

Corporate worship and spiritual formation is an area in life that I contest with daily as a Christian musician. In the article "Corporate Worship and Spiritual Formation: Insights from Worship Leaders,"

As defined in the opening paragraph, "Corporate Christian worship is a spiritual practice designed to focus on the glory of God and to deepen one's faith." Although I agree with this statement, this failed to be defined from a well-rounded aspect. Someone leading anything has an agenda going into whatever, in this case, I'm going to focus more so on the "corporate worship" aspect and how I feel it fall short of involving God due to what is portrayed during this segment of the church.

The article measured different aspects that I consider to be odd when addressing the matter of spirit. Such as prayer, preaching, praise, confession, ministry, and sacrament. (p.2)

The text was written in hopes to find a correlation between collective worship and it's wellness-related properties. The article looks at key concepts in a church service, some of which were "religious practices, such as prayer and ritual, influences and cognition and in decreased risk of disease as well as increased wellness." (p.1)

In the article several studies were conducted, in one, "26 music worship leader exemplars, from various ethnic and denominational backgrounds were interviewed. The areas of inquiry included the roles of embodiment, cognition, affect, and spirituality in worship, leader preparation, and the "congregations role". Quantitative analysis software NVivo9 was used during this process.

Common themes found were bodily signals, God's action, and presence, God-centered engagement, facilitating worship, divine purpose, and continual commitment to spiritual formation.

This study found, positive relationship between church attendance and health-related outcomes. Despite the significant findings with church attendance, few researchers have the "black box of church attendance" to identify key factors in church services, such as corporate worship, that may be exposed to a spiritual dose" that includes experiencing spiritual emotions (e.g., awe and gratitude) and viewing themselves as "sacred vessels." (p.1)

The article examined, the emotional and cognitive aspect and this psychophysiological study of church attenders. They interviewed 74, ethnically diverse participants from presbyterian and pentecostal churches to elucidate key factors that contributed to spiritual transformation, spiritual struggle, and experiences of feeling close to God in worship. However, I ask, why is feeling close to God in worship important when the bible tells us that on multiple occasions the I/him will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Why then is the worship portion becomes a moment of focus on that and not the goodness of God? Yes, one might argue that God is with us is to be worship but that isn't what the article is saying. Pointing out that Christians believe that devotional and worship practices train the imagination to live well before God" (Dyrness, 2011, p. 85).

Is it a biased view? How did one conclude that that is the example of worship or standard or prototypical rule by which to follow? Why is there a chosen few puts in place based on the examples in the article anyway? Also, gratitude varies from person to person, what I thank God for, say, for instance, my children and husband, might not be the thing a single person with no children would be grateful to God for. Also, having been put in the position of worship leader before, having the unction to go before the church and in a way be a vessel of example is a lot, but my reason was because I naturally love to sing and because I was encouraged to based on that alone, not for any real spiritual reasons that I could understand. Where did this ritual of "corporate worship" start and why would be my question after reading the article?

For me, the article lacked explaining and answering questions such as, why worship corporately? Why would one need or want to come to someone else to seek the unified adoration of God? Time and time again the bible tells the Christian believer to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4) and "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth". (John 4:24) The bible also tells us to " ... let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25). This leads me to believe that we gather together for each other and not for worship alone. This part of a service, in my opinion, is unnecessary because it can be extremely distracting, oftentimes for me taking away from the worship experience. I could never personally understand the praise and worship segment of the church, maybe it's my opinion, but I always thought that our sole purpose in life, is to exalt God. I would have like to also the negative influences that corporate worship produces. I often find myself being distracted during these times in the service, by the fact that in my Pentecostal church, worship isn't free. It's merely, in my opinion, a "ritual".

The article points out the leaders having to focus their attention on God in hopes to be hidden in self, but wouldn't that defeat the purpose of being a leader?

The bible states the "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of host: the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3) This leads me to believe that when in collective worship our focus should only be on God, and as the article referenced often is that the minds of the worship leaders were on self often and attempting to look like the picture of a worship leader.

In my opinion, the themes in this article that deal with areas in which have no measure, like "God's action and presence" how does one accurately analyze this? For me, the use of Bodily signals as a means to gather data is flawed. For example, we read about modeling in our psychology book, modeling is defined as according to the text, as observational learning (Modeling) The individuals performing the imitated behavior are called models. Research suggests that this imitative learning involves a specific type of neuron, called a mirror neuron (Hickock, 2010; Rizzolatti, Fadiga, Fogassi, & Gallese, 2002; Rizzolatti, Fogassi, & Gallese, 2006). (ch.6,p.206.)

My question is how can one measure authenticity. I make that point because I notice my children mimicking things that I do on a daily bases with little to no understanding or real thought behind it. My

question then is, what is the purpose of this behavior in worship and how could the article engage the "listener" more for clarity?

Also, how do we measure God's action in a service? And if there isn't an "action" necessarily, does that equate the lack of God's presence in the service or one's life even?