal plan for raising awareness in the future.⁶ The goal was met when the survey and oral responses were analyzed by the expert panel, successfully completing goal 4 of the project.⁷ The Q & A session facilitated discussions that indicated positive change that suggests these leaders are more prepared to implement future training plans than they were at the beginning of the project.

Having evaluated the project's goals, considerations must be given to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Strengths of the Project

Developing Christocentric worship leaders involves living a lifestyle that reflects prayer, and spiritual formation that points the worshiping community to glorify God. This project elevated singing Christocentric songs to its proper place at Shiloh Baptist Church. This project curriculum synchronized with the worship leaders' training practicums. The curriculum accommodated and established learning modalities that will reflect Christ's life and character. One strength of the project was that it equipped worship leaders at SBC with a desire to assess and measure their need to implement the singing of Christ-centered songs. Singing Christocentric worship songs during corporate worship will help stir and encourage members of the congregation at SBC to grow unto maturity, glorify God, and live out the Christlike example.

Another strength of the project was the teaching sessions and the participants' enthusiasm in actively participating. By learning from the training sessions and singing Christocentric songs, the worship leaders are exemplary of Christ's righteousness and proclaim his good news on a daily basis.

Another strength of this project was that it challenged me to put into practice

⁶ See appendix 4.

⁷ See appendix 3.

the principles I learned and taught with the student body that I serve in Bristol, Tennessee, in partnership with my local congregation First Presbyterian Church of Bristol and the Resident Life Department at King University Bristol. My aim as I serve in chapel or college worship night is to lead students in authentic Christocentric worship, encourage them to have a relationship with God, and help them excel in their Christian thought and walk with Christ. I was humbled to see the project participants' desire to lead Christocentric songs during worship and become tools in the hands of God and responsible citizens who have a passion to serve God, humanity, and the church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project had many weaknesses, and the first was time. I originally planned to teach an eight-week study; however, due to rising insecurity and violent attacks on the church in Nigeria, switching supervisors, and the short turnaround to submit chapters to SBTS faculty, I decided to do a four-weekend training. Because of this change, I felt that the project was rushed to meet my desired training goals.

The second weakness of the project was the inability to follow-up with participants in person, especially after each training session. Most participants seemed encouraged with what they had learned during the four weekends, but they but did not seem to have a sense of accountability to place solid foundations on the various principles of Christocentric worship.

A third weakness was technology and good internet connectivity. With little or no access to computers, it became difficult to have smooth Zoom connections. It became difficult for some participants to pay close attention as there seemed to be breaks in transmission from time to time, and we had to resort to WhatsApp video and audio calls. However, most participants signed up with an e-mail, so part of the lesson notes and training materials were emailed for participants to read and reflect on some of the taught principles of Christocentric worship.

What I Would Do Differently

Many modifications would improve the project. First, in the early stages of the project I would develop sample surveys and test them on a pilot group. This additional testing would help in the development of the curriculum so that it could be more impactful in developing worship leaders who will put into practice (Jas 1:22–25) and be models of what it truly means to live a Christocentric lifestyle.

Second, if completing this project again, I would assign participants to accountability partners and mentors who would follow up with them to check progress in leading the corporate body in Christocentric songs. It would be accountability partners' responsibility to make sure each participant received the benefit of the training by daily developing a pattern of prayer and meditation of God's Word in planning, and preparation of singing Christocentric songs in response to God's revelation.

Third, to improve the project, I would modify the worship curriculum to emphasize Christian obedience as a living sacrifice. In addition, I would emphasize how holiness reflects the gospel of Jesus Christ in the life of the worship leader. It would be helpful to give detailed examples of why the corporate body needs to gather, grow, and follow Christ.

Fourth, the training sessions greatly impacted the participants and expert panel who reviewed the curriculum with great joy and excitement. The expert panel suggested more time be allocated to each participant in the future plan to ask certain questions they were grappling with. Due to technological and security constraints, I felt that the training was rushed, and adequate time was not provided for participants to digest the material and content provided during the teaching sessions, which would have lasted a bit over thirty minutes to forty-five minutes. The expert panel recommended more teaching time in future trainings. Participant questions in real-time enhanced the focus on the worship leader's character and lifestyle.

Theological Reflections

In 2019, I read Constance Cherry's *Worship Architect*. In the book, Cherry asserts, "Christocentric worship acknowledges the priority of Christ. The cornerstone of Christian worship is Jesus Christ. This truth alone determines the authenticity of Christian worship."⁸ The corporate body are living stones that bring God unceasing worship. Harold Best affirms, "We worship by faith. Worship is no more started up because we have pushed the faith button than our faith is started because we pushed the worship button."⁹ The past three years at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have equipped my understanding on the biblical role of Christocentric worship not only in living a life of holiness and sanctification to God, but in pointing the corporate body to the center of worship, Jesus Christ. My theological reflections have been sharpened by my professors and my two faculty supervisors, Matthew Haste and Matthew Westerholm, from whom I have gained so much as mentors for life.

First, God created man in his image after his likeness (Gen 1:27), to worship him and reflect his nature. The corporate body cannot approach the throne of grace in an unholy manner, rather they come before God with a heart of worship and reverence before God (1 Sam 12:24; Heb 12:28–29). It is the worship leader's responsibility to champion how the congregation reveres and honors God. Christocentric worship reflects God's holy nature, and the task of the church is to come before his presence with joyful hearts that give him glory.

Second, growing up in a diverse multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria, with over 528 native tribes and languages, it is a joy to see various tribes lifting the name of God in worship. It will be God-honoring to say the corporate body must unite in singing Christocentric songs and not be conformed to the pattern of this world (Rom 12:2). SBC

⁸ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 21.

⁹ Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 28.

members championing authenticity and sacrificial worship will challenge those who do not have a relationship with God to surrender to his Son, Jesus Christ.

Third, the Bible is not silent on the church singing spiritual songs, Psalms, and hymns to God and to one another (Eph 5:19). The worship leader has been set apart to lead God's people into his presence for his glory (Exod 19:6). The church in Nigeria and in Africa must be aware of the communality in corporately lifting songs that speak of God's redemptive purpose. Without an emphasis in pulpits, seminaries, and worship conferences, the church in Africa will not navigate its way to Jesus Christ, the center of true worship.

Fourth, over the four-weekend training session, participants acknowledged the significance of singing Christocentric worship songs that point the worshipping community to the redemptive grace of Christ. SBC must walk in God's truth and sing the promises of God to one another. Singing Christocentric songs cannot be experienced in a four-weekend doctoral training. Sustained Christ-centered worship must be cultivated week-in-week-out, and through the power of the Holy Spirit the corporate body will sing songs of worship that point to the author and finisher of the faith of all who come humbly before him (Heb 12:2).

Personal Reflections

Developing Christocentric worship leaders has been in my heart for many years. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to research, write, and teach worship leaders at SBC to sing songs that submit to the priestly life of Christ. Inasmuch as the training edified participants, my prayer is for worship leaders to continue to acknowledge Jesus, the center of Christian worship. If SBC worship leaders embrace biblical Christ-centered worship and live a life of obedience to God, then there is great hope for the worshipping community to focus on the divine object of worship, Jesus Christ. If there will be continuity in reproducing Christocentric worship leaders at SBC, then I must organize teaching sessions such as this, provide resources, and challenge worship leaders to point the corporate body to Jesus who was chosen by God as the cornerstone of worship.

First, I am grateful for the work God is doing in the lives of SBC worship leaders. The worshipping community must flourish and yet, Cherry is right in affirming, “When we worship, we do not gather to discuss a religious idea but to encounter the living, Lord. Each time the community gathers to worship we must understand and experience that we are entering into a dialogue with God in Jesus Christ, who is truly among us.”¹⁰ It is my hope that the corporate body at SBC will continue to enter God’s presence through Jesus who redeemed man to the Father.

Second, I have strived to be accessible even with the barrier of distance. I am making a commitment to build an authentic relationship with SBC worship leaders. Building such a bridge of connection and making resources available will encourage the worship leaders to grow and mature in their reality as those who have been set apart and sanctified for the glory of God. This will also keep the worship leaders accountable as disciples whose hearts are active to live in obedience to the will of God and to the task of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. My goal is to continue to echo the need for worship leaders to make sure that “in everything Christ has supremacy” (Col 1:18).

Third, my heart must be humble and passionate. Following the four-weekend sessions on developing Christocentric worship leaders at SBC and being away from my home country for a couple of years, I have learned the participants’ struggles and their need to be equipped with worship resources, training, and equipment. Having access to these things becomes essential for worship leaders as they become effective witnesses of the gospel of Christ. Training opportunities such as the one provided in this project will also help them pay attention to planning, prayer, and preparation with a sole aim to glorify God. The life and redemptive purpose of Christ must be the central focus of worship.

Fourth, this ministry project and doctoral program stretched me, and I almost gave up at some point. I will forever remain grateful for Matthew Haste and Matthew

¹⁰ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 26.

Westerholm's mentorship and encouragement to keep at it until I cross the finish line. This ministry project has humbled me in many ways as I am further equipped as God's servant and witness of the gospel. I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to equip worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria. This project challenged me to be involved in the lives of worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church to be actively engaged in the worship ministry.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Moreso, the true purpose of the gathered church is to unite spirits in the presence of God. James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep affirm, "Curriculum content must aid the student in building a relationship with Jesus Christ."¹¹ Through this research I was able to develop and implement a worship curriculum that increased the knowledge and practices of singing Christocentric songs. Cherry asserts, "We worship God the Father, but we do so through the Son, Jesus Christ. The power of the holy Spirit makes this possible. Authentic Christian worship, worship in spirit and in truth, is filled with Christ who, in turn, fulfills the purposes of the Father. When Christ is exalted, God is glorified."¹²

The statistical improvement among worship leaders who participated in the ministry project training sessions are a source of encouragement to me as the teacher. Post-project, participants have been meeting once a month to enhance their worship leadership practices, pray for one another, and develop relationships that will foster unity. It is my desire that this project will continue to be profitable to the worship leaders at

¹¹ James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep, *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 61.

¹² Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 22.

Shiloh Baptist Church and many other worship leaders in Kaduna State, Nigeria, and Africa at large.

I am thankful to God for the opportunity to train current and future worship leaders who will someday read this research and continue in the quest to develop Christocentric worship leaders who will sing songs of worship that point the corporate body to Christ. It was a pleasure to prepare and train worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State Nigeria.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-PROJECT SURVEY ON SINGING CHRISTOCENTRIC SONGS

The following survey was distributed to project participants to assess the knowledge and leadership of worship leaders in pointing the corporate body at Shiloh Baptist Church to Christ. The results of the pre-project survey and post-project survey were analyzed using a *t*-test for dependent samples.

PRE-PROJECT SURVEY ON SINGING
CHRISTOCENTRIC SONGS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to develop Christocentric worship leaders and to identify the current understanding and practices of Christ-centered songs in corporate worship of the participant. This research is being conducted by Jeremiah Swam Sidi for the purpose of his doctoral ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

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

Name: _____

Date: _____

Participation Number (Pre-Project Survey): Please create a non-sequential 5-digit participation number using the last five digits of your mobile number. This number will be used to correlate your pre- and post-survey results. Please write it down. You will need to remember it for the post-assessment survey.

5-Digit Participation Number: _____

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS – Please answer the following questions honestly. I am giving this survey to understand how worship leaders relate to biblical worship and how they assess their knowledge and practice of singing Christocentric songs for corporate worship and living a lifestyle that reflects Christ.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing an ‘X’ next to your answer.

1. Gender
 - A. Male
 - B. Female
2. To what age group do you belong
 - A. 20-30
 - B. 31-40
 - C. 41-50
 - D. 51-60
3. How long have you been a Christian
 - A. 1-5 years
 - B. 6-10 years
 - C. 11-20
 - D. 21 + years
4. How long have you been a part of the worship ministry at Shiloh Baptist Sabon Tasha?
 - A. 1-5 years
 - B. 6-10 years
 - C. 11-17
 - D. 21 + years
5. How does Colossians 3:16-17 point the corporate body to Christ at Shiloh Baptist Church?
 - A. It admonishes the congregation to deep intimate worship, recognizing who he is
 - B. It leads the people into the presence of God with Jesus at the center of worship
 - C. God’s word dwells in the heart of the worshipping congregation
 - D. A, B and C
6. Which vocal part do you sing? _____
7. If you play an instrument, what instrument (s) do you play? _____
8. In what ways can worship leaders continually live a life of humility and become examples of servant leaders?
 - A. By becoming humble disciples of the word
 - B. By being transformed daily, by the renewal of their minds
 - C. By beholding God’s glory and lead the gathered church through the Holy Spirit to encounter the greatness of God
 - D. A, B, and C

9. Which of the following is the most important in your worship experience?
- ___ A. Raising of hands/Dance
 ___ B. Songs/Hymns
 ___ C. Scripture reading
 ___ D. Confession/Communion
10. What is the most biblical interpretation of the worship leader exemplifying Philippians 4:8?
- ___ A. The lifestyle of the worship leader must reconcile what he/she professes
 ___ B. The worship leader must live a lifestyle that is pure and true
 ___ C. The worship leader must be of good report
 ___ D. A, B, and C

SECTION 2: KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE – Part 2 of the survey will assess the knowledge and practice of Christocentric songs for corporate worship. Please give your opinion regarding the statements below using the following scale. Strongly Disagree – SD, Disagree – D, Somewhat Disagree – SD, Somewhat agree – SA, Agree – A, Strongly Agree – SA.

Directions: Please circle the most appropriate answer using the following scale.

- SD – Strongly disagree
 D – Disagree
 SD – Somewhat disagree
 SA – Somewhat agree
 A – Agree
 SA – Strongly agree

1. The songs we sing at Shiloh Baptist church are focused on Jesus
 SD D SD SA A SA
2. Christocentric worship is important for Shiloh Baptist Church
 SD D SD SA A SA
3. Shiloh Baptist Church worship is rooted in Scriptures
 SD D SD SA A SA
4. My desire for Shiloh Baptist Church is to sing Christ-centered songs during worship
 SD D SD SA A SA
5. I believe singing Christocentric songs challenges the congregation to worship in spirit and in truth
 SD D SD SA A SA
6. The Bible instructs worship leaders how to lead worship by the power of the Holy Spirit
 SD D SD SA A SA
7. All of Scripture points worshipers to Jesus Christ
 SD D SD SA A SA
8. Christocentric worship is primarily about pointing congregants to Christ
 SD D SD SA A SA

9. Worship is a matter of the heart that is defined by the heart
SD D SD SA A SA

10. I believe the worship at Shiloh Baptist church is spiritually-edifying to my soul
SD D SD SA A SA

11. How would you define Christocentric worship?

12. In what ways can Christ be the center of our worship?

13. How many times were you able to attend the Christocentric training sessions?
a) 1-2 times b) 3-4 times c) 5-7times

14. Did you find this training sessions helpful?
a) Yes b) No

Please explain below

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APPENDIX 2
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following appendix is the curriculum evaluation tool as well as the comments tool used by the evaluation expert panel. The curriculum evaluation rubric was distributed to an expert panel consisting of worship pastors, deacon, deaconesses and elder, who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.

Name of Evaluator _____

Date: _____

Christocentric Worship Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson to be Evaluated:					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The material is relevant on singing and leading Christocentric songs that point the corporate body to Christ					
The material is biblical and theologically consistent					
The material includes vital information on how to utilize Scripture during worship services					
The material laid out principles to be used to train future worship leaders on Christocentric worship					
The training should focus more on practical applications of contextualized Christocentric songs in relation to the corporate body					
The training will benefit more worship leaders if the material supports the purpose outlined in the thesis with much time allocated to each lesson					
Having more precise answers in relation to the questionnaire could better communicate the idea of the teacher					
The lessons were clear and could be taught by another person but there was not enough time to digest the content of the lessons presented					

APPENDIX 3

TEACHING THE CURRICULUM

The training material was used to introduce participants to why singing Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship. This training material prepared participants to practice and lead Christocentric songs from a biblical point of view.

Christocentric Worship Initial Training Session Plan

Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria

Weekend One: Introduction

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and lead a short devotion from Psalm 146:5–10 to start the training.

Context

- Singing Christocentric Songs - delivered online via Zoom/WhatsApp.
- Students are primarily worship leaders/worship pastors from Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The training is a part of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ministry project for Jeremiah Swam Sidi to worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church.

Content

- A general introduction to basic concepts and distinctive features of Christocentric worship. This course will focus on: (1) What is Biblical worship, and how does singing Christocentric songs during worship point the corporate body to Christ? (2) What Christocentric worship is and what it involves; (3) The role of the worship leaders as a living sacrifice; (4) Practicing and singing Christocentric songs.

Weekend One - Lesson Plan 1: Biblical Worship

- a) **(Exodus 7:16)** God told his servant Moses to tell Pharaoh to release his people from slavery that they might go and worship him. God led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and led them by the cloud of his presence. God's people gather to worship him through singing his praises, the reading and listening of his Word. Some of the worship elements are prayer, offertory, confession of faith, and the (Eucharist) breaking of bread, baptism, and the benediction. This first week's lesson will demonstrate how biblical worship is best understood as a structured, sacred, and institutionalized ministry that focuses on pointing worshipers to the Cross of Jesus and helps them respond by presenting their lives as a living sacrifice to God.
- b) The primary emphasis of Christocentric worship is to build humble worship leaders who will grow and mature in their spiritual journey through prayer, meditation of the Word and always see the Scriptures as their most reliable source of life and inspiration.
- c) Biblical worship must be Christocentric and understood as structured, sacred, and Holy as it welcomes the Lord's presence and points the worshipper to acknowledge the risen Lord.
- d) Spiritual discipline of meditating on the Word will help draw worshipers closer to God. The bible must be read with an intentional reason to grow in seeking God's face.
- e) God loved his people and set them apart from other nations. He gave them the Ten Commandments which are basically laws about how he wanted them to learn to worship him (Exodus 20:1–8).

Music and songs that are fixed on Jesus reveal his redemptive role in reconciling humanity back to the Father. Therefore, there is a necessity for worship leaders to live an authentic and holy life, understand the importance of biblical, Christocentric worship that glorifies God. Jesus must be central to leading biblical worship and growth unto maturity as Christ continues to be present in the gathered community.

Questions:

- 1). How does singing Christocentric songs invite the gathered church to celebrate victory in Christ?
- 2). In what ways can a worship leader be proficiently equipped for good works?
- 3). How can a worship leader understand the true meaning of submitting to God?

Learning Outcome 1: By the end of this week, students will be able to identify the fundamental principles of Christocentric worship and how worship leaders are called to mirror biblical principles of worship that exemplify Christ and offer their lives as a living sacrifice. Biblical and theological foundations are significant in developing Christocentric worship leaders.

2) Weekend One - Lesson Plan 2: The Role of the Leader

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and lead a short devotion from Psalm 148:7–14 to start the training.

- a) This class is about the role of the worship leader and why singing Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship.
 - (1) It's about constructing a theological grid through which to interpret the worship experience and educate the corporate body to recognize the Bible's resources for life and godliness as they point others to the power of the Cross and the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus.
 - (2) The worship leader's relationship with god in preparation, planning, and prayer, in pointing the corporate body to Christ.
 - (3) Aim at introducing Christocentric worship by situating it biblically, theologically, historically, and philosophically. The role of the worship leader's grasp of Scripture, Old Testament worship and the response to redemption, and the characteristics of Christocentric worship.
- b) Christocentric worship is best understood as a structured, sacred, and institutionalized ministry that points worshipers to the Cross of Jesus and help them respond by presenting their lives as a living sacrifice to God. This will be achieved by bringing a robust, biblical understanding of God and the human experiences in giving him all the glory.
 - (1) In order to apply a biblical framework of worship and the human experience, the gathered church needs to have a clear understanding of what it means to worship with one another in unity. "The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).
 - (2) To worship God means to honor and praise him with the hearts and mind. The purpose of doing so is for who he is and what he has done. "Examine your devotion to God, hunger and thirst for deep intimacy with Christ and be willing to walk daily with God" (Dr. Greg Brewton).

- (3) The corporate gathered church worships God because the church is his treasured possession.
- (4) *Historically*
- a) Christocentric worship is an *ancient ministry of the Church*
 - b) It is an aspect of pastoral theology that recognizes Jesus Christ as the “Chief Liturgist” The training curriculum reveals how God expects all those who follow him to watch and pray (Verse) even through difficult life circumstances and remain consistent in prayer.
- (5) *Theologically*
- a) Christocentric worship is “*Applied or Practical Theology*”
 - (i) It is not independent from theology...in fact, it is a derivative of a sound, biblical theology of worship.
 - b) Theological Foundation:
 - (i) Level one: Scripture — worship leaders must begin by identifying God’s Word as the only source of inspiration, authority, and basis for Christocentric worship.
 - (ii) Level two: Liturgy — worship leaders must seek to understand Liturgy through the eyes of Scripture and sacredness of why Christ must be the focus and central point of worship.
 - (iii) Level three: Christocentric worship must engage the discipline of having a biblical theology of worship by formulating edifying outcomes from Scripture that builds members of the congregation.
- (6) *Ecclesiological*
- a) Christocentric worship must be ecclesiological by focusing on the redemptive work of Christ to the church.
 - (i) David Peterson in *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* summarize the ecclesiological concept of worship: “God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt so that they might serve or worship him exclusively. They were redeemed to engage with God, initially at ‘the mountain of God’, then in the wilderness wanderings, and finally in the land which was to be his gift to them.” (David Peterson, p. 48)
- (7) *Philosophical*
- a) Christocentric worship in a philosophical approach must point believers to the Cross.
 - c) Robert E. Webber: *Worship Old and New*
 - (1) *The People Remember*
 - (2) *The People of God Anticipate*
 - (3) *The People Celebrate*
 - (4) *The People of God Worship from the Heart* (Robert E. Webber. p. 27–31).
- b) **Worship: Response to Redemption**
- a) **(John 1:14)** will consider the fundamental commitments of biblical worship, including its authority, focus, and goals through Jesus Christ who atoned for our sins and reconciled us with the Father. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen God’s glory through his one and only Son, Jesus Christ. This is a 25 to 30 minute lecture that will give attention to the concept of bringing our sacrifice of worship and praise as an offering as God’s

tabernacle and be shaped by our interpretation of and response to the worship experience.

1. We can boldly come into God's presence with confidence that he is for and with us.
2. We can come into God's presence by faith in the risen Christ, that we may draw near to God whose promise of his presence will forever be with us.
3. We are the gathered tabernacle of God, where he dwells and reveals his glory through the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. The tabernacle points to the coming of Christ, his death on the Cross, his resurrection from the grave that gives us access to come into his presence.
5. We can count on God's presence through the Holy Spirit who is our teacher, comforter, and guide.

Learning Outcome 2: By the end of this week, students will be able to assess the knowledge and leadership of worship that points the corporate body to Christ. Identify the spiritual discipline of singing Christocentric songs from a biblical point of view with a goal of applying the principles.

3). Weekend Two - Lesson Plan 3: Characteristics of Christocentric Worship

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and lead a short devotion from Psalm 72:1–7 to start the training.

1). (Ephesians 4:12) “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” The focus here is on the doctrine of Scripture and its implications for biblical worship. Biblical worship demonstrates the authoritative framework for understanding the human experience in God's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit to build up, motivate, empower, and direct the corporate body of Christ in life and godliness.

- (2) Bryan Chapell points out characteristics that set Biblical Worship apart.
- a) Biblical Worship is personal, corporate, experience in God's presence.
 - b) It is important to sing Christocentric songs in response to redemption. The worship ministry is found in the pages of Scripture and could be seen as....
 - c) Introduce the learner to “Spirituality: meditative worship, prayer, and study of the Word through a 30minute lecture. The worship leaders will be engaged in a discussion forum about the perspective of worship from the biblical point of view. The big idea of this lesson is to challenge learners on the need for spiritual rejuvenation. The training curriculum explains the significance of spending time with God by citing *Christ-Centered Worship* by Chapell who affirms, “Our obedience does not make our worship acceptable; our worship is acceptable because God has made us holy. He accepts our obedience as spiritual worship (and we delight to give it), “in view of God's mercy” that has made fallible people's praise pleasing to him.” (Chapell, p.109). This statement

- provides the worship leaders a thought-provoking idea of the significance of obedience in Christ that leads to spiritual maturity through the eyes of God's Word. The mind can only be built to the place of maturity in Christ. A Q&A time will conclude this session.
- d) Relate biblical worship to the sacrifice of Christ.

Learning Outcome 3: By the end of this week, students will be able to relate why Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship.

4). Weekend Two - Lesson Plan 4: Qualities of a Christocentric Worship Leader

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and lead a short devotion from Psalm 96:1–3 to start the training.

Theoretical and practical foundations of Christocentric Worship

(Colossians 3:16–17)

- (3) To properly appreciate this passage, we need to recall its context...
- a) V16–17– [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God, [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (ESV)
 - (i) Target: that you live a holy life full of gratitude/model after the life of Christ/find identity in Christ.
 1. What you do = What you believe worship is
 2. How you act = Who the worshiper is and how the life you live is a living epistle to others.
 - b) What are the benefits of living a life of gratitude to the worship community?
 - (i) V16 – Christ calls leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry by letting the word dwell in them.
 1. Worship leaders are tasked with shepherding the people of God toward this goal by equipping the saints (= building up the body of Christ)
- (4) Life/Reality alignment described in various ways.
- a) Our faith in the knowledge of God's Son
 - b) Mature in Christ in the measure of his love towards us = Maturity in Christ
- (5) Target: that your life and theology of worship may align to give God glory as you grow into maturity and stability in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- a) This is the essence of discipling worship leaders and helping them grow toward spiritual maturity.
 - b) How do we best summarize Biblical Worship in NT: singing hymns and Psalms to one another?
 1. Singing - inspire/challenge/encourage/edify
 2. Hymns and Psalms - bringing the Word of God alive

- c) This is the basic task of a Christian worshiper: to sing of God's love to build up the corporate body of Christ.
 - d) The role of the priest and the significance of holiness and obedience to God.
 - e) Jesus as High-Priest and the obedience of Christian's obedience as a living sacrifice in response to Christ's redemption. Living in obedience to Christ's will.
- b) So, if we want to define Biblical worship in the language of the Scriptures, we could say that it is expressing reverence and adoration to God and building up the body of Christ.
- (1) All Christians are called to fellowship and worship God with one another . . . we are called to build up the body through the posture of our hearts.
- a) Notice in v16 – We lift one another by speaking the Word to one another in love.
- c) In this way, Biblical Worship is an important ministry of the church as it equips, develops, and deepen the relationship of the worship leader and members of the congregation.

Question:

1). How can Christ-centered worship bring God's presence into the lives of the worshipers?

Learning Outcome 4: By the end of this week, students will have an increased understanding of Christocentric singing by the teachings from the curriculum. Participants will have a better grasp on sanctification and the foundation of ministering Psalms and hymns to one another.

5). Weekend Three - Lesson Plan 5: Qualifications of a Worship Leader

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and read Psalm 40:1-4 to start the training.

(1 Peter 2; John 17:17) We examine the condition of man's heart and experience in coming before God. With particular attention given to the various ways the heart responds to God in getting rid of all unrighteousness and growing into salvation through the worship experience. A discussion forum will challenge the learner's concerning confession and how the process of biblical transformation can be explored in coming before God as a living stone chosen by God.

- Worship leaders are called to exemplify Christ. We will together be considering several verses (Gen 8:18–20; 14:19–19; 26:24–25; 28:11–22; Exod 12:21; 19:5–6; Num 18:20; Ps 89:5; 100:3)
- Offer their lives as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1-8). We will also be considering (1Pet 2; John 17:17) in detail.
- Grow unto maturity in Christ in doing his will (Jas 1:22)
- Hebrews 4:14–10:31 see holiness to Christ as one of the priorities of Christocentric worship.
- See Jesus as the source of eternal reconciliation for all who choose to worship, follow, and obey him, and offer their lives as a living sacrifice.

Question:

1). What makes obeying Scripture difficult in singing Christocentric songs?

Learning Outcome 5: By the end of this week, students will be analyzing the condition of the heart in the worship experience.

6). Weekend Three - Lesson Plan 6: Holiness in the life of the Worship Leader

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and read Psalm 27:1, 4–9 to start the training.

Participants will engage in a twenty-minute lecture that has an overview of revitalizing the corporate body with the primary task of “Giving Thanks to God.” This lecture will focus on 1Thessaloninas 5:18 on the need for the worship leader to come before God with an exegetical analysis of the text. When one is grateful, he submits to the guidance and leadership of God. The discussion will engage worship leaders to see themselves as people who have been called to the place of seeking God’s will and further assists the corporate body pursue spiritual revitalization.

- Foundational to this commitment is the rule Jesus gave believers to "*Worship him in spirit and in Truth,*" because the hour has come when true worshipers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seek such (John 4:24)
 - a) God is Spirit and we must obey his commands and worship the invisible God who is the source of life.
 - b) For a formal definition, we might say that a worshiper is one who is a follower of Christ, who ascribes reverent love and adoration to God.
- A worshiper venerates God by surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus and continually give him thanks. The training curriculum explains the life of obedience to God’s command for the corporate body to give him thanks. The curriculum further reveals that thanksgiving brings great joy in fellowship with God. This session will conclude with questions that challenges the worship leader on the significance of gratitude to God before leading members of the congregation in worship.
- Rom 12:1 – the willingness to present oneself as a living sacrifice brings to life Christ’s faithful witness.
- Ask participants to examine what it means to be a living sacrifice.

Questions:

- 1). How can the worship team develop a theology of worship at SBC?
- 2). What biblical principles of worship fit into our worship context at SBC?

Learning Outcome 6: By the end of this week, students will know how to develop and initial strategy in helping the corporate body pursue biblical revitalization through holiness and a life that pleases God.

7). Weekend Four - Lesson Plan 7: How the Worshiping Church Reflect the Gospel

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and read Psalm 23:1-6 to start the training.

(2 Timothy 3:16) Participants will intentionally walk through the process for revitalizing worship leaders and worshipers by gathering information, discerning Christocentric worship concepts, establish involvement, providing instruction, and targeted application of the principles learned.

- What principles changed your perspective? John D. Witvliet has provided a helpful image for worship that seeks understanding. Witvliet – “True worship celebrates the most definite God of the covenant in Moses and Jesus, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachael; and of countless others.

- Worship: “Is a celebrative response to what God has done, is doing, and promise to do” (p. 31).

- “True worship provides a unique opportunity for the worshiper to anticipate divine action” (p. 31).

- True worship provides a unique opportunity for the worshiper to respond and celebrate the mighty acts of God.

- True worship provides a unique opportunity for the worshiper to seek the knowledge of God and rehearse his actions in history.

- Biblical worship proclaims the divine activity of God in the past, present, and future

- Biblical worship is targeted at worshipers who participate in the continuity of God’s faithfulness.

- It provides a unique, structured opportunity for the worshiper to have a sense of hope through the faithful acts of wonder of God in time past.

- All believers demonstrate and value worship when they connect the teachings of the bible with their liturgical practice.

- The bible is the major source of inspiration to all believers and the central point of the gospel message of salvation. Participants in these twenty-five minutes lecture will be given an opportunity to talk about what the text means to them and explain how the Word of God increases one’s faith and a heart of obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit is cultivated.

Questions:

- 1). What action do we need to take in preparing for worship?
 - 2). What effect does the studying God’s word has in the life of the worship leader?
 - 3). Does your experience of singing as a worship leader point the corporate body to Christ?
 - 4). How can the worshiping church reflect the gospel?
- Challenge the participants to daily seek biblical and Christ-centered revitalization through God’s Word.

Learning Outcome 7: By the end of this week, students will be able to apply the foundational principles of Christocentric worship, towards a process aimed at edifying the people to desire to pursue biblical transformation.

8). Weekend Four - Lesson Plan 8: Practicing and Singing Christocentric Songs

Log in to Zoom and WhatsApp to let participants in. Open with a Word of Prayer, welcome participants and read Psalm 29, Psalm 100 to start the training.

Review and conclude training

Final lesson, and it was organized in a way that it will review and conclude the various lessons as participants strive to walk with God and grow spiritually. Learners must be fully aware of the need to digest God's Word and rightfully divide it. This session will be surveyed in a 25minute lecture that explains the difference between self-performance/fame and Christian Worship, with particular attention given to a Worship Philosophy that forms Congregational Spirituality. The course will conclude with an overview of various characteristics that distinguish the sacred actions of the Church. Explain to the participants how Christ is the center of worship and how worship leaders must be equipped to point the corporate body to him.

- *We are expected to not neglect the 'Gathering' of one another*
- Hebrews 10:25 – Not neglecting to meet together, as the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (ESV).
- Hebrews 3:13 – But exhort one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (ESV).
- Seek ways to faithfully engage God's Word during corporate worship services.
- We thrive in the context of Christ-centered biblical worship.
- How to apply the fundamental principles of Christocentric worship towards a process aimed to edify members of SBC to pursue Christ and his righteousness.
- Psalm 100 – Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come before his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (ESV).

Colossians 3:16 – Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (ESV)

The training curriculum explains the goal of one who is a follower of Christ, to live a life that is in unity with God and be transformed by the renewal of the mind and through the Word. (Psalm 1) "God's law" must be taken to heart and be meditated upon with all diligence. The training will conclude with a question-and-answer session to help improve the content on meditating on God's Word.

Question:

- 1). When you think of Christ-centered songs, what song comes to mind without looking at the lyrics?
- 2). Why do you think you were able to remember the lyrics of that song?
- 3). Why does singing Christocentric songs matter in corporate worship?

Constance Cherry defines: *Christocentric worship* saying, “It acknowledges and welcomes the risen Lord.”¹ Cherry describes, “Nothing is so central to our understanding of biblical worship than Jesus is truly present in the midst of the gathered community.”² Christocentric worship is reverencing the presence of Jesus as the central figure of worship. It is worship that welcomes the presence of God. Christocentric worship retells Christ’s story and declares the mighty acts of God.

Conclusion

The desire of this ministry project is to see you (worship leaders) equipped with resources that will spur you to lead and sing Christocentric worship songs and portray Christ in your lifestyle wherever you go. I pray you become leaders who will make a commitment to grow unto maturity and be Christ’s disciples who will proclaim the goodness of God. The goal of this curriculum is to ensure the eight-weekend’s lesson plans edified the spiritual lives of the worship leaders in SBC. Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfelt asserts, “Our task is to communicate all that God wants to say as meaningful as we can. Teach. Be a creative teacher and learn all you can about how to handle God’s word. Develop skills that will help you lead learners to respond and commit your efforts to God in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit, who alone can truly teach the Word”³

The spiritual nourishment of the worship leader must be of paramount importance in communication the gospel message. This will enable worship leaders walk by faith and submit to the power of the Holy Spirit as they apply biblical truth. The fourth-weekend lessons covered biblical contents that challenged the learners to relate to what is true from Scripture. The lessons encouraged the learner to stay focused in finding meaning in Christ-centered singing. Communicate biblical truth to the corporate body and engage the minds of the worshiping community to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Closing remarks:

Each of you is going to be assigned verses of Scripture from the Old to New Testament that speaks of worship that is centered on Christ. And I want you to think through these verses and be ready to share your thoughts. Biblical and theological foundations of Christ-centered worship must be seen through Colossians 3:16–17. Even though (Colossians 3:16–17) challenges us to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,

¹ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 25.

² Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 25.

³ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfelt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 322.

teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” We often get distracted and discouraged. We often don’t follow the instructions written in God’s promise to us and fail to point the members of our congregation to Christ, the center of our worship.

At the end of our four-weekends together, I am going to give you an opportunity to keep a journal that will introduce you to write principles that emphasizes the significance of God’s word as you prepare to lead worship. How to apply God’s word practically in your life as a worship leader. And how to pray the scriptures as you prepare and plan to lead the corporate body every week. Now turn to the person sitting next to you and pray for that person asking God’s to use that person as an instrument in pointing the corporate body to Christ as a worshiper. I know you all are busy, but when next we meet, I will ask how you are faring in spending time with God through his word and how much you are examining your heart in preparation to leading Christocentric songs.

REMEMBER

I encourage you with the words of Robert G. Rayburn, who affirms,

“Let us remember that when we say that we offer all acceptable worship to God in and through Jesus Christ we must understand that this means Jesus Christ in all the fullness of His being and His work. We must see Him as the incarnate Son of God, as both the man Jesus and God’s Anointed One, the Christ. In our worship we must always remember that the Eternal Word became a man in order that He might deliver man from the bondage of sin and accomplish on the Cross all that was necessary to save believing man, the elect, from all the guilt and corruption of his sin and from death itself.”⁴

Closing Prayer.

Learning Outcome 8: By the end of this week, students will be able to understand Christocentric worship and re-evaluate personal spirituality considering the context and discern how biblical faith and living a holy life is of great importance in both the worship experience and in the life of the worship leader.

⁴ Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 112.

APPENDIX 4
POST-PROJECT SURVEY

The following appendix includes the post-project survey. The analysis and evaluation of the post-project survey results helped in the development of a formal plan for raising awareness in the future among worship leaders at SBC.

POST-PROJECT SURVEY ON SINGING
CHRISTOCENTRIC SONGS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to develop a formal plan for raising awareness on Christocentric worship in the future among worship leaders at SBC. This research is being conducted by Jeremiah Swam Sidi at Shiloh Baptist Church, Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the pre and post project questions. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.*

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

Name: _____

Date: _____

Participation Number: (Post-Project Survey): Please use the 5-digit participation number you used in the first survey. This number must be the same. It will be used to correlate your pre- and post-project survey results. If you do not remember it, please send a WhatsApp message to Jeremiah Swam Sidi on +1 (254) 400 XXXX and the number will be sent to you.

5-Digit Participation Number: _____

THE PURPOSE AND PRACTICE OF CHRISTOCENTRIC
SONGS IN CORPORATE WORSHIP

DIRECTIONS: Considering the past four weekends, respond to the following statements with either a “True” or a “False. If your response is not binary, then answer with what is generally “True” or generally “False” for you.

1. Spending time in fellowship and singing Christocentric songs has given me confidence to fix my eyes on God
True False
2. Over the past four-weekends, I have become more intimate with worship leaders here at SBC
True False
3. I am comfortable being accountable with participants of the training session now than I was four-weekends ago.
True False
4. Hearing the various struggles of other worship leaders encouraged me to see that I am not alone in my struggle to live a holy life.
True False
5. The closer I draw to my fellow worship leaders; it joins my faith with theirs to point the corporate body to Christ.
True False
6. Preparation, prayer and planning is not needed in choosing Christocentric songs.
True False
7. Studying the Scriptures together with my fellow worship leaders has helped me understand God called me to edify the church.
True False
8. Being accountable makes it easier for me to discuss my struggles with members of the worship team.
True False
9. I enjoyed the training principles of Christocentric worship with my fellow worship leaders.
True False
10. I believe worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church should practice holiness
True False

DIRECTIONS: – Answer the following short-answer questions honestly. Your responses will help the deacons and elders know how best to encourage worship leaders to lead Christocentric songs in corporate worship.

11. How has singing Christocentric worship songs impacted your relationship with God?

12. How has singing songs that point to Christ impacted your relationship with members of SBC?

13. What was your greatest take away from the training sessions?

14. How could worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church be better equipped?

15. What two principles of Christ-centered worship stood out to you? How do you plan to put them into practice faithfully going forward?

16. Where do you find yourself struggling as a worship leader? What can you do to be a faithful witness of the gospel?

17. Identify one or two biblical guiding principles that you need members of the worship team to emulate. Briefly explain why?

18. How does Christocentric worship affect the way believers live day to day?

19. What has been the most helpful thing for you to grow unto maturity in Christ?

20. Please offer any other comments, questions, observations, or recommendations about Christocentric worship?

APPENDIX 5
T-TEST RESULTS

The project's aim was to increase knowledge and practice of singing Christocentric songs during corporate worship. Achieving this goal depended on successfully presenting a six-point scale was used to determine the numeric value of the survey questions, with each question having the desired score of five points. A t-test was used to compare results from the pre- and post-survey.

T-Test analysis of pre- and post- survey results

t- Test: Paired Two Samples for Means	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	159.12	160.8
Variance	21.7766667	18
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.236971	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	24	
t stat	-1.5236672	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.07033069	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.14066138	
t Critical two-tail	2.06389856	

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING CHRISTOCENTRIC WORSHIP LEADERS AT SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH SABON TASHA KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

Jeremiah Swam Sidi, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Matthew D. Haste

The purpose of this project was to develop Christocentric worship leaders at Shiloh Baptist Church Sabon Tasha, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Chapter 1 describes the ministry context of the project and the rationale for its implementation. Chapter 2 addresses the biblical and theological foundation for Christocentric worship. Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical and practical foundations of Christocentric worship. Chapter 4 addresses the details of the project preparation and its implementation. Chapter 5 addresses the evaluation of the project's goals and offers reflection on the strengths and weakness of the project, as well as theological and personal reflection.

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