

“But again, the engagement of the heart is more important than the correctness of routine.”¹ Within the context of the book, *Christ Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice*, Bryan Chapell’s words stated above not only surmise what one should do during confession, but what one should be doing during worship. This review will look to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Chappell’s work while assessing the takeaways for someone involved in ministry, in worship, or both. Overall, the book makes one evaluate why they worship the way they do while making one understand that worship has primary and secondary issues.

Chapell does an exquisite job of bringing forth the history and styles of services that have been associated with Christianity. One is richly educated about Roman Catholic services and rationale while seeing how changes developed due to reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Rayburn. As one reads it was fascinating to see that changes to services and worship were not fickle but done with a purpose and direction. An example of this was seen regarding communion. Although different branches of Christianity handle communion differently, Chappell delves into the debate by stating, “...Church leaders at the time of the assembly debated whether weekly Communion was more likely to create appreciation for or apathy towards the Lord’s Supper.”² This is one of the many debates that developed regarding how worship and services should be conducted. Chapell unpacks the reasoning behind why differing perspectives existed and why it was simply more than preference.

Preference and emphasis on this are discouraged and Chapell is very conscientious in explaining what unites Christianity. Although he is careful to point out key differences in the varying periods and sects of Christianity, he is just as careful to highlight the glue that keeps

¹ Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Ill, Baker Academic, 2017), 91.

² Chapell, *Christ Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice*, 77.

Christianity united. This point is accentuated when discussing adoration. Whether it was the ancient Roman Catholic liturgy or looking at the later influences of Luther and Calvin, one is reminded that all were concerned with the adoration and the greatness of God.³ If one looks at the history of Christianity, it is easy to become tangled up in the wars that have occurred in Europe, as well as, the social media battles that occur today with those in the faith. Chapell raises the reader to recognize that what one does is not as important as why he or she is doing it when revolving around worship.

Although classifying this as a weakness might seem counter-productive to what has been presented, one area that Chapell could strengthen would be that of examples Chapel communicates well to the reader the problems that exist with worship in the current North American churches and the issues that can make worship confrontational. Whether speaking about gender responsibilities or charismatic gifts, there seem to be multiple opportunities to draw a line down the floor and make two sides of an aisle causing division.⁴ Chapell comments on sensitivity and compromise and the need to prioritize the Gospel. Although one cannot disagree with this, it would be helpful for a novice of worship to see more examples of what this looks like. To the writer's credit, he does provide examples like Willow Creek Community Church to demonstrate a church that is innovative and looking to unite values.⁵ Arguably, other specific examples are not given as by giving these, Chapell then provides someone with an opening to say that he is showing preference as to what he is highlighting and what he is leaving out. A suggestion here would be for Chapell to demonstrate how to navigate these troubling topics in church meetings and amongst staff. Are there exercises that can be done to gradually get to the root of division? Are there steps everyone can take on a committee that can lead everyone to a

³ Ibid., 103.

⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁵ Ibid., 170.

common place to look at worship elements more objectively rather than from a lens of bias? A writer cannot pen all ideas and remedies but this would be one area that Chapell should make a supplement for.

Upon reading Chapell's book, one his analysis with a better understanding of worship and the role worship plays in one's life. The reader is reminded that when gathering occurs in His name, it should be for the praise of both His light and goodness. As Calvin stressed and as Chapell affirms, one should not do anything before God without first recognizing just how much there is a need for Him.⁶ This also reflects the idea that one must know God. Henri J.M. Nouwen once stated, "The Christian leader of the future is the one who truly knows the heart of God as it has to become flesh, "a heart of flesh," in Jesus."⁷ When looking at the two authors' ideas, it becomes clear that congregants or a leader must know God and learn the heart of God by walking in a relationship with God. This in turn brings about a worship experience that is more personal and more intentional.

Chapell is astute in pointing out that the Protestant tradition has been about valuing expression with general principles regarding the Bible. This undoubtedly has led to battles and wars when there is an enforcement of one's preferences over the freedoms of others.⁸ As a follower of Christ, one must remove pride and reduce themselves to be humbler. Writers Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry argue that by making God the object of one's worship, one will develop a confidence in God that will replace insincere pride and fear. "Instead of edging God out because we are driven by pride and fear, our relationships will be renewed with humility and God-grounded confidence as we seek to exalt God only."⁹ Both authors

⁶ Ibid., 69.

⁷ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reflections on Christian Leadership*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 38.

⁸ Chapell, 68.

⁹ Ken Blanchard et al., *Lead Like Jesus Revisited: Lessons From The Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2016), 78-79.

communicate that although everyone will have reasons why they will wish to worship the way they do, they simply do not have the right to put their wants over that of God's Kingdom.

Works Cited

Blanchard, Ken, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry. *Lead Like Jesus Revisited: Lessons From the Greatest Leadership Role of All Time*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016.

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