

Missional Worship

For my Mr. T
All my love, so deep and forever
Mrs. T

Missional Worship

Increasing Attendance and

Expanding the Boundaries

of Your Church

Cathy Townley



CHALICE[®]
P R E S S

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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Cover image: iStockphoto

Cover and interior design: Scribe Inc.

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

11 12 13 14 15

Paperback: 9780827216440 EPUB: 9780827216457 EPDF: 9780827216464

**Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available
from the Library of Congress**

Printed in the United States of America

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Acknowledgments

To the practitioners—Thank you for taking the time to read my material and give me feedback on it. I took everything you said to heart. If you read this book now, you'll see your influence in it.

Mike Crawford—Mike, I appreciate you. You get the job done.

Andy Adams—Andy, your insights were very useful, and you were so kind to take so much time to share them with me—without ever having met me!

Jeremiah Cox—You too, Jeremiah; because of your comments, I told my story more overtly. Some day I'd like to be in the room when you're in front of the congregation.

Linnea Nilsen Capshaw—Hey, S.A. girlfriend! You have such a winning personality. It's fun to know you. You do good work.

Bjorn Dixon—Now you can take the three-ring binder off the shelf, Bjorn!

Jon Russell—I have learned much from you, Jon. You are a true talent.

To the mentors—Your work has tentacles, and you have impacted many people that you know and don't know. I am one.

Sally Morgenthaler—You are such an important voice in this field, in part because of your intelligence and your gifts, and in part because of your deep soul. Thank you for your partnership in this project. Plus, you are so kind and patient. Guess what? I have one more version I can send you. Peace, sister.

Tom Bandy—Tom, you have been so generous to share your writing skills with me. Thank you for your encouragement over the years and your input on this project.

Martha Grace Reese—Gay, it is an awesome privilege to work with you and be part of what God is doing through you. I am certain you have seen your influence in these pages.

Jim Griffith—Jim, anyone who knows you and the work you do will see your hand in this book, but I will never tell anyone what a truly great guy you are. Your secret is safe with me! You are such an important person in our lives. Mr. 76 and I love you.

To the friends and family—You are so encouraging, and I'm grateful you're in my life.

My intercessors—I really don't know what I'd do without you. I rely on you. You are a gift from God.

Golfing friends—Playing golf with you is an awesome distraction from the grind. You have been such good friends to Terry and me.

Regina and Jill—Thanks for the pushing and cajoling to keep up with the workouts even while my head was buried in my computer. You guys rock.

Todd Townley—Thank you for the photos, the fliers, the technical help, and your good humor. You are so talented, even if I am related to you.

The E—You are a new light in our family, and your joy and good nature are infectious, and not just for your Todd. Welcome to the New Mrs. Townley.

Terry and Jill Townley—You were the first after Dad to hear the news of publication. It was fun to share it with you. If you read this, I hope it has meaning. Dad and I adore you.

Mr. 76—No words are enough, Mr. T, for the feelings I have for you and for the love and the strength you give to me and our family.

Foreword

At the center of the book you're about to read is this simple yet elusive understanding: When worship is a way of life, then daily life is the destination, not the worship service.

After a dozen years of pushback on church growth and what some have dubbed “weekend performance syndrome,” this statement may seem like a broken MP3. Of course, church isn't just a worship service. On the heels of the missional movement, most of us realize (at least in our heads) that we need to break out of our fixation on the building, and many of us have been making great strides in that process.

Yet whatever biblical truths the missional movement brought to the fore, now a countermovement of isolationism is sweeping North America. Precisely because of this isolationism, reminders about what the church is supposed to be and do—and how worship relates to that—are so timely.

Let us be clear. Jesus didn't come to establish a ritual. Nor did he empty himself and become a servant “unto death” to give us a one-hour-a-week high. Rather, he came to establish a kingdom, a kingdom that reflects the very essence of the Father.

Rightly understood, worship serves the kingdom. It is an “amen” to the unfolding reality of God's nature. Worship was meant to be, as Townley says, “a way of life”: a persistent, moment-by-moment catalyst to kingdom living and a synapse into all that is holy, life-giving, reconciling, and freeing.

Thus, to say with Townley that it is all about the worship is really to say that daily we realign ourselves with who God is and what God wants to accomplish, on earth as it is in heaven. As Townley concludes, “Worship is the path we travel to meet God, each other, and ourselves.” I couldn't agree more. Worship literally breaks open God's person, God's people, and God's plans for the world.

Years ago, I wrote a book called *Worship Evangelism*.¹ The central theme was that good worship, not just a message about God, helps people experience God's presence. I still believe that. But that is only half the story. The second half is that good worship should help us experience God's heart and intent for a hurting world. Author Mark Labberton puts it this way: “Biblical worship that finds God will also find our neighbor.”² If worship serves the kingdom, then worship must go way beyond ourselves.

Townley understands this incredibly well. However, she also understands what we may have forgotten: The fusion of kingdom and worship

doesn't just happen outside the building. It can and must happen inside. As we grapple with an ever-decreasing influence of the church in Western society, worship services that reflect and reinforce an outward, kingdom orientation are more important than ever. To devalue corporate worship or underestimate its kingdom power just because we've redefined ourselves as missional would be a grave mistake. Equally grave would be to return to a performance-driven, "it's all about us" experience, opting for self-preservation in times of political and economic uncertainty.

When we finally understand that life is really "all about the worship," we give all that we are to God and God's purposes. Worship and kingdom are joined. Frankly, I can think of no more exciting motivation to celebrate together.

May our worship, both inside and outside the building, become only more true, more passionate, more constant. And through it, may we become as we were predestined to be: cocreators of the divine, generative, reconciling kingdom that is our Lord's.

April 7, 2010
Sally Morgenthaler,
author of *Worship Evangelism*

Introduction

A Note to Practitioners: It Takes One to Know One!

Worship is the journey through which you learn who you are. How is it with your worship?

I am a practitioner—a hands-on, put-it-into-practice church leader who finds meaning in helping others grow as leaders. I tried to fight that. I wanted to be something else, but that's not what God endorsed. My worship journey has brought me to a place of understanding and acceptance of who I am, and finally to the completion of this book.

YOUR TIME TO LISTEN

[Listen on iTunes](#)

Revelation, by Third Day; Contemporary Christian Rock

I Look to You, by Whitney Houston; Contemporary Christian Gospel

Most of you are practitioners too—pastors, musicians, and other worship leaders. (This book is for you!) I see leadership potential in you because of the questions you ask; you want practical answers. We practitioners are like that. The number-one question worship leaders ask is, how can we increase worship attendance in our church? At least that question lurks behind every other question you pose.

Here's the simple answer: *It's all about the worship*. It's all about you seeking after God each day by incorporating spiritual practices in your life and allowing God to lead you into the mission field so that you can invite those people to the life that is in Christ and to your church. I took the same journey. Worship teaches us who we are and how to live out our identity. Now we can influence others to do the same. Our influence on others toward Christ helps churches grow.

As a practitioner with a lot of experience as a worship leader or a coach of worship leaders in new and established churches, I know a lot about

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the practicalities too. Spiritual practices are essential but not exclusive. If you don't apply the practicalities, you won't grow either. In the midst of this discussion we must get to important concrete applications for growing your church.

Numerical Growth in the Emergent Era

This is the *emergent* era, in which we have a new understanding of church. We are moving past labels such as “liberal” and “conservative,” and we are in search of the “conversation” about what it means to follow Christ. We are, by and large, disillusioned with the institutional church.¹ That makes *any* book about numerical growth seem not to be very organic, because our focus on numbers reinforces the institutionalism that plagues the church. Yet if the growth of a worship service is any indication that we're bearing fruit in our practice of worship, then why wouldn't we want to increase our influence? And if we want to reach more people, then why wouldn't we want some tips? That's a practitioner's mantra! No cookie-cutter formulas prove effective in this era, but some insights and approaches are helpful. Even in the twenty-first century, we are not completely devoid of solutions, though our preference for being natural has caused us to think otherwise.

The idea that church growth is dead has influenced some new start and turnaround pastors to the point that they rejected growth principles out of hand. Some participants in emergent seminars learned that emergent leaders who grew their churches in the twenty-first century did so without using church growth techniques. If you scratch the surface, however, you see that those leaders did employ church growth techniques. They just didn't apply church growth vocabulary to their work. Those who rejected church growth principles never got any traction and closed their doors just before they opened or reopened them.

Practitioners Need Direction

This Is a “How-to” Book

Adopt a worship lifestyle to increase worship attendance and expand the boundaries of your church. It is both a spiritual and practical endeavor. Ten worship practices provide the framework for your journey. I've discovered them in my work first as a worship leader and then as a worship and evangelism coach and consultant for new and established churches:

- The first five practices focus on how you live this life individually and lead others to do the same. In case you might raise any question, this is how I live my life too.
- The second five practices examine the nuts and bolts of putting a service together so you can welcome your mission field into Christian community to experience God. I have done these things as a worship

leader starting new services or churches, and I coach leaders to do the same in their churches.

- Each chapter ends with some directives for the pastor and the church musician to carry out the practice of worship in their own lives and in the faith community. Start doing them as you read this book.

This Is a “Why” Book

Most practitioners are very opinionated about worship, so a book on the topic should challenge us. If it doesn't, it's not worth our time to read it. Consider the thoughts behind the practices in the pages that lie ahead. They may open your heart to a new understanding of worship, or they may simply help you know why you disagree. Either outcome is valid.

This Is a “Resource” Book

The sidebars that run throughout the text refer to songs, other arts, writings, Web sites, research, and other links. Use these to seek after God as you consider this material. You might use some of the materials in your worship service too. Not all are specifically Christian, though I have found meaning in them. In the resource addendum you'll find more explanation of how to use the resources.

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YOUR TIME TO LISTEN AND RESEARCH

[Listen on iTunes](#)

React, by Jurassic 5; Hip-Hop/Rap

Hip Hip, Chin Chin, by Club Des Belugas; Latin

Focus on words as well as sound; look up the meaning of “Hip Hip, Chin Chin.”

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**Who Should Read This Book
(And a Challenge to Emergent Leaders)**

Throughout this material, I refer to “pastors” and “worship leaders.” They include the people who stand before the congregation leading others into the presence of Christ, or who work behind the scenes producing the event for the gathered community. They also include those people in seats who take worship seriously but might not have an official role in producing worship each week in the local church. This book is written for all of us who fall into these categories.

This book is also a dialogue with or maybe even a challenge for anyone immersed in the emergent mind-set. As an observer, I see the need for the revolution. As a person on a spiritual journey, I have my own issues with the church, and so I resonate with much of the philosophy I hear younger

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leaders discuss. Yet I am also on the apostolic end of the spiritual leadership continuum, and that means I am always drawn to the work of outreach. As a practitioner, I am aware that practical applications for growth aren't much different from how they were in biblical times.

Emergent or not, a church that isn't growing often has leadership that has overvalued one side of the leadership equation: either spirituality *or* strategies. Real growth always involves both. That's what makes growing difficult. To follow Christ individually or corporately requires a structure, but any structure we put into place must continuously point us back to the heart of the matter, which is following Christ and touching someone else's life with hope.

As I visit emergent churches and discover how many of them aren't growing, I sense that the focus on mission makes us think we can't apply growth principles without losing our heart for mission. I am saying the opposite: We can't fulfill mission unless we have a structure for growth. That's why it must be our lifestyle. Then it's real.

I hope the discussion in these pages will lead you to dialogue and learning. Look for conversations at townleycoaching.com.

The Circular Nature of Worship and Outreach

The chapters in this book build upon each other, but if you're inclined to jump around, that can work. You could start at chapter 10 and work your way backward. It will work because worship leading is the vantage point from which most of us are beginning this journey. Worship is a circle. We live a life of worship apart from the gathered community, but in the gathered community we are encouraged to do so corporately. For some, the first experience of Christ may well be in a public worship setting. No matter where you start, you'll end up in the same place.

The Main Thing

It's important to say right here that when I speak of worship in this book, Jesus is my focus. I don't know a generic God who has no son, or a God or gods of any other religion or spirituality. Christianity is my purpose. It's what I want others to know about and experience.

In this postmodern age, we all need more clarity about who Christ is in our lives, not less. We are on the road to that in this book. Clarity is not tantamount to judgment. Clarity is simply being comfortable with who you are as a Christ follower. My own journey has brought me to that place of clarity in Christ, and that's what I have to give away to others.

As you work through these pages and apply the practices associated with adopting worship as a way of life, you receive no guarantees that you will achieve numerical growth. However, you can be sure you will become the person God intended. When that happens, others are drawn to you, and the boundaries of the church expand. If we follow Christ with

intention through our personal, spiritual practices—the disciplines—we are always becoming the person God created us to be.

Spiritual practices make us like Christ. With God, we always find more room to grow. For me, that is reason enough for being a Christian. When being like Christ is your focus, you will find greater ease with the ideas and suggestions in this book.

This is not a book on the spiritual disciplines per se. It is a book about the connection between the life you lead and your public leadership. When you are clear about who Christ is in your own life, you will articulate the journey more compellingly, and that will increase your ability to bear fruit.

YOUR TIME TO LISTEN AND WATCH

[Listen on iTunes](#)

Abide with Me, by Hayley West, Celtic; The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Choral

[Search on YouTube](#)

Elton John sings *Abide with Me*

A worship lifestyle is our relationship with God and our way through life.

It leads to our interaction with the mission field.

It is fueled by prayer and other spiritual practices.

Networking is our framework—a spiritual practice in itself.

Invitation is the outgrowth of such practices: inviting others to the life that's in Christ and to the church—to be the church.

PART I

LAYING A MISSIONAL
FOUNDATION FOR
NUMERICAL GROWTH

(It's All about Worship)

1

Make Worship, Not the Worship Service, the Goal of Church Life

We can get so strategic that we worship so our church will grow . . . But we're doing all this because God is worthy and we want to worship Him.¹

—TOMMY WALKER, WORSHIP LEADER AND COMPOSER

Worship is about the journey through life in which we meet God, each other, and ourselves. Here's a little bit about my worship journey. One minute God didn't exist in my mind or in my life; the next minute, I knew God is real.

I was so far away from God and the church that if you had known me, you would have been worried about me. My decision to go to seminary as the response to God coming into my life was in retrospect humorous, if not ludicrous. I was absolutely spiritually immature and certainly not ready for prime-time spiritual leadership. Further, my going shocked my family, and that was a very big hurdle to overcome. God stuck with me and stuck with my family, and we grew up.

YOUR TIME TO GOOGLE

[Search Google](#)

A Brief History of Ancient Israel—Abraham Builds an Altar, by Victor Harold Matthews

Throughout my youth, I was in plays and shows and all sorts of performances. I wanted to be an entertainer until the day I had that conversion

experience. Instead, I went on staff at a church where they asked me to start a contemporary service. I had no idea what I was getting into. It worked, although I can't take credit for it. God moved me around a lot from that point forward. In the process, I learned more about starting worship services—about what it actually takes to do that on a practical level.

One day, God took me out of worship leading and worship start-up and kept me out of ministry for a while. Not being in ministry was necessary, but it was hard too. God had to teach me to worship if I was going to be a worship leader. The practical tips would only go so far.

Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, you could still hang up a denominational shingle and people would show up on your church's doorstep. That has changed. Invitation is how we grow services today, and it is a much bigger picture than the worship service. When new members came, we easily believed that the worship service was the point of all the church did. My journey with God taught me that worship is not the church's all in all. Worship is about daily life, because that's where we can spend the most time with God. The worship service is just an hour a week.

God made me into a real worshiper by taking me away from the worship service and moving me into daily life, where I now spend the majority of my time with God through spiritual practices and disciplines. When I don't take time out of my day to just sit with God, I miss that special tie to God. Since God is so much a part of me, I find it much easier to talk about my faith than I did when I stood in front of people during the worship service. Faith talk is natural when you spend a lot of time with God.

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YOUR TIME TO PRAY

Pause for Prayer

Ask God to reveal some things to you about your life of worship.

What can you learn from my worship journey and your own?

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If you want to grow your worship service, let God take you away from your focus on your worship service for a while so you can learn to worship as you follow God into daily life. There you will meet God, others, and yourself. This experience with God will teach you to talk about faith, and that will help you grow your worship service.

If everyone in our churches stepped back to be with God in daily life, we wouldn't have nearly the trouble growing our services that we do now. Worshipping God in spirit and in truth by following Christ wherever Christ leads will change you to the core. In part, you will become more pleasant to be around. Why wouldn't people want to talk about faith with you?

Right now, in many of our churches, worship is not our focus. The worship *service* is. The distinction is sometimes hard to see, until we think about the things people in seats do to try to control God. Have you ever thought that our focus on the worship *service*—not a worship lifestyle—is part of the problem?

Let's talk about what a worship lifestyle is. When God took me away from up-front leadership for a time, I learned that worship is our relationship with God. That means worship is our way of life. Worship changes our lives. If our lives don't change, we're not spending that much time with God. We are not worshipping.

Life change is a matter of degree. The most life change we can ask for is to follow Christ and then to grow comfortable in our own skins as Christ followers so that we don't hide who we are. Right now, most of us try to hide our Christianity from plain sight. If we seek God every day through our spiritual practices, we can't really hide because God is too much a part of us. When others see Christ in you, they're more open to you, not less. When you see Christ in yourself, you invite others to meet him. That's how church growth works.

YOUR TIME TO LISTEN

[Listen on iTunes](#)

With Arms Wide Open, by Creed; Rock

The invitation to meet Christ is an invitation to spiritual maturity. Following Christ helps us grow up. So our invitation to others to meet Christ is a hand-off: We give over the reins of the spiritual journey to others by teaching them how to incorporate spiritual practices into their own lives. We make such hand-offs because it's how we live our lives and because it's how Christ changed us.

This action has big implications for the way we vocational ministers think about worship in general but also for the way we plan and lead the worship service in our churches. Right now, most of us think of the worship service as the pinnacle of church life.² The worship service is important, but it isn't the goal or even the main focus. We in the church have made it the main focus, and that's backward. Daily life is the goal because that's where we actually live out our faith, whether we're just starting out following Christ or have been Christ followers for a long time. Jesus leads us outside the church walls. We grow up "out there," as Christ draws us closer to him through our spiritual practices.

When we invite others to meet Christ by inviting them to the worship service, we're really sending them away. The only reason they come back is to find encouragement for returning to the world and to have a place to invite their friends and loved ones who are on this journey with them.

Our spiritual practices allow us to follow Christ: praise, prayer, confession, forgiveness, scripture, meditation, study, giving, fasting, acts of service, and faith sharing (among other things). We practice these things each day. That means that spiritual practices must be in the worship service too—all of them, so that we're prepared to follow God and so that we recognize the worship service as worship and as the encouragement for the journey.

In part II of this book, we'll see how to incorporate the spiritual disciplines into the worship service. In this section, we're focusing on how the disciplines become our venue for following Christ outside the church building. We have to leave before we can come back.

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YOUR TIME TO GOOGLE

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John Wesley and Spiritual Disciplines—The Works of Piety

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A Worship Lifestyle Is Not a Search for Morality

What is a worship lifestyle? Why are its spiritual practices so important? First we must understand why the spiritual disciplines are so important for following Christ.

These days, talking about a worship lifestyle is trendy. That means we're not always sure what someone else means by the words "worship lifestyle," even though we think we know. Without clarity, the conversation usually turns to morality. We think that seeking God each day is all about making better decisions and "living in alignment" with God. On some level, that's true. When we love God enough to follow God, we do want to please God.

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YOUR TIME TO GOOGLE

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Worship as a way of life

YOUR TIME TO REFLECT

[Ask Yourself](#)

How do you define worship as a way of life?

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If we're really doing the work of worship in our own lives, we don't have to work that hard to please God because we are more concerned with *being* with God than with trying to please God. We spend time with God through our spiritual practices. That is pleasing in and of itself.

Plus, it's dangerous to make good deeds and "purity" the focus of our worship lifestyle. Such things may be by-products, but when they're the goal, then we're in danger of trying to earn our way to heaven. Isn't that what so many of us do right now? We go *to* church, to the *church service*, and we think we've done our duty. Let's face it; the world isn't pure. The more we focus on morality as the meaning of a worship lifestyle, the more we have to separate ourselves from the world, not interact with it. When we separate ourselves, we have only one place to go—the safe haven of the church building, where we attend the worship service—our place of refuge.

Worship Makes Us Countercultural

"Cultural Christian." I first heard that term in the early twenty-first century, right about the time the phenomenon started to wane—or at least about the time that I noticed it was on the wane. A cultural Christian is a person who is a Christian because it's appropriate or because he or she was born into it. When life comes down to living out the faith, a cultural Christian's faith has no substance to provide the needed resources. At such crisis moments, a cultural Christian cannot look back on daily spiritual practices to gain any real sense of following after Christ at a heart level. In truth a cultural Christian has not experienced life transformation. In our postmodern era, we're seeing fewer and fewer cultural Christians because of the cultural movement away from the church. More discussion on this topic is in chapter 2.

A true Christ follower is countercultural. We could explore that topic on many levels. For our purposes here, we'll focus on the *following* of Christ. Staying inside the church building is not an example of the way a Christ *follower* is countercultural. We can only go against the grain when we live in the world, interacting in daily life. God leads us there because God transforms us as God is transforming the world through us. We follow God because we want more of God. In the process we become integrated within ourselves. We are sure of who we are as Christ followers. God uses that to show others what it means to be Christian.

YOUR TIME TO READ SCRIPTURE

Read *The Message*

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

When we think about the way Christians are supposed to go against the grain, it's easy to see why we confuse our journey of following Christ with a journey into morality. We do become much more moral when we spend a lot of time with Christ, but that is not the value we're after. The world already has that value, even though the way the world thinks of morality is (mostly) different from the way a Christ follower thinks of it. Just ask Oprah. Being moral makes you *quite* cultural.

What distinguishes a Christ follower who follows Jesus into the world from someone who just lives in the world because that's all he knows? For a true Christ follower, the distinguishing mark is our motivation. We are *following* Christ into the world for one reason: to have more of Christ. Jesus has left the church building, and we want to go with. We don't need to manufacture ways to be different; we just are.

Not only are Christ *followers* different from those who are already in the world because they're not elsewhere, we are also different from those who remain inside the church building—the cultural Christians. For those of us who find Christianity a way to separate ourselves from daily life, the church building is our haven. That makes us schizophrenic. I know that because that's the way I used to live my own life.

When I first became a Christian, my spiritual practices were few. I went to seminary, so I did a lot of studying. I also laid at the foot of the cross in utter confession and allowed the forgiveness of God to wash over me with hope and love and promise. I got healthier as a person. While I was an up-front worship leader, I didn't do a whole lot more. After a time, I went on staff at a very large church that placed a high value on prayer. I saw the power of prayer firsthand. It led me to pray more, read more scripture, and explore fasting. However, I did these things here and there, without any real consistency.

Then, as part of my coaching work, I made a covenant to pray every day and to practice other disciplines.³ Immersion in these spiritual disciplines allowed me to see what was missing before. I began to pray that God would bring me people who needed to talk about faith, and God took me up on it. That led to more prayer and spiritual practices. In so doing, the ease of being a Christian came upon me in ways I simply did not expect.

That's how I know that many of us clergy and other Christ followers do not practice the disciplines with discipline. Spiritual practices also taught me that *we* must put in the effort to follow God. That's how God grows us to become who we are: lovers and followers of Jesus Christ.

Worshiping Christ and Christ Alone

If we're really following after Christ, then we have to let him lead us. When he does, we take a path into the world and into relationships with people who are not Christ followers. Those are the people Christ wants to reach, and he'll reach them through us. In this book, we are learning the

ways that encourage our departure from the safety of the church building and that eventually lead to invitation to others to join us on our journey. For them, just like for us, the invitation is to follow Christ into daily life, to a life of worship.

When we first meet Christ, we worship by definition. Even the most superficial relationship with Christ is worship, by virtue of our creation. God is God, and we are not. Then, when we follow after Christ, we worship with intention. Worship is our response to God and the means of grace for becoming the person God created us to be. Every interaction we have with God is worship. With each interaction, two things happen. We become separate entities from God because worship reminds us we're not God. We become tied to God for the same reason; if we're not God, we need God.

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YOUR TIME TO WATCH

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Made to Worship

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Some people—many people—in this world do not take to the notion that there is a God, or that Jesus is God. When we don't have Christ, what are we left with but ourselves? I am amazed at my very intelligent and successful friends who don't believe in God or who think Christ is a fabrication. Instead they believe in luck and "the powers of the universe." Surely you know people with that mind-set.

Such anti-Christian mind-sets shouldn't surprise us, because as Christ followers, we know we were made to worship. If we don't worship God, we will worship something else. God literally created us to be in relationship with Him through worship. We are not to worship just anything but to worship Jesus—the essence of God's creativity, God's offspring, the apple of God's eye. Worship is in our DNA, so we *must* worship, even if we worship false idols. We cannot *not* worship.

The common journey for all people on this earth is the search for meaning and significance. We're all tempted by false idols because they give us a fleeting sense of self-importance. The end result of worshipping God substitutes is *insignificance* because we come to believe we *are* God. Deep down we know that's not true, and so does everyone else. But the illusion is very seductive, and we'd prefer to hold on to it. At that point, everything we do is to protect our mistaken identity.

True importance comes as we embrace our identity as Christ followers—as people who need God because we're not God. Therefore God can reside in us. Anything else does not leave enough room. The more we worship Christ in spirit and in truth, the more we lose a little more of our falseness in favor of our realness. We're on a journey toward authenticity.

That’s why Christianity is not and can never be about becoming better people. When you understand the nature of worship, you know that Christianity is about becoming *complete* people. We are complete when we worship Christ and no one or *nothing* other. Anything or anyone else is false. Therefore, we don’t worship God because it’s what good Christian people do, but because we can’t live without our focus on Jesus. If we try, we will lose perspective.

God inserts the drive in us to follow Christ into the world by virtue of our creation. If you know God, then you know God is not a puppeteer. God gave us free will. So we can choose to reject Christ and not worship Christ, or we can choose to worship Christ marginally—by definition. Most of us have done both of those things. Worship is more than something we do “by definition.” It’s an activity—a spiritual practice. So we have to live it. That’s how God changes us.

Worshipping with Intent

For most of us, speaking to others about our faith is a chore. We either come on too strongly and judgmentally or we don’t speak at all about it. We call our faith “private.” Faith is anything *but* private if God is so completely integrated in us because we are worshipping God each day. Nor can faith be judgmental if our worship is true and deep in us. When we really worship, we know that the right to judge does not belong to us because we are not God. Real worship lets us just be who we are.

The more disciplined we become in our spiritual practices, the more they are our link to everyday life. God is with us everywhere we go; we don’t leave home without him. Faith talk is like falling off a log as we connect thoughts and expressions from everyday interactions and conversations to our insights about God.

Words of faith flow out of our mouths without shame, guile, or judgment—when we speak with the butcher, the masseuse, the acupuncturist, the nail tech, the barber, the dog sitter, the tennis partner, the golf foursome, the banker, the barista, the bartender. These are our “peeps,” so why wouldn’t we talk about faith with them? It’s who we are. If we can’t be ourselves, then it isn’t a relationship.

YOUR TIME TO READ SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 1:8–12

Some readers might be feeling a familiar stirring right now. Could it be “our wall of resistance?” We look at that list of our “peeps” and dig in our heels, saying that talking about faith with people we hardly know is an imposition.

That's only if they don't want to have the conversation. How will we know if we don't ask? Besides, many of us have a lot of contact with such people in our lives, and we've gotten to know them. We like them and they like us. Yet I'll bet we've never said much to them about our lives as Christ followers—if anything.⁴

YOUR TIME TO REFLECT

Ask Yourself

How much time do I take out of each day to sit quietly with God and just listen?

Spiritual practices are not easy. They're *disciplines*. We must *practice* them, with intention. That takes time and effort. Once we start, we can't stop. It's our identity! We *always* have to practice the disciplines *so that* we can continue to be the person God is leading into the world. Most of us don't want to put in that kind of effort or open ourselves up to that much change.

From my own journey and from the work I do, I know most of us say we spend time with God, but we don't. We have lost the art of it, or maybe we never had it in the first place. As a person who comes out of a mainline liberal background, I am aware that the focus on Jesus can be a problem for many of us. That's another bridge I've crossed, and that's why I am trying to be clear about such things. It's essential that we mainline Christians come to terms with Jesus, or growing our churches is going to be very tough no matter what we do.

The journey into worship is a reality check. We must practice it with intention and allow God to connect us with Christ and with the world. If we are not reaching out to others out of our personal sense of identity as Christ followers, then we are not really doing the work of worship. It is that simple.

YOUR TIME TO GOOGLE

Search Google

Reality quotes

The Integrity of the Worship Leader in the Worship Service

I don't write these words as some kind of expert. There is no such thing if we're always following God. We are all partners on the journey. If you hear someone say he or she is an expert in worship, you know that the journey is superficial. That person is focused completely on what goes on inside the church building: the worship service.

Still, the worship service is important, and the desire to grow it is the primary reason most readers will have chosen to read this book. We want the service to be good; otherwise, it won't grow. We need practical tips to help, and this book is full of them. Part II is almost entirely devoted to specific "how-to's."

If you start with Part II of this book and never go through Part I, then you will not be putting the practicalities into place in the context of your worship lifestyle. You can do that if you want, and it can work to a degree. In the end, if the only thing you do is strategize, nothing will really change about worship in your church.

That's why I am encouraging you—the pastor, the church musician, the serious Christ follower who sits in seats, and even the new Christ follower who is still deciding about this thing called faith. You are the only ones who can create an environment for real worship in your church. You do it by taking your eyes off the worship service and placing them squarely upon your life of worship—to benefit your life and to lead others into that same life. When you do that, then any strategy you employ has a chance to become more than just a pretty window dressing.

As our churches decline in this country, many of us want to pin it on something over which we have no control, whatever that might be. I can say with certainty that we do have some control, and it's us. We are the ones we can manage by taking the reins of our own spiritual journey. That is the *only* thing we can control. We can seek God for ourselves. When we do seek God, it will mean something to those who follow us. They will do the same because we will guide them to do so.

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YOUR TIME TO PRAY

[Pause to Pray](#)

About your life of worship

YOUR TIME TO LISTEN

[Listen on iTunes](#)

Alright, by Mercy Me; Country/Contemporary Christian Pop Rock

Your Hands, by JJ Heller; Contemporary Christian Folk Rock

.....

**Note to Pastors and Musicians: New Ways to Think
about the Disciplines in the Worship Service**

When we are following the disciplines in our own lives, we see them differently than we did when we followed them only in the worship service.

We will explore this topic more in part II. Here is a sneak peek:

- *Praise God in the midst of strife.* Doing so is a discipline. Include a joyful praise song in the midst of confession.
- *Hear the still, small whisper.* Plan for silence, or allow it to occur naturally in the service as an act of worship.
- *Journal to express your journey.* Do more than give people an opportunity to fill in the blanks for your sermon.
- *Talk about faith.* Even if it's awkward, give members of your congregation some ways to tell the person next to them about their journey.
- *Fast.* Eliminate a regular, even beloved portion of the worship service to show God how much you rely on him.
- *With any of these disciplines, you'll have to tell people why you're doing them. It will be easier to do so when you are practicing them in your daily life.*

Growing Disciplined

For the next month, find a time each day to sit in silence for five minutes. Set an alarm so you're not constantly checking your watch. Start by offering words of love and praise, and then wait. What do you hear? Maybe nothing; maybe something. After your alarm goes off, journal what you heard, saw, felt, thought, or experienced. Do this every day. At the end of the month, reread your notes. What is God telling you?