

Theology for Life

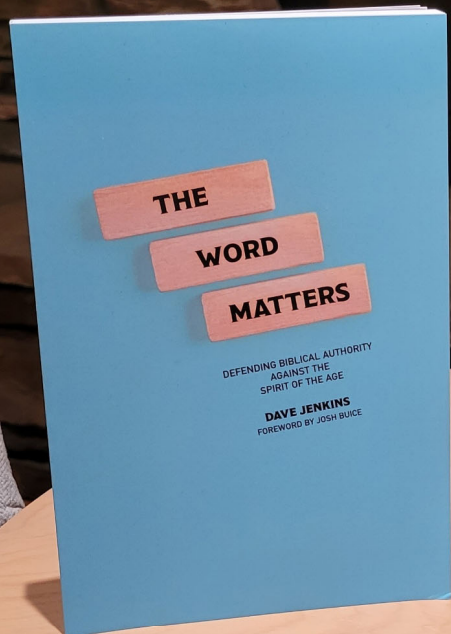
Truth in Worship

DISCERNMENT, THEOLOGY,
AND THE SONGS WE SING

Inside this Issue...

- What is Biblical Worship? Honoring God According to His Word
- Worship Discernment Checklist: 5 Questions to Ask
- Rescuing Worship: How Shepherds and Saints Can Lead with Truth and Grace

In ***The Word Matters***, Dave Jenkins takes readers by the hand and helps them understand how serious the issue of biblical authority is and how the Bible is under attack, so that they can stand with confidence on the Word of God.



The Word Matters

DEFENDING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY
AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE



In a personal and yet accessible way, Dave Jenkins, in his latest book, ***Contentment: The Journey of A Lifetime***, takes readers on a personal journey of discovering contentment as defined in Scripture. Masterfully incorporating the Church's rich teaching and literature on contentment, he provides very practical help for readers, equipping them in their efforts to gain contentment in their own lives.

Contentment

The Journey of a
Lifetime

DAVE JENKINS

Theology for Life

www.theologylife.org

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Editor's Corner

EXECUTIVE EDITOR*Dave Jenkins***CONTENT EDITOR***Sarah Jenkins***DESIGN DIRECTOR***Sarah Jenkins*

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What comes to mind when you hear the word *worship*? For many today, worship has been reduced to a musical experience or an emotional high. In our age of fog machines, LED walls, and influencer-style worship leaders, the gravity and wonder of biblical worship often get lost. But worship is not about mood—it's about truth. It's not about what moves us emotionally, but about what exalts God faithfully.

At *Theology for Life*, we believe worship must be grounded in Scripture, not culture. That's why this issue focuses on helping Christians rediscover what it means to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24). As pressures mount and compromise becomes common, it's never been more important for believers to stand firm in how we worship—and why we worship the way we do.

We begin this issue by answering the foundational question: *What is biblical worship?* Before we can discern what's wrong with modern approaches, we need to recover a clear understanding of worship as defined by God—not shaped by our preferences. From there, we move into a practical discussion on how and why Christians must exercise discernment in the songs they sing. Music is powerful, and the theology in our songs shapes how we view God, the gospel, and the Church.

Next, we'll look at one of the most urgent is-

sues of our time: the dangerous “theology” of Bethel Worship and similar movements. And finally, we’ll consider Numbers 9, where God leads His people with a cloud by day and fire by night. In this overlooked passage, we find a powerful lesson about worship discernment: the people didn’t move until God said to move. They didn’t camp based on convenience. They didn’t worship based on emotion. They followed God’s lead. That same posture of obedience and attentiveness is desperately needed today.

This issue of *Theology for Life* is about more than correcting error—it’s about calling the Church back to joyful reverence. Worship isn’t something we get to customize. It’s something we receive from God’s Word and respond to in faith, with awe and gratitude.

Our prayer is that this issue stirs your heart toward worship—a worship that is not only true, but also thoughtful—and that it equips you to lead others to do the same. May we be a people marked by discernment, depth, and devotion as we worship the God who is worthy of it all.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

What is Biblical Worship? Honoring God According to His Word

By Dave Jenkins

In a day when churches are more likely to be evaluated by musical style than theological **substance**, it's critical that we return to a foundational question: What is biblical worship?

Worship is not whatever feels spiritual. It's not about fog machines, dim lights, or personal playlists. Worship is not defined by atmosphere—but by God's Word. Biblical worship is God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-empowered, and Scripture-regulated. It's not our invention. It's our response to God's revelation, on His terms, for His glory.

Worship Begins with God's



Revelation, Not Our Imagination

The worship of God must begin with God Himself. He initiates. He commands. He reveals. From the moment God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3), to the thunderous encounter on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19–20), worship has always been a response to the self-revealed holiness of God. The second commandment makes this clear: *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image... You shall not bow down to them or serve them...”* (Exodus 20:4–5).

To approach God on our terms is not worship—it’s idolatry. John Calvin warned that the human heart is “a perpetual factory of idols,” and our man-centered ideas of worship are often the most dangerous ones. True worship begins not with creativity but with submission to the God who has spoken.

Worship is Rooted in the Word of God

Biblical worship is always anchored in Scripture. It is shaped by the commands of God, not the preferences of man. Colossians 3:16 encourages believers in this way, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

The Reformation recovered the Regulative Principle of Worship—the conviction that God is to be worshipped only in ways He has commanded in His Word. This principle isn’t about legalism, it’s about reverence. This means Scripture must guide:

- The content of our songs.
- The form of our prayers.
- The structure of our services.
- The administration of the sacraments.
- The tone and goal of the preaching.

To worship without the Word is to drift toward man-centered manipulation. The Scriptures are sufficient—not just for salvation and sanctification—but for wor-

ship itself (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Worship is Christ-Centered and Gospel-Fueled

We do not approach a holy God in our own merit. We come through the finished work of Christ. Hebrews 10:19-22 encourages us, *“Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”*

Every act of true worship is gospel-shaped. It proclaims our need, magnifies Christ’s sufficiency, and leads to grateful adoration. Without the gospel, worship becomes moralism or self-improvement. This is why the Lord’s Day is central. On the first day of the week, we gather to celebrate the resurrection, rehearse redemption, and fix our eyes on the risen King. Sunday isn’t about “recharging.” It’s about reorienting our lives around Christ.

Jonathan Edwards said it well, “The essence of all true religion lies in holy affections. But they must be rooted in truth.” In biblical worship, Christ is not background; He is center stage.

Worship is Corporate Before it is Personal

Yes, worship should be personal—but it’s never private. In Scripture, worship is overwhelmingly a gathered act—the people of God assembled under the His Word, responding with unified reverence and joy.

Acts 2:42 states, *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”* This is where much of modern evangelicalism has drifted. Worship has been individualized into private spiritual expression. But the New Testament picture is one of assembly—preaching, praying, singing, and partaking in the ordinances together.

When we neglect the corporate gathering (Hebrews 10:24–25), we sever ourselves from the very means God uses to strengthen His people. Our spiritual formation is not a solo endeavor—it’s a community calling.

Worship Must Be in Spirit and in Truth

Jesus' words in John 4:23 are foundational, *"The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth..."* To worship *"in spirit"* is to worship from the heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit. To worship *"in truth"* is to worship in accordance with God's Word. Both are essential. Spirit without truth becomes emotionalism. Truth without Spirit becomes dead orthodoxy. The Bible calls for engaged minds and enflamed hearts.

As Hebrews 12:28-29 says, *"Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."* The holiness of God demands reverence. The grace of God compels joy. Biblical worship is the fusion of both.

"The Spirit uses the rhythms of Word-centered worship to shape our desires, correct our thinking, and fuel our obedience."

Worship Transforms the Worshiper

Worship isn't performance. It's formation. In Romans 12:1 Paul exhorts, *"I appeal to you... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice... which is your spiritual worship."* As we behold the glory of God in worship, we are changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Spirit uses the rhythms of Word-centered worship to shape our desires, correct our thinking, and fuel our obedience. Worship reminds us of who God is, who we are, and what we need. It's not a break from discipleship—it's the engine of discipleship.

Biblical Worship Confronts Cultural Counterfeits

- Worship that conforms to Scripture will clash with the culture.
- Worship says God is King—not self.
- Worship says truth matters—not feelings.

- Worship says God is holy—not casual.

That’s why faithful worship is countercultural. It teaches reverence in an irreverent age. It prioritizes the Word in a world obsessed with image. It teaches us to value God’s presence more than personal preference. Worship is warfare. Every Sunday we’re being re-formed, re-aligned, and re-commissioned for life in a fallen world.

A Call to Church Leaders: Shepherd Worship Wisely

To pastors and ministry leaders: you are *worship* shepherds. Your task is not to entertain sheep, but to feed them the Word and lead them in honoring the Chief Shepherd. Prioritize what God prioritizes:

- Preach the Word with clarity and conviction.
- Guard the ordinances.
- Train your musicians in theology, not just talent.
- Lead your people to love truth and sing with joy.

R.C. Sproul once said, “The greatest need in worship today is the recovery of the biblical concept of the holiness of God.” That recovery begins in the pulpit and at the Lord’s Table—not the soundboard.

Worship and the Posture of Reverence (Isaiah 6 and Psalm 95)

Biblical worship is not casual—it is reverent, weighty, and humbling. In Isaiah 6, the prophet sees the Lord seated on His throne, high and lifted up. The seraphim cry, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!*” Isaiah’s response is not excitement but trembling: “*Woe is me! For I am lost.*”

This kind of reverence is echoed in Psalm 95:6–7, “*Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For He is our God.*” In true worship, we see ourselves rightly because we see God rightly. Worship isn’t flippant or casual. It is deeply joyful—but also deeply reverent.

Worship and Everyday Life

Biblical worship doesn't end when the church service does. It fuels a life of obedience, gratitude, and gospel witness. In Colossians 3:17, Paul reminds us, *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus...”*

Sunday worship is not a compartment. It's the catalyst for Monday faithfulness. When we sing about God's holiness, we are being formed to walk in holiness. When we hear the gospel preached, we are being prepared to speak it during the week. The worship of God overflows into work, parenting, rest, and outreach. Romans 12:1 reminds us that offering our whole selves as *“a living sacrifice”* is spiritual worship. Every act of obedience, when done in faith and for the glory of God, is worship.

A Snapshot from History: Worship in Geneva

In the 1500s, John Calvin transformed worship in Geneva—not with choirs or lighting, but with Scripture. He simplified the services, removed superstition, and centered everything on the Word of God. The congregation sang Psalms. The pulpit was central. The Lord's Supper was administered with reverence. Preaching was expository and regular.

Calvin believed that worship should reflect the character of God—holy, orderly, and edifying. His legacy reminds us that when the Church is reformed by the Word, her worship becomes more beautiful, not less.

A Word for Households and Small Churches

You don't need a big budget or a large building to worship biblically. You need God's Word, God's people, and a desire to honor Him. In small churches, biblical worship is just as vital—and just as powerful—as it is in large ones. In fact, there is often more simplicity and focus in such settings. Singing together, praying faithfully, and hearing the Word preached reverently—this honors the Lord.

The same is true in the home. Family worship—opening the Bible, praying,

and singing—can become a holy rhythm that shapes children for a lifetime.

Common Questions about Biblical Worship

Question: Isn't God more concerned with my heart than the method?

Answer: God certainly desires your heart—but He also commands how He is to be worshipped (Deuteronomy 12:32). Heartfelt worship must still be obedient worship.

Question: Can't we use creativity to reach more people?

Answer: Creativity isn't wrong—but it must be constrained by Scripture. Worship should engage, but never entertain. God's glory—not our appeal—is the goal.

Question: Isn't all of life worship? Why focus so much on Sunday?

Answer: All of life is worship (Romans 12:1), but the Lord's Day gathering is unique. It is God's appointed means to form and feed His people corporately.

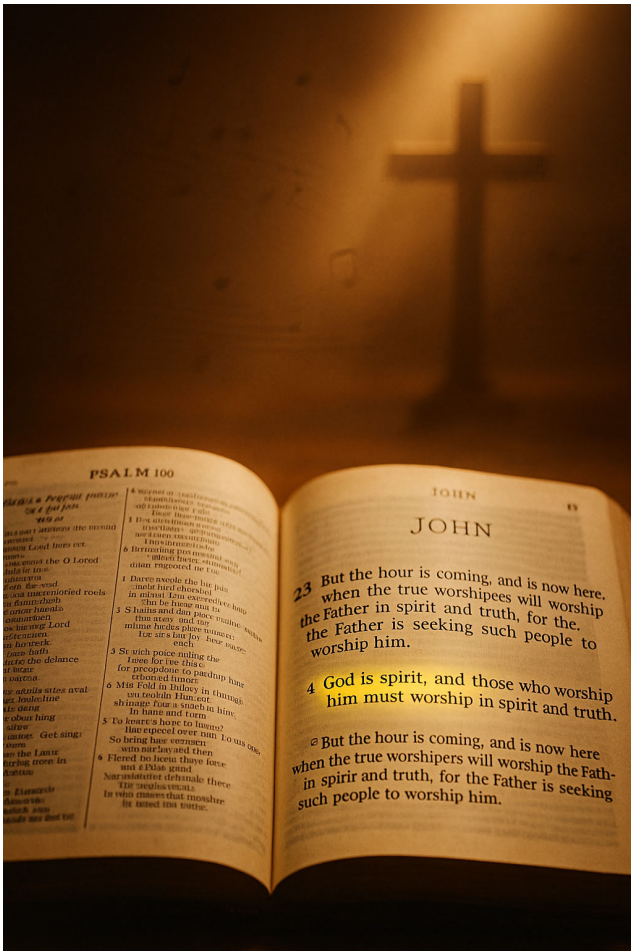
Conclusion: Worship is for the Glory of God Alone

Worship is not for our entertainment. It's not for applause. It's not even primarily for our spiritual nourishment—though we're surely strengthened by it. Worship is for the glory of God alone.

Psalm 29:2 exclaims, "*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.*" Let us come before the Lord each Lord's Day with reverence and joy. Let our churches be marked by truth-filled songs, Christ-centered preaching, Spirit-led prayers, and faithful observance of the ordinances. Let us not offer what is easy—but what is excellent, obedient, and pleasing to the Lord.

In Spirit and in Truth: Why Biblical Worship Matters

By Joshua Mills



Why does biblical worship

matter? It matters because worship is about *God*. Our great and glorious God determines how He ought to be worshipped. Thus, if we are to worship God rightly, we must see what He has to say in His Word. In this short article, I would like to set before you the way we must approach our Triune God in worship. God determines how sinners can approach Him in worship. If we grasp this reality, we will have a biblical foundation for worship to build upon.

Biblical Worship Defined

To begin, how does God want to be worshipped? There are many passages that one could turn to in finding an answer to this question. If we were to narrow down

our study to one passage in the New Testament, we could go to the Gospel of John. The Apostle John has written a book—the Gospel of John—to display the glory of God in the flesh, with the intent that we would believe upon Him and find eternal life. Take note of John 20:30–31: “*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*”

The whole structure of John’s Gospel is based on the backbone of setting Jesus Christ before our eyes. John moves from the “idea of Jesus as the true tabernacle (1:14) and the true temple (2:19) to suggest that He fulfills the ideal of the holy mountain where God can be encountered (4:20–24).” (i)

In John 4, we see that the Triune God is seeking worshippers who will worship Him “*in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24). Biblical worship can be simply defined, “as worshiping the Triune God in spirit and truth. God is seeking this kind of worship; therefore, worship according to His Word matters.” (ii)

**In the words of D.A. Carson,
“The person and work of Jesus
Christ would inaugurate a new
kind of worship which is not
limited to location or space.”**

In the context of John 4, a Samaritan woman comes to Jesus with a question about worship: “*Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship*” (John 4:20). Sadly, the woman’s main concern is not *how* we are to worship, but *where* we are to worship. The Samaritan woman is more concerned about the location of worship than the way to worship, and the essence of worship.

The Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “*Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father*” (John 4:21). What hour is coming? The hour refers to the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 16:32). In the words of D. A. Carson, “The person and work of Jesus Christ would inaugurate a new kind of worship which is not limited to location or space.” (iii)

**“We worship the Father,
through the Son, and by the
Spirit.”**

So, what does it mean to worship the Triune God “*in spirit and truth*”? Bob Kauflin defines biblical worship as the following: “Worshiping God ‘in spirit and truth’ is a spiritual engagement with God by means of Christ. In other words, ‘our meeting place with God’ — the ‘place’ we now worship — is the exalted

Lord Jesus Christ, who is truth incarnate.” (iv)

Biblical Worship Practiced

Next, what does biblical worship “*in spirit and truth*” look like in the New Testament Church? We can look at biblical worship in two ways.

First, we approach the Triune God in worship. We worship the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit. The Trinitarian view of worship is defined as “*the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son’s communion with the Father. That means participating in union with Christ, in what He has done for us once and for all, in His self-offering to the Father, in His life and death on the cross.*” In John 4, we see that “*the exalted Christ is now the ‘place’ where God is to be acknowledged and honoured.*” (v)

Second, true worship is gospel-focused. Concerning this, D. A. Carson writes: “New Covenant worship finds its first impulse in this transforming gospel, which restores our relationship with our Redeemer-God and therefore with our fellow image-bearers, our co-worshippers. Worship must manifest itself both in the individual believer and in corporate worship, which is offered up in the context of the body of believers.” (vi)

As we conclude, have you considered the sheer grace that we have received in Jesus Christ? We do not deserve to approach the Father in worship. We deserve His holy, eternal wrath for our sins against Him. And yet, in grace and mercy, the Triune God has made a way for sinners to be reconciled to God. It is through believing, trusting, resting in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners. We can only approach the Father through Christ alone.

*Five bleeding wounds He bears, received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers, they strongly speak for me;
"Forgive him, oh forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die."
The Father hears Him pray, His dear Anointed One;
He cannot turn away the presence of His Son;
His Spirit answers to the blood
And tells me I am born of God.
My God is reconciled, His pard'ning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child; I can no longer fear;
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And, "Father, Abba Father," cry!*

— Charles Wesley

References:

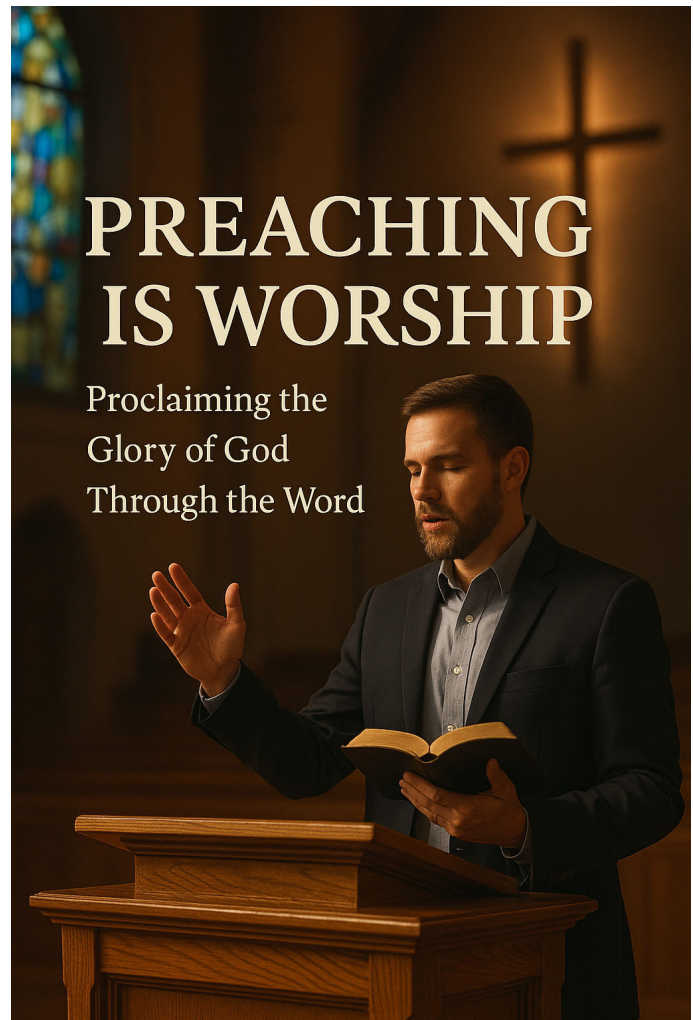
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Preaching is Worship: Proclaiming the Glory of God Through the Word

By David de Bruyn

Worship is knowing and expressing God's worth. Worship is treasuring, valuing, and loving God according to what we think is "*due His name*" (Psalm 29:2). For God to be praised, admired, and treasured, His glory must be perceived. For Him to be perceived, He must reveal Himself. God reveals Himself in the Scriptures. Preaching is declaring His Word. Therefore, preaching is worship because it unveils God. It tells us who God is in Christ: what He is like, what He expects, what He is doing, what He desires, what He has done and shall do.

God's Word is His declaration of Himself. So, when God's Word is central in a corporate worship service,



God's glory is sure to be seen, admired, and cherished. In fact, what has always set God's people apart has been His written Word. When Israel came out of Egypt, what differentiated them from the nations was the Law. The Law revealed Jehovah, noting else.

This is why preaching ought to be at the center of corporate worship. A read through First Timothy, which was given so believers "*may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God*" (1 Timothy 3:15) shows us just how central preaching is to be (1:3; 4:6, 11, 13-16; 6:20). Second Timothy continues the theme of the centrality of sound doctrine through sound teaching and preaching (2 Timothy 1:6; 13-14; 2:2, 15-16, 22-24; 4:1-2)

Picture a meeting of gem collectors. As in any meeting, we might imagine all kinds of things: old friendships renewed, some discussion on recent news that would be of interest gem collectors, perhaps some time given to one or two gem collectors telling others about their recent finds. But what would be the main event of their meeting? Surely, it would be displaying the gems: bringing out the rubies, emeralds, sapphires, tanzanites, topazes, opals, diamonds – holding them up to the light, letting the light pass through them and reflect off them, letting them sparkle and show off their brilliance. As this is done, the gem collectors would admire, praise, and delight in those jewels.

Corporate worship similarly has many aspects: fellowship, mutual encouragement, edifying of each other, giving, and serving one another. But the main aspect of worship is when the preacher takes the treasure box of the Bible and shows forth the precious glory of God, holding it up so it sparkles and people see the brilliance, beauty, and value of God. As a result, there will be right reactions of praise, blessing, admiration, and honour. People are captivated, enthralled, thankful, challenged, and convicted. The preacher is worshipping over the Word as he exults in the truth that he has experienced in his own heart, and the receptive people glory in seeing it as well. God's people encounter Him as He speaks.

But this assumes that a particular kind of preaching is taking place. Not just any preaching will do. I have, at times, heard people say of a particular man, “What a blessed speaker!”, “What tremendous preaching!” And on occasion, I have thought to myself, the man was indeed interesting, dynamic, or eloquent, but it wasn’t good preaching. Indeed, the most dangerous false teachers are seldom boring speakers. But their popularity doesn’t add up to true preaching.

Good preaching is not good merely because the speaker has the ability to hold the audience’s attention. Good preaching is not good simply because the speaker is witty, clever, or charming. Again, this might be skill or natural talent on his part, but this alone does not make for good preaching.

In Nehemiah 8:10, we have an Old Testament example of true preaching, which brings about worship. “*So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.*” Three characteristics of true, worship-inspiring preaching are readily noticeable.

One: The Scripture is Read Clearly (“They Read Distinctly from the Book”)

The Word of God is read in a way that all who hear can understand clearly what is being said. The reason for reading the Scripture distinctly is because we plan to unpack it carefully. True preaching aims to examine carefully what God has said. And the starting place is a careful reading of God’s Word.

Reading the Scripture publicly is commanded in several places in the New Testament (1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16). Reading the Scriptures publicly does not mean that a Scripture is merely referenced in passing, and then the preacher goes off on a tangent. That is known as *springboard preaching*. This is where a preacher takes you to a text, ostensibly to preach from it. But after reading it, he actually simply uses the words or some of the words to *launch off*, to speak about what he has already decided to speak on. The Scripture

is read to provide the authority and basis of the sermon.

Two: The Meaning of the Text is Explained (“They Gave the Sense”)

Sometimes God’s Word is plain enough to do its work without any explanation. Most times, it needs to be explained. It must be taught. When true preaching takes place, someone is used by God to unfold the meaning.

The faithful preacher does not invent meanings. He does not attach meanings which he wishes to preach. He does not find allegorical meanings to seem clever. This is the opposite of exposition. Imposing upon the Bible our own ideas on a text and then act as if that text teaches it is eisegesis, not exegesis. Eisegesis is putting ideas into a text, instead of extracting them.

Simply put, true preaching is when what God has said is allowed to speak for itself. The preacher does not use the Word to his own ends, but is a servant to the Word. He unfolds it, unpacks it, lays it out, organises it, and structures it. Scripture is not a servant to the preacher, like source material for a comedian or a historian. No, the preacher is a servant to the Scripture—letting it speak.

The preacher is a bridge between God’s Word and the people. This is true preaching. When the preacher is finished, the people forget about the preacher. They can walk away and say, “This is what God said in His Word, and I understand what He meant.”

Three: The Listeners Understand and Respond (“Helped Them to Understand the Reading”)

The teaching of Ezra and his assistants helped the people to understand the reading. Notice, there was more than a mental understanding. The people were moved in their affections: *“And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day*

is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law." (Nehemiah 8:9)

When the Word came, the people were pliable and yielded to it. They were gripped by God's glory, gripped by their own sense of failure, gripped by remorse and conviction. True preaching does not just tickle the mind, it stirs the heart. The affections are raised. Whether it be joy, delight, admiration, awe, fear, sorrow, confidence, thanksgiving, changed affections demonstrate an understanding, which penetrates the soul. It goes beyond head-knowledge and engages the emotions and in turn causes a response of the will. When true preaching has taken place, people see their God and respond to Him.

Preaching is reaching its highest place when people almost forget about the preacher and are captivated, enthralled, and convicted by the glory of the God in the face of Jesus shining through the Word.

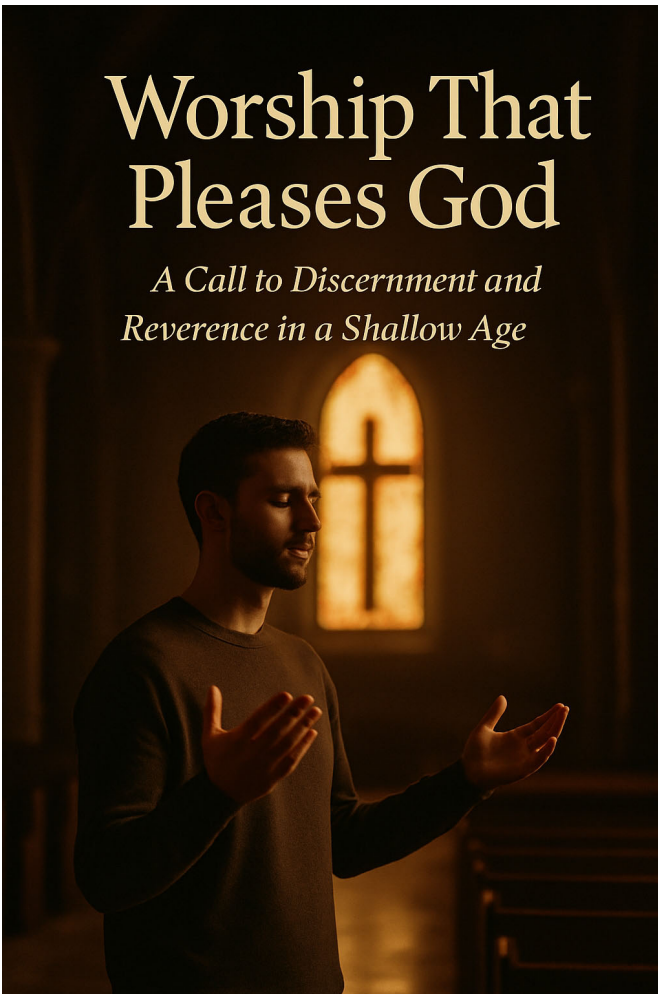
That's what true preaching is, and that is why preaching is worship. The responsibility of the preacher is to bring across what God has said about Himself with the clarity and authority with which God has said it, so that God's people might respond to Him.

Worship That Pleases God: A Call to Discernment and Reverence in a Shallow Age of Worship

By Drew Von Neida

Worship That Pleases God

A Call to Discernment and Reverence in a Shallow Age



In recent years, worship in many churches has started to look and feel a lot like the surrounding culture: loud, emotionally charged, experience-driven, and centered more on personal feelings than on biblical truth. Worship sets resemble concerts. Lyrics sound more like self-help mantras. And behind the music, ministries like Bethel Music, Elevation Worship, and Maverick City are shaping the sound of the modern church, and not because of theological integrity, but because of emotional appeal and mainstream success. But for Christians who love Christ and His Word, this trend raises a vital question: Are we offering

worship that pleases people, or worship that pleases God?

The Regulative Principle: Worship on God's Terms

At the heart of this conversation is something called *the regulative principle of worship*. Simply put, it's the belief that God—not us—gets to decide how He is to be worshipped. We are not free to create, customize, or borrow from culture. Worship must be grounded in Scripture, shaped by God's commands, and offered with reverence.

This principle stands in contrast to the *normative* approach, which assumes we can do anything in worship unless Scripture explicitly forbids it. But God's Word warns us against this thinking:

- **Leviticus 10:1–2** – Nadab and Abihu offered unauthorized fire before the Lord and were consumed.
- **Deuteronomy 12:32** – “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.”
- **John 4:24** – “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
- **Hebrews 12:28–29** – “Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”

These verses remind us that worship is not a sandbox for creativity or a platform for performance. It's a sacred act—one that must be offered with fear, faith, and fidelity to God's Word.

What's the Problem with Bethel, Elevation, and Others?

Some people may argue, “But the music is beautiful,” or “People are coming to Christ through these songs.” That may be true in part, but beauty and impact do not equal *truth*. Worship must be measured not by how it makes us feel, but by whether it aligns with Scripture and reflects the character of God. Here are three concerns with these popular ministries...

One: Their Theology Undermines the Gospel

Bethel Church promotes “grave soaking”, unbiblical declarations of healing, and a distorted view of Christ’s divinity. Elevation Church, under Steven Furtick, preaches a man-centered message that often presents God as a tool for

personal breakthroughs rather than the holy Lord of all.

“Worship is not a personal concert. It’s a corporate act of praise that lifts high the name of Jesus and builds up the body of believers.”

When churches sing songs from these ministries, they are not just borrowing lyrics, they are promoting the platform and theology behind them. Licensing fees support their work. Lyrics give them credibility. And the damage is often

done subtly, without a word being spoken. As Paul warned in Galatians 1:6–9, to promote a different gospel, even unintentionally, is no small thing.

Two: Their Worship is Centered on Self, Not God

Much of modern worship revolves around personal emotion and experience. Lyrics emphasize *my worship, my breakthrough, my miracle, my victory*. The focus drifts from the glory of God to the feelings of the individual. This stands in stark contrast to the Psalms and the worship scenes in Revelation, where the emphasis is on *God’s* majesty, faithfulness, and holiness. True worship exalts the Lord, recounts His works, and brings the worshipper low in awe and wonder.

Three: They Blur the Line Between the Sacred and the Profane

Stage lights, choreographed crescendos, and emotionally driven atmospheres often create a setting that feels more like a concert than a church. The re-

sult? Emotion without substance. Excitement without transformation. Worship that is driven by atmosphere rather than truth may stir the senses but leave the soul untouched.

What True Worship Looks Like

So, what does the Bible say true worship is? Here are four clear marks drawn from Scripture:

One: Worship is Regulated by God's Word

God has not left us to guess. He has told us how to worship Him—through prayer, preaching, the reading of Scripture, singing psalms and hymns, the ordinances, and gathered fellowship (Colossians 3:16; Acts 2:42).

Two: Worship is Reverent

Hebrews 12 reminds us we come before a consuming fire. Worship is not meant to entertain; it's meant to humble us in the presence of God's holiness.

Three: Worship is Rooted in Truth

Jesus said we must worship "*in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). That means both heartfelt devotion and doctrinal soundness. Our songs should teach, not just inspire.

Four: Worship is Christ-Centered and Church-Edifying

Worship is not a personal concert. It's a corporate act of praise that lifts high the name of Jesus and builds up the body of believers.

A Gentle but Urgent Plea

To those who love the music of Bethel, Elevation, or Maverick City: this isn't an attack on your sincerity. Your desire to worship God is real, but that desire must be shaped by truth. We wouldn't sit under false teaching week after week. So why would we allow our songs, affections, and theology to be formed by the same ministries?

Churches must lovingly but firmly stop using music that comes from

movements that distort the gospel. It is not enough for a song to “feel good” or “sound Christian.” We must ask: Is this true? Does this honor God? Is this shaped by His Word?

Worship is Holy

Worship belongs to God. It’s not for us to redefine or repurpose. It’s not a tool to draw crowds or manipulate emotions. It is holy ground, and we should treat it that way.

Let’s return to the beauty of simplicity. Let’s sing songs shaped by Scripture, grounded in doctrine, and offered from hearts that tremble at His Word. Remember, Colossians 3:16 exhorts us, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

- Let’s feed the sheep, not entertain the goats.
- Let’s exalt Christ, not mimic the culture.
- Let our worship be holy.

Biblical Worship vs. Experiential Worship

A Comparison of Foundations, Focus, and Fruit

Category	Biblical Worship	Experiential Worship
Source of Authority	God's Word (Scripture governs worship)	Personal feelings, preferences, or cultural trends
Focus	God-centered – exalting Christ and His truth	Man-centered – aimed at generating emotional highs
Content	Theologically rich, rooted in truth (e.g., Psalms, sound doctrine)	Vague or repetitive, focused on emotional language or experience
Goal	Glorify God and edify believers through truth and reverence	Produce a spiritual experience or emotional encounter
Posture	Reverent, humble, full of awe before a holy God	Casual, self-expressive, or entertainment-driven

Category	Biblical Worship	Experiential Worship
Means	Word, prayer, sacraments, singing, fellowship – all shaped by Scripture	Music-driven, performance-centered, often disconnected from biblical elements
Fruit	Lasting transformation, deeper knowledge of God, discipleship	Temporary emotional boost, often lacking doctrinal depth or lasting fruit
Congregational Role	Active participation in truth (singing, confessing, hearing, praying)	Passive observation or consumer-style engagement
Leadership	Elders/pastors lead worship by the Word	Worship teams or “leaders” often driven by performance or trend
View of God	Holy, sovereign, transcendent – and near through Christ	Often reduced to “feeling God” or sensing His presence based on mood

How and Why Christians Can Exercise Discernment in the Songs They Sing

By Dave Jenkins



Christian worship isn't merely about melodies—it's about theology. Every lyric we sing teaches something about who God is,

what He has done, and how we are to respond. In a culture saturated with catchy tunes but shallow doctrine, Christians must rediscover the importance of *discernment* in their worship.

Worship through music is not entertainment, it's an offering. And what we offer to the Lord must be marked by truth, reverence, and biblical fidelity (John 4:24). So, how can Christians rightly discern what they sing, and why does it matter?

Biblical Worship Requires Biblical Truth

God has not left us to invent worship on our own terms. Scripture defines what true worship looks like— centered on God's character, shaped by His Word, and directed toward His glory. Colossians 3:16 exhorts, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*" Songs are a vehicle for teaching. If the lyrics are shallow, vague, or false, they do more harm than good. To sing rightly, Christians must evaluate lyrics for:

- **Doctrinal clarity:** Does the song rightly reflect the truths of Scripture?
- **Christ-centered focus:** Does it exalt Jesus, or merely stir emotion?
- **Biblical language:** Are the lyrics shaped by the vocabulary of Scripture?

Worship Has the Ability to Shape Doctrine

What we sing, we remember. Music is one of the most powerful tools for catechizing believers, especially children and new Christians. When songs emphasize emotionalism without truth, they train our hearts to pursue feelings over faithfulness. When songs are rich with biblical themes— grace, atonement, holiness, and the cross— they equip the church to stand strong in a world of confusion. Churches must ask: are we discipling our people through what they sing?

Discernment is a Mark of Spiritual Maturity

Discernment isn't a "nice-to-have" — it's a *spiritual necessity*. Hebrews 5:14 reminds us, "*But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice...*" In an age when some churches use music as bait to attract crowds, we must ask deeper questions:

- Where does this song come from?
- What does it say about God, sin, salvation, and the Church?
- What does it produce in the hearts and minds of worshippers?

Discernment protects both the worshipper and the congregation from error and helps ensure that we are not *sincerely wrong* in how we praise the Lord. Pastors and worship leaders have a responsibility to help their congregations grow in musical discernment. One of the most loving things a shepherd can do is filter the worship set through the lens of Scripture, not just musical appeal.

Worship That Honors God Must Reflect His Holiness

Worship is about *God*, not us. We must guard against a consumer mindset that judges songs based on how they make us feel rather than how they glorify the Lord. Hebrews 12:28 encourages, "*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe...*" This means being cautious about songs:

- That overemphasize human emotion while minimizing God's attributes.
- That *originate* from ministries or movements with serious doctrinal compromise.
- That treat Jesus as little more than a boyfriend or reduce the Trinity to a vague "presence."

God is holy; He is not to be approached casually or carelessly. Worship that is theologically shallow, irreverent, or emotionally manipulative dishonors the One we are meant to glorify.

Church History Can Help Us Build Wisely

The Church has centuries of hymnody that reflects deep theology. We do not need to start from scratch. Hymns by Isaac Watts, John Newton, William Cowper, and more recent examples by the Sovereign Grace Music, offer biblically-rich resources for the Church today. When we endeavor to select songs for our worship services, we must ask:

- Are we including songs that have stood the test of time?
- Are we grounding our new songs in the deep wells of theological tradition?
- Are we helping the next generation inherit a legacy of worship rooted in truth?

There is wisdom in drawing from what has endured. Let the past guide the present as we sing with the saints across the ages.

Evaluating the Source Matters (But Requires Nuance)

A key question in today's debate is: *Should we sing songs from ministries or churches that teach false doctrine?* This includes sources like Bethel, Hillsong, and Elevation. While not all songs from such movements are heretical in themselves, using them unfortunately may:

- Lend unintentional credibility to dangerous theology.
- Create confusion among the flock.
- Expose churches to spiritual compromise.

Historically, the Church has exercised caution about using materials produced by heretical movements, even if some of the content sounded biblical. Why? Because worship is not just about lyrics; it's about witness. Moreover, royalties from streaming and CCLI usage often go back to these ministries, funding their teaching platforms. This is more than a musical decision—it's a stewardship issue.

Discernment here isn't about being divisive, it's about being faithful. Local

church leaders should equip their congregations to understand both what they sing and why.

Shepherding Worship Teams with Discernment

Pastors and worship leaders are responsible not just for musical quality, but for doctrinal fidelity. As such, they must:

- Encourage teams to read and reflect on lyrics before rehearsing.
- Provide doctrinal review of songs before introducing them.
- Disciple worship leaders to love theology as much as melody.
- Sing songs that honor the Lord of the Word, not just the mood of the moment.

How to Respond to Common Objections

Unfortunately, making these types of decisions can often be met with push-back from the congregation. And while some of their questions may be legitimate, the ones below are not valid reasons to cave to popular demand.

- *“Isn’t it legalistic to scrutinize every song?”* No. It’s biblical (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Discernment is not about nitpicking—it’s about protecting the flock and offering worship that honors Christ.
- *“What if a song has great lyrics but comes from a bad source?”* Even if a song is doctrinally sound, singing it may still platform problematic ministries. Churches must weigh whether or not the benefit outweighs the risk and explain their choices with care.
- *“Aren’t all songs imperfect?”* Yes, but that doesn’t mean we should settle for theologically-weak or misleading songs. Strive for songs that are both musically beautiful *and* theologically faithful.

Conclusion: Worship is a Discipleship Issue

The songs we sing don’t just reflect our theology, they shape it. That’s why biblical discernment in worship isn’t optional. It’s a call to worship God with *reverence, truth, and joy*, rooted in His Word. Let’s raise a generation that doesn’t

just sing loud but sings true.

Pastors, don't hand over the theological direction of your church to a Spotify playlist. Let our worship be bold with truth, rich with Scripture, and aflame with awe. For our God is holy, and He is worthy. Ask before you sing:

- Does this song exalt the triune God?
- Is it faithful to Scripture?
- Would I still sing it if the music were stripped away?
- Does it teach sound doctrine?
- Does it stir affection *because of truth*, not instead of it?

Why it Matters What Songs We Sing— Personally and On the Lord's Day

By Joshua Mills



Why does it matter which songs we sing on the Lord's Day?

Though there is much that could be said about this topic, I have narrowed down my answer into two points. The intention of this article is not to provide an exhaustive response, but rather a simple and brief reflection meant to stimulate our thinking on what the Bible says about corporate singing on the Lord's Day.

To begin, why does it matter which songs we sing on the Lord's Day? The answer is simple: because it is the Lord's Day. The day that we gather corporately to worship the Triune God is the day our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave. The day is about Him. Each Sunday, we assemble

as Christ's blood-bought people to worship the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. The great longing of our regenerated hearts is that the Triune God's name would be hallowed (Matthew 6:9).

In Malachi 1:11, the LORD proclaimed, *"For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts."*

And in Revelation 5:9–10, the Apostle John had a glimpse into the throne room of heaven. What did he see and hear? He heard the songs of the redeemed: *"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"*

As we gather on the Lord's Day to worship the crucified and risen Christ, we experience a foretaste of Heaven. In that foretaste, we see the importance of singing. For all eternity, we will sing the praises of the Lamb. Therefore, our Lord's Day gatherings must be marked by singing.

God Calls Us to Sing

Why else does it matter which songs we sing on the Lord's Day? First, it matters because God calls us to sing. God desires a redeemed people who sing His praises among the nations. A quick survey of Scripture shows there are over 400 references to singing and 50 direct commands to sing. Clearly, singing in corporate worship matters to God.

For example, in Psalm 96:1–3, the psalmist declares, *"Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!"*

In the opening chapters of Scripture, we see original sin enslave mankind to

decay and death (Genesis 3). At the Tower of Babel, the LORD confused the languages of the wicked and scattered them into nations. Yet now, through the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the Triune God is drawing together a redeemed people from every tribe and tongue to sing the praises of the Lamb.

God Tells Us How to Sing

Second, God not only calls us to sing—He tells us how. The New Testament gives us a framework for the kind of songs that should be found in our worship services. In Colossians 3:16, the Apostle Paul writes, *“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.”*

Likewise, in Ephesians 5:18–21, he says, *“...but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

“God wants us to sing. He wants us to sing songs that hallow His name, are governed by biblical truth, and are saturated with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

When the word of Christ dwells in us richly, we will want to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. When we are filled with the Spirit, we will address one another with singing and make melody to the Lord

with our hearts.

The main takeaway from these passages is this: God wants us to sing. He wants us to sing songs that hallow His name, are governed by biblical truth, and are saturated with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Historically, the greatest hymnwriters—whose works have stood the test of time—were also great pastors and theologians. By God’s grace, we are witnessing a renewal of doctrinally rich, Christ-exalting congregational singing in our generation.

A Call to Sing with Intention

As we conclude, may it be our prayer that God would make us a singing people. To prepare your heart for Lord’s Day worship:

- Buy a hymnbook for your home.
- Sing Christ-exalting hymns throughout the week.
- Sing loudly and cheerfully with God’s people on the Day Christ rose from the grave.

Let us sing, not just because it feels good, but because God is worthy.

Voices on Worship: Purity, Reverence, and Truth

Timeless Quotes from Trusted Theological Voices

John Calvin

“God cannot be truly worshipped but from a pure conscience and sincere faith.”

— *Commentary on the Psalms*

“The principal part of His worship lies in the doctrine that flows from His mouth.”

— *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.1

Charles Spurgeon

“God is to be worshipped in spirit, not in mere outward form and ceremony. The essence of acceptable worship is not in the place, or in the dress, or in the music, but in the heart.”

— *Sermon: Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24)*

“The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service.”

— *Sermons on Worship*

J.C. Ryle

“True worship is not lip service or outward ceremony, but the heartfelt offering of reverence and love to God.”

— *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*

“The best public worship is that in which everything is ordered according to Scripture, and all is done with reverence, humility, and a sense of the presence of God.”

— *Practical Religion*

John MacArthur

“Worship is not entertainment. Worship is not emotionalism. Worship is not personal experience. Worship is giving to God the honor, the glory, the praise, the adoration, the reverence, and the awe that He is due.”

— *Worship: The Ultimate Priority*

“Truth is the foundation of worship. We must worship God as He is revealed in Scripture—not as we imagine Him to be.”

— *The Ultimate Priority*

Sinclair B. Ferguson

“When we gather for worship, we are coming to meet with God—not to be entertained but to be changed.”

— *Devoted to God's Church*

“Reverence in worship is not a personality trait. It is the fruit of seeing the majesty of God as He reveals Himself in His Word.”

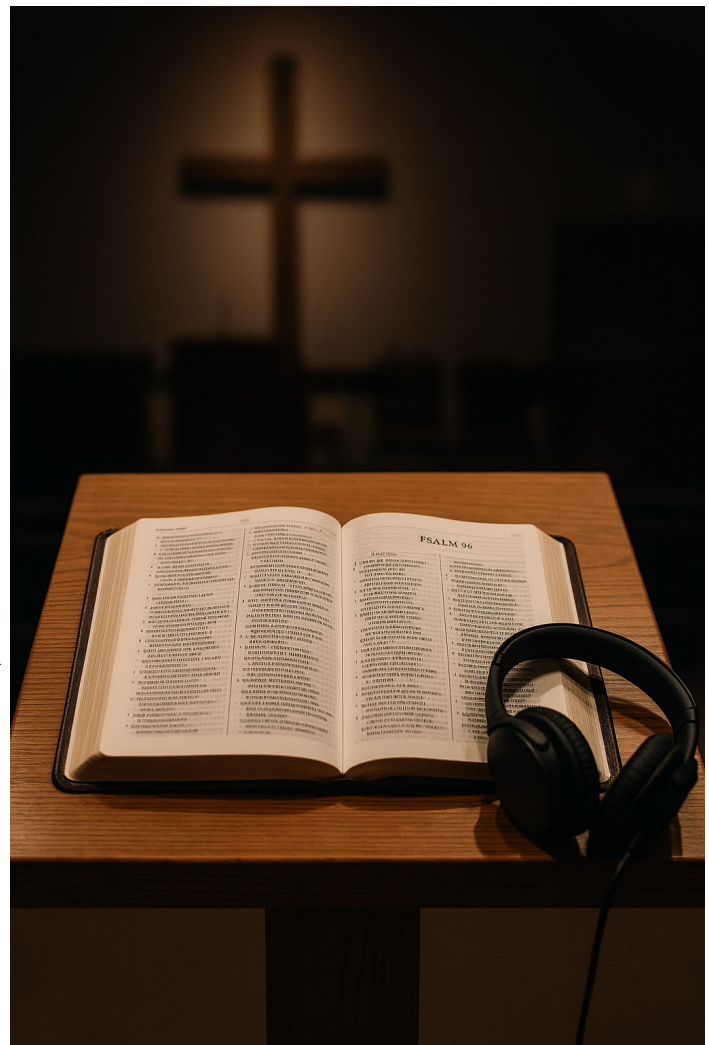
— *In the Year of Our Lord: Reflections on Twenty Centuries of Church History*

Start with the Word: Why Daily Bible Reading Shapes Discernment in Worship

By Dave Jenkins

In a world awash with emotionalism, experience-driven faith, and theological confusion, the Church must re-anchor itself in the Word of God—especially when it comes to worship. While conversations about worship often center around music preferences, lighting, or style, the deeper issue is one of discernment. And discernment starts not on a stage, but in Scripture.

Daily Bible reading isn't merely a spiritual discipline for private edification—it is the foundation for developing theological clarity, cultivating spiritual maturity, and aligning the affections of our hearts with the revealed will of God. Worship that pleases the Lord flows from hearts transformed by



truth. If we want to sing what is true, and worship in spirit and in truth, we must start with the Word.

The Centrality of the Word in Worship

Worship is not left to human invention. From the tabernacle to the temple, and from the Psalms to Paul's epistles, we see that God regulates worship by His Word.

Jesus said in John 4:24, *"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* That word *"must"* is not optional. Worship is only acceptable to God when it is both spiritually authentic and anchored in truth. Consider the language of Romans 12:1–2, where Paul urges believers to *"present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* But how is that done? The answer is in verse 2: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."* Renewal comes from the Word.

Likewise, Colossians 3:16 connects the Word of Christ dwelling richly in us with the practice of worship: *"...teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."* If the Word is absent, worship becomes sentiment. If the Word is central, worship becomes substance.

Daily Bible Reading Trains the Mind and Tunes the Heart

You can't separate daily discipleship from corporate worship. The believer who lives in the Word throughout the week is better equipped to discern what is sung and said on Sunday.

Hebrews 5:14 states, *"But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."* Daily Bible intake is how believers train themselves to spot error, sift truth, and evaluate theology—whether from a sermon or a song lyric. The Bible doesn't just shape your knowledge; it tunes your heart. It reshapes your affections toward what God loves. This is how we learn to delight in truth, reject flattery disguised as worship, and embrace the weight of holiness.

Case Study: Psalm 119 and the Word-Saturated Worshipper

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible and a rich example of how love for the Word shapes every part of life—including worship.

- *“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning”* (v. 54).
- *“Let my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your statutes”* (v. 171).
- *“I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules”* (v. 7).

The psalmist’s praise flows from knowledge. His worship is the overflow of truth, not the pursuit of feeling. This is the fruit of daily meditation on God’s Word.

A Defense Against False Teaching in Worship

One of the most dangerous avenues for theological error today isn’t the pulpit—it’s the platform. Worship music has become a theological battleground. Music industry giants like Bethel Music, Elevation Worship, and Hillsong have introduced doctrinal confusion to the Church through emotionally powerful songs that often lack biblical clarity or subtly promote Word-Faith, prosperity, or New Apostolic Reformation theology. What makes this more dangerous is how unaware many Christians are. Because they haven’t been saturated in Scripture, they don’t recognize when a lyric is theologically off, spiritually manipulative, or doctrinally unsound.

Real-Life Example

A worship leader I spoke with recently shared how his song selection changed drastically after he returned to regular daily Bible reading. He said, “I realized I was picking songs based on how they made me feel, not what they actually said. Once I started spending time in the Word every morning, I could no longer sing lyrics that were shallow or misleading. My theology deepened—and so did the songs we sang.” This isn’t just anecdotal—it’s a reflection of spiritual reality. The Word sharpens discernment and guards the heart against error.

Daily Bible Reading Shapes the Worshipper Before the Worship

Too often we think of worship as something we start when we walk into church. But in truth, worship begins long before the service starts. True worship is the overflow of a life that is surrendered to the Lord, shaped by Scripture, and grounded in grace.

A heart that reads Scripture daily is a heart that comes to church already humbled, already stirred, already full of reverence. Without daily exposure to the Word, we risk walking into worship services cold, distracted, or self-focused.

As Jesus told Satan in Matthew 4:4, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* If that’s how we live, it must also be how we worship.

The Testimony of Church History: Scripture Before Song

Throughout Church history, reformers and faithful shepherds have emphasized that worship must be regulated by God’s Word, not by the creative impulses of man.

- John Calvin wrote that worship should be limited to what is commanded in Scripture, lest we create idols in our image.
- The Puritans fiercely protected worship from innovation that lacked biblical warrant, often emphasizing Psalm-singing and Scripture-saturated lyrics.
- Jonathan Edwards warned that revival not grounded in the Word would eventually produce counterfeit emotionalism.
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones urged the Church to keep worship grounded in the truth of God’s revelation. He believed that *“a revival that is not centered on the Word is a false revival.”*

The lesson is clear: when the Word is central, worship is preserved. When the Word is neglected, worship decays.

The Modern Church: Word-Deprived Worshippers

The modern evangelical Church faces a crisis: biblical illiteracy is growing, while music ministries often chase trends instead of truth. This vacuum of biblical depth produces congregations that are easily swayed by performance, novelty, or celebrity worship culture. We need a radical return to Scripture-fed worshippers who evaluate lyrics like Bereans (Acts 17:11) and sing with both heart and mind (1 Corinthians 14:15). If Sunday worship is the only time a Christian engages with the Bible, they're spiritually malnourished—and vulnerable to deception.

Practical Implications

Here are several takeaways for believers and church leaders.

For Church Members:

- Commit to daily Bible reading—not as legalism, but as spiritual formation.
- Let your time in the Word train you to love lyrics that are true, not just catchy.
- Ask weekly: Does what I sing align with what I read in Scripture?

For Worship Leaders:

- Prioritize biblical fidelity over emotional effect.
- Evaluate your song list through the lens of Scripture. Are you feeding the sheep or entertaining them?
- Encourage your team to be daily readers of the Word. A worship team that doesn't read the Bible will eventually lead people away from it.

For Parents:

- Model daily Bible reading for your children.
- Help them understand the connection between knowing God's Word and worshipping Him rightly.

Conclusion

Worship that honors God doesn't begin with a chord or a lyric—it begins in the heart of the believer, shaped by the truth of God's Word. If we want worship that is theologically sound, spiritually rich, and Christ-exalting, then we must build our lives on Scripture.

Start with the Word. Before we critique songs, assess churches, or define biblical worship, we must open our Bibles, hear from God, and let His truth train our hearts. When the Word dwells richly in us, our worship will rise faithfully to Him.

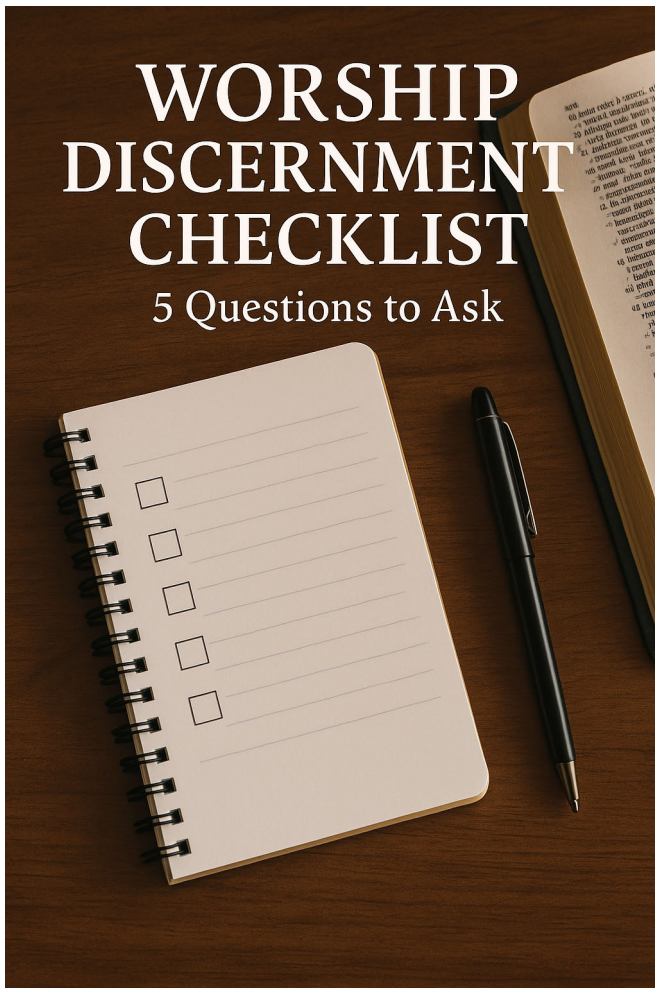
In what ways is your daily Bible reading shaping your understanding of God—and how you worship Him? Many ask, “Why does daily Bible-reading matter for worship?” It's because it trains our discernment, shapes our affections, and grounds our worship in God's revealed truth—not our feelings.

Looking for a Daily Bible Reading Companion?

If you want to grow in discernment and cultivate worship that pleases the Lord, the first step is to open the Word daily. Tune in to *Reading the Bible Daily with Dave*, a podcast designed to help you understand Scripture in context, explore sound theology, and apply God's Word to every area of life. This podcast can be found at: <https://servantsofgrace.org/reading-the-bible-daily-with-dave/> and is also available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and YouTube.

Worship Discernment Checklist: 5 Questions to Ask

By Dave Jenkins



We live in a time where the word "worship" can mean almost anything—and sometimes means almost nothing. For many Christians, worship has become synonymous with a music style, a feeling, or even a concert-like experience. But true biblical worship is not about how we feel, however; it is about who God is and how He has commanded us to approach Him. In John 4:24, Jesus says, *"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* Worship must be anchored in truth—that is, the Word of God. And yet, in many churches, that anchor has been quietly cut loose. Emotional manipulation, doctrinally vague lyrics, and songs from false teaching

movements are leading many away from sound worship.

This article is designed to give you a two-part discernment tool: first, to help you evaluate the songs your church sings, and second, to help you assess what those songs may reveal about your church's overall direction.

Five Questions to Ask About Worship Songs

One: Is the Song Theologically Sound?

Does it reflect sound doctrine and biblical clarity? Worship lyrics should be saturated with Scripture. They should not merely mention God or Jesus, but rightly represent His nature, attributes, and works. Songs that promote vague spirituality or distort doctrine should be avoided. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"* (Colossians 3:16).

Two: Who is the Song About – God or Me?

Biblical worship centers on God, not the worshiper. Ask whether the song exalts the Triune God or primarily focuses on human emotion or experience. Would someone unfamiliar with Christianity walk away knowing who Jesus is?

Three: Does the Song Clearly Proclaim the Gospel?

Too many modern worship songs mention love, freedom, or victory, but never mention sin, the cross, or grace. True worship exalts Christ crucified and risen. Songs that never mention our need for redemption do not prepare hearts to worship in truth.

Four: Who Wrote the Song and What Do They Believe?

The source matters. Songs written by ministries like Bethel, Hillsong, or Elevation may contain and do *likely contain* orthodox lyrics, but are financially supporting movements with deep theological error. Romans 16:17 commands us to avoid those who teach contrary to sound doctrine.

Five: What Fruit Does the Song Produce?

Does it encourage awe, reverence, repentance, and joy in the Lord? Or does it create a momentary emotional high with no lasting spiritual impact? *"Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"* (Romans 12:1).

Five Questions to Ask About Your Church's Worship

One: Does My Church Prioritize the Preaching of God's Word, Or Performance?

Is worship shaped by Scripture, or by atmosphere and experience? A church committed to biblical worship will put the exposition of Scripture at the center, not the band.

Two: Are Worship Leaders and Pastors Committed to Biblical Fidelity, Or Following Trends?

Are songs evaluated for theology? Are they chosen because they are true, or because they are popular?

Three: Is There Transparency and Theological Clarity From Leadership, Or Silence And Compromise?

If you ask about worship choices or theological concerns, are you received with openness and biblical reasoning, or with defensiveness and dismissiveness?

Four: Does the Worship Service Lead Me to Deeper Awe of God, Or Just a Temporary Emotional High?

Biblical worship transforms the heart. It doesn't just entertain; it sanctifies. Ask whether you leave your church service more in love with God's holiness and His Word.

Five: Am I Being Discipled in Truth, Or Distracted by

Experience?

Worship forms our theology. Churches that regularly use emotionally-driven music with shallow theology are forming people in spiritual immaturity. True worship strengthens faith. False worship stunts it.

When Should I Leave a Church Over Worship?

This is a weighty question. Scripture calls us to love our church, to submit to godly elders, and to bear with one another in love. But when a church:

- Persistently sings songs from false teachers despite correction,
- Reduces worship to a concert instead of a corporate, reverent gathering,
- Silences or marginalizes members who raise biblical concerns,
- And/or avoids or waters down the preaching of Scripture in favor of emotional hype,

...then it may be time to pray, seek counsel, and consider finding a church that worships God according to His Word. Leaving a church should never be done lightly. But staying in one that dishonors God in worship may also be a failure of stewardship.

Conclusion: Worship That Honors the Lord

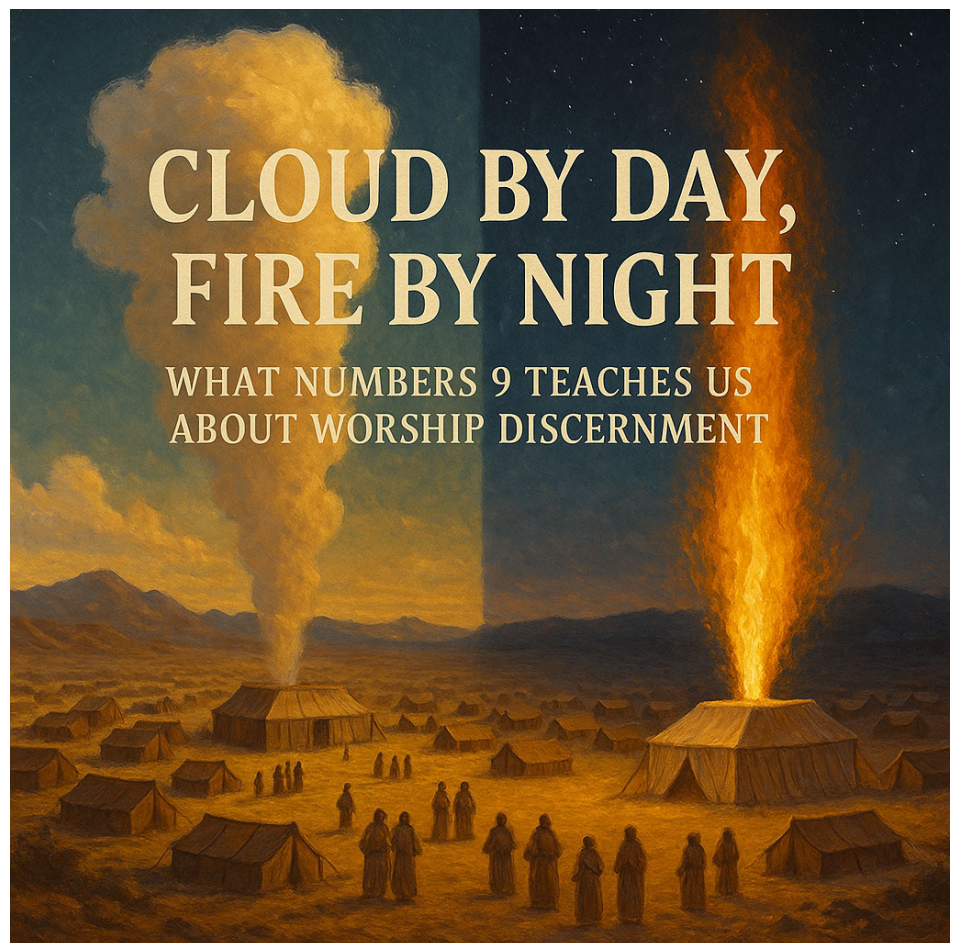
Worship is not just a moment on Sunday—it is a declaration of what we believe about God. Discernment in worship is not about nitpicking songs or judging others' preferences. It's about loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Ask the hard questions. Start with Scripture. And remember, true worship is not about what moves us emotionally, but about what glorifies God truthfully. *“Stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love”* (1 Corinthians 16:13–14).

Cloud by Day, Fire by Night: What Numbers 9 Teaches Us About Worship Discernment

By Dave Jenkins

Worship today is often shaped by trends, technology, and emotional experience. For many churches, the measure of good worship is how engaging or moving it feels. But Scripture paints a different picture. Worship is not primarily about our preferences, our musical style, or our emotional response, it's about



God's glory and our response to Him in truth.

In Numbers 9, we find one of the most overlooked yet powerful passages on worship discernment in the entire Old Testament. As the Israelites camped in the wilderness, the Lord Himself led them through a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Their movements, their rhythms, and their worship were entirely governed by the visible presence of God. They didn't move unless the cloud (or fire) moved. They didn't stay unless God said to stay. They followed the Lord, not because it was efficient or exciting, but because He was holy.

As we examine this chapter, we'll see why worship must be directed by God's Word, how obedience matters more than innovation, and why discernment in worship is urgently needed today. We'll explore the text, trace its fulfillment in Christ, connect it to Church history, and end with practical steps to cultivate discernment in the worship life of the Church.

Worship Must Follow God's Direction (vv. 15–18)

“At the command of the Lord the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the Lord they camped” (Numbers 9:18). The cloud that covered the tabernacle symbolized the presence of God. When it lifted, the people broke camp and followed. When it settled, they waited. Their lives and worship were tied to God's movement and timing. There was no schedule, no predictability—just obedience.

In our day, worship is often engineered for consistency and engagement. Churches build services around what attracts the most people or creates the strongest responses. But Israel didn't have the luxury of programming their journey; they had to watch, wait, and move at God's command.

We are not free to define or schedule worship according to our preferences. True worship starts with submission to God's revealed will. The Church must return to watching the "cloud" of God's Word, not the smoke machines of modern emotionalism. Discernment check: is our worship shaped more by the presence of God or the performance of people? This question isn't theoretical—it's pasto-

ral. Are our services led by faithful shepherds responding to Scripture, or by stage designers optimizing for response metrics? Israel moved by watching the cloud. Are we watching the Word?

“The tabernacle, the cloud, and the pillar of fire were not just wilderness tools— they pointed forward to something greater.”

God’s Commands Override Human Expectations (vv. 1–14)

In verses 1–5, God commands the people to keep the Passover, but then a problem arises. Some men are ceremonially unclean due to contact with a corpse and can’t participate in the feast. What happens next is instructive. Moses doesn’t

invent a solution; he inquires of the Lord. And God responds with clarity— providing a merciful, regulated exception that preserves both holiness and inclusion. He even includes foreigners, provided they submit to His commands.

Moses models what faithful spiritual leadership looks like. In a moment of tension, he doesn’t react with pragmatism—he seeks the Word of the Lord. In contrast, many modern leaders modify worship practices based on what draws a crowd or *feels authentic*. But the truth of the matter is that discernment means slowing down and going upward before going forward.

When worship leaders face questions about song choice, liturgy, or platform culture, they must do what Moses did: ask, “*What has God said?*” We don’t need cultural creativity. We need biblical clarity.

Obedience in Worship Isn’t Optional (vv. 19–23)

“Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time... they remained... and

did not set out" (Numbers 9:22).

Sometimes the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for a day; other times it remained for a month. The people had to be ready at all times to either stay or move. This required patience, trust, and obedience.

Today's worship culture prizes immediacy and stimulation. We want predictable formats, impressive experiences, and fast spiritual results. But Israel learned to live in submission to God's presence—even when it meant waiting without clarity.

Biblical worship requires humility. Discernment means resisting the urge to manufacture movement when God has called us to wait. In many churches, worship has become performance-driven rather than presence-centered. The question is no longer, "What pleases God?" but "What gets people excited?" Faithful worshipers don't rush ahead of God's Word; they wait, trust, and follow. Obedience in worship isn't always glamorous, but it *is* godly. And in a culture of constant innovation, faithful waiting can be the most countercultural act of worship.

The Cloud and the Cross: How Numbers 9 Points to Christ

The tabernacle, the cloud, and the pillar of fire were not just wilderness tools—they pointed forward to something greater. Ultimately, they pointed to Christ Himself. John 1:14 says, "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" The Greek word for "*dwelt*" literally means "*tabernacled.*" Jesus is the fulfillment of what the tabernacle represented—God with us.

In the wilderness, the people followed the cloud. In the New Covenant, we follow the Son of God, led by His Spirit and Word. He is our true High Priest, our once-for-all sacrifice, and the One who leads us into the true Promised Land.

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1–2). The cloud and the pillar of fire led the people externally. Today, Christ leads His Church by the internal Witness of His Spirit, through the external authority of

Scripture. If worship is not Christ-centered and Word-shaped, it is not Christian worship.

The modern Church must ask: are we following the presence of Christ revealed in Scripture, or the sensations of the moment? If the cloud pointed to Christ, then worship that ignores Christ is a worship that has already lost the way.

Calvin, Burroughs, and Reverent Worship

John Calvin taught that worship must be governed by the revealed will of God. His concern was not merely theological but pastoral. He believed human inventions in worship clouded the glory of Christ. Indeed, Calvin once said, “God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.”

Jeremiah Burroughs, a Puritan pastor, warned against what he called “will-worship” — worship built on human preference. In his book *Gospel Worship*, Burroughs wrote, “The reason why we worship God in a careless manner is because we do not see God in worship.”

Hughes Oliphant Old, a noted historian of Reformed worship, observed that true worship is always both biblical and historic. Worship not rooted in either quickly becomes shallow.

5 Marks of Worship Discernment

The Reformers and Puritans saw worship not as a playground for creativity but as holy ground. Their writings on the subject can help guide our understanding of the five marks of worship discernment.

1. **Scripture-Regulated:** Every element — songs, prayers, readings, preaching — should be grounded in the Word.
2. **Christ-Centered:** Worship must exalt Christ, not personalities or performers.
3. **Spirit-Enabled:** Discernment flows from the Spirit working through

the Word—not emotion detached from truth.

4. **Congregation-Focused:** Worship is for the building up of the Church, not individual entertainment.
5. **Reverent and Joyful:** Awe and joy are not opposites—they meet in the presence of a holy God.

Pastors must lead their people in a culture of discernment, patiently teaching them to evaluate everything by Scripture. Worship leaders must submit their artistry to God's Word. And all Christians must reject the temptation to treat worship as an experience to consume rather than a response to God's glory. We don't need novelty—we need reverence. We don't need creativity—we need clarity. And we don't need production—we need submission.

Closing Reflection: Waiting for the Cloud, Following the Cross

The history of God's people given in Numbers 9 isn't just about ancient Israel's obedience—it's about the posture of the people of God in every generation. Today, many churches have replaced the "cloud" of God's presence with fog machines. But the Church must reclaim a vision of worship where we don't move until God speaks—and when He speaks, we move in obedience.

One of the reasons the Puritans left England for the New World was to worship God in freedom and fidelity. They brought the Geneva Bible and the conviction that worship belonged to God alone. They sailed not for preference, but for principle. Let us follow in their footsteps. Let us fix our eyes on Christ. Let us worship according to His Word. And let us never forget: worship is not where we get creative—it's where we get humble before the Lord.

“Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28–29).

Strange Fire and Sweet Sound: The Dangerous Theology Behind Bethel and Similar Movements

By Dave Jenkins



Bethel Music has taken the global Church by storm. Its soaring melodies and emotionally charged lyrics echo from megachurch stages to small-town sanctuaries. But behind the beautiful music lies a dangerous theological foundation—one that distorts the gospel, elevates experience over Scripture, and threatens the spiritual health of the Church. In this article, we'll examine why biblical worship must be grounded in truth, how Bethel's theology diverges from orthodoxy, and what pastors and churches must do to guard against compromise.

The Foundation of Biblical Worship: Spirit and Truth

Jesus declared in John 4:24, “*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*” True worship is not driven by emotional highs or cultural trends—it is anchored in Scripture. Worship must exalt God as He has revealed Himself, not as we feel or imagine Him to be. Colossians 3:16 reinforces this, commanding believers to *let the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly as they sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.*

Historically, the Church has understood that worship is not entertainment, but reverent response to divine revelation. The Reformers, particularly Calvin and Luther, restructured worship around the preached Word and congregational singing of Scripture-rich songs. Calvin emphasized simplicity and reverence, fearing that innovation would obscure the gospel. Luther harnessed music as a theological tool to teach congregations sound doctrine. In both cases, the goal was worship saturated in biblical truth.

Bethel’s Theological Errors: When Experience Replaces Scripture

Bethel Church in Redding, California, is at the heart of the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)—a loosely affiliated movement that emphasizes modern-day “apostles”, miraculous gifts, and dominion over culture. Bethel’s teachings elevate personal prophecy, physical manifestations, and supernatural experiences above biblical doctrine.

Consider the practice of “grave soaking”—laying on the graves of deceased Christians to absorb their “anointing.” While Bethel has tried to distance itself from this, the practice has been promoted by leaders connected to the church. Likewise, “glory clouds”, “angel feathers”, and gold dust (common gold glitter) have been presented as signs of divine activity during services.

These phenomena aren’t simply unorthodox—they’re dangerous. They turn the focus of worship away from Christ crucified and risen, and instead draw attention to subjective, unverifiable experiences. Scripture warns us not to chase

signs and wonders (Matthew 12:39) but to trust in the Word.

Music as a Trojan Horse for Bad Theology

Bethel's music is one of its most powerful tools of influence. Songs like *"Reckless Love"* and *"Goodness of God"* are sung in churches across denominations. While many lyrics appear harmless—or even biblical—this music functions as a gateway to Bethel's broader theological ecosystem.

"Reckless Love", for example, while emotionally powerful, presents a confusing picture of God's character. God's love is lavish and undeserved, yes—but not "reckless." Words shape theology. When churches adopt Bethel songs, they risk importing their doctrinal baggage as well.

When a church sings Bethel songs, they introduce their congregation to a brand and a ministry that promotes a false gospel of health, wealth, and supernatural signs. Many pastors assume that because a song sounds good and moves the heart, it must be spiritually sound. But emotional resonance is not the same as biblical fidelity.

Moreover, this isn't just a theological danger—it's a financial one. Every time a church uses a Bethel song (or one from Hillsong or Elevation), royalties flow back to Bethel Church (or Hillsong or Elevation) through CCLI and other music licensing platforms. According to reports, Bethel brings in millions annually through its music ministry. That money goes on to fund Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry and their global efforts to spread NAR theology. When you sing a Bethel song, you're not just borrowing lyrics—you're fueling a movement.

The Seven Mountain Mandate and Dominionism

Bethel (and others like it) is also deeply tied to the Seven Mountain Mandate—a doctrine that asserts Christians must take control of seven spheres of society: religion, family, education, government, media, arts, and business. This ideology replaces gospel mission with cultural conquest.

Instead of proclaiming Christ crucified for sinners, the focus shifts to taking dominion over earthly institutions. This theology confuses the kingdom of God with the kingdoms of this world and undermines the Church's true calling to make disciples of all nations. It's a redefinition of the Church's mission—from making disciples to making cultural warlords.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Worship

Some may argue that Bethel's worship is simply "Spirit-filled." But we must ask: what does it truly mean to worship in the Spirit? The Holy Spirit never points to Himself or to ecstatic manifestations; He glorifies Christ and illumines the Word (John 16:13–14). True Spirit-filled worship exalts the Son through the Word.

Bethel's worship often centers on subjective experience rather than objective truth. This misrepresents the Spirit's role and risks leading people into spiritual confusion. Worship shaped by the Spirit will always align with Scripture, not compete with it.

What Does Faithful Worship Look Like?

Biblical worship is God-centered, Word-saturated, and theologically rich. It prioritizes truth over trend, reverence over experience, and depth over emotionalism. The Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs the New Testament speaks of are meant to teach, admonish, and edify (Colossians 3:16). Faithful worship is marked by:

- Songs that exalt the triune God and proclaim the gospel.
- Lyrics grounded in Scripture, not mystical speculation.
- Leadership that values theological clarity and pastoral responsibility.
- A focus on Christ's finished work, not personal encounters or signs.

A Word to Church Leaders

Pastors and worship leaders have a sacred responsibility to guard the flock from error (Acts 20:28–30). This includes vetting every worship song, teaching

source, and theological influence. Using music from movements like Bethel, Hillsong, or Elevation without discernment invites confusion and compromise into the church.

To those who say, “But the lyrics are sound,” we must ask, “Does our use of this song platform a ministry that teaches heresy? Are we subtly endorsing what we claim to reject?”

Church leaders are not called to follow the crowd, but to shepherd the people of God with courage and conviction. Avoiding controversy is not the same as pursuing unity. Real unity is built on truth.

Conclusion: Worship That Pleases God

The Church must return to worship that is shaped by Scripture and centered on the gospel. We cannot afford to be careless in what we sing or whom we platform. Bethel and similar movements have popularized a worship culture that may feel powerful—but ultimately pulls hearts away from God’s truth. Worship is not about chasing a feeling. It’s about fixing our eyes on Christ, proclaiming His truth, and glorifying the Lord with reverence and awe. May we be found faithful.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do the songs we sing align with the theology we preach?
2. Are we exposing our congregation to unbiblical movements by our worship choices?
3. Have we trained our worship leaders in sound doctrine?
4. Are we helping our people worship with discernment and joy?

The Dangerous Theology of Bethel Worship and Similar Movements

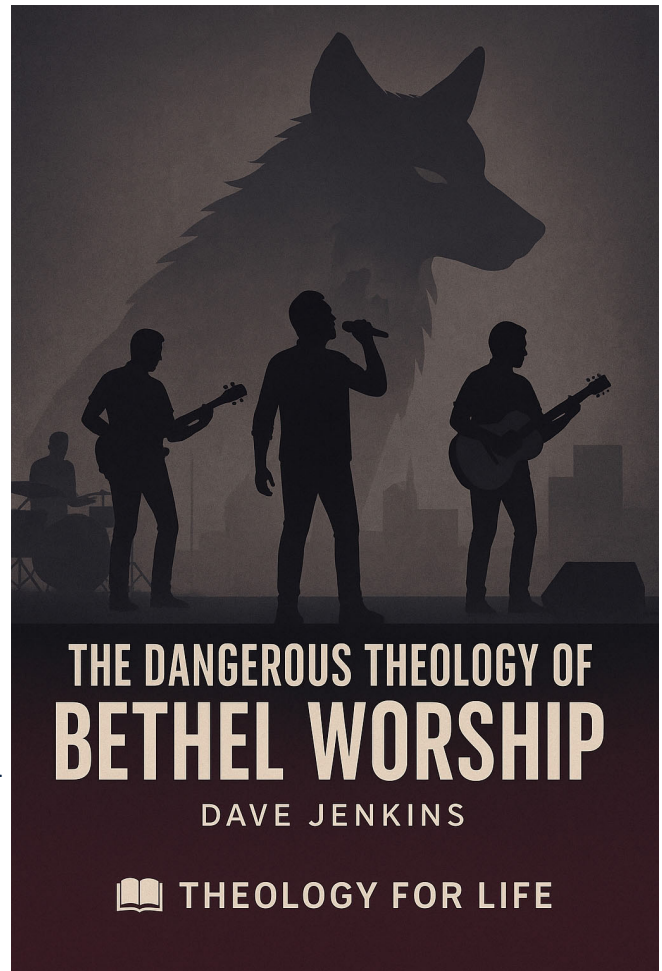
By Dave Jenkins

Bethel Church in Redding, California, has become one of the most influential worship movements in the world.

Through its music label, Bethel Music, and global conferences, Bethel has shaped the worship sound and experience in thousands of churches. But behind the soaring melodies and emotionally charged lyrics lies a dangerous theology that distorts biblical truth, elevates experience over Scripture, and promotes unbiblical views of God, man, and the Church.

A Brief History and Theological Overview

Bethel Church is led by Bill Johnson and is closely associated with the New



Apostolic Reformation (NAR)—a movement that claims modern-day “apostles” and “prophets” continue to receive authoritative revelation, placing their words on-par with canonized Scripture. Johnson teaches a theology of signs and wonders, miraculous healings, and personal prophecy, often divorced from biblical exegesis or historical orthodoxy.

Central to Bethel’s vision is the idea that believers can “bring heaven to earth,” a phrase repeated throughout their music and sermons. While Scripture indeed speaks of God’s kingdom coming (Matthew 6:10), Bethel’s interpretation often emphasizes dominionist overtones, personal empowerment, and experiential encounters with God that minimize the authority of Scripture.

The Theology Behind the Music

Bethel Music is not neutral. The lyrics often subtly promote their theology: victory declarations, emotional highs, and vague references to divine presence without clearly defined biblical context. Songs like “*You Make Me Brave*”, “*Reckless Love*”, and “*This is a Move*” use emotionally charged language to stir the affections—but without anchoring in sound doctrine.

These songs are frequently sung in churches that would never endorse Bethel’s theology from the pulpit. Yet by adopting their music, churches unintentionally platform their theology and open their congregations to potentially dangerous influences. Worship is discipleship—what we sing shapes what we believe (Colossians 3:16).

Moreover, Bethel’s songs often lack the theological precision of historic hymns or biblically grounded contemporary worship. Phrases like “reckless love” introduce doctrinal confusion. God’s love is abundant and sacrificial—but it is not reckless. Words matter. The theology embedded in our singing forms our view of God, the gospel, and Christian life.

Unbiblical Practices and Doctrinal Errors

Bethel leaders have publicly endorsed grave-soaking (lying on the graves

of deceased revivalists to absorb their “anointing”), prophetic declarations detached from Scripture, and false healings. Their School of Supernatural Ministry trains students to perform “miracles” and “healings” without biblical grounding. These practices mirror the Gnostic pursuit of secret knowledge and power, rather than humble submission to God’s Word.

Scripture warns against those who perform signs to deceive (Deuteronomy

13:1–5; Matthew 24:24). True worship is rooted in truth (John 4:24), not in emotionalism or mystical experiences. When signs and wonders take precedence over the gospel and sound doctrine, the Church is on dangerous ground. The theology promoted at Bethel often distorts the gospel. Instead of calling sinners to repentance and faith in Christ, it emphasizes “breakthroughs”, healing, and empowerment. This prosper-

“Bethel’s worship empire generates tens of millions of dollars annually through music sales, conferences, and training programs.”

ity-adjacent gospel appeals to felt needs while ignoring sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

The Money Behind the Movement

Bethel’s worship empire generates tens of millions of dollars annually through music sales, conferences, and training programs. Their songs top charts and are streamed by the millions. But this isn’t simply about good music—it’s a brand that funds a broader theological agenda. Churches that use Bethel music pay royalties, often unknowingly supporting a ministry that actively promotes false teaching.

According to publicly available data, Bethel Music and its affiliates operate

as a commercial enterprise within a religious wrapper. Their conferences cost hundreds of dollars to attend, merchandise sales are robust, and music licensing through CCLI ensures ongoing revenue. We must ask, “Would we use worship songs produced by a cult if the lyrics seemed biblically sound?” The source matters. The theology behind the music matters. And the financial support we give through CCLI licenses and streaming has real-world implications.

A Call to Discernment for Churches and Christians

Pastors and worship leaders must be theologically vigilant. Just as they would never allow false doctrine in the pulpit, they must guard against it in the worship set. Singing songs from Bethel, Hillsong, Elevation, or other theologically compromised sources without discernment opens the door to syncretism.

Discernment requires study, prayer, and courage. Churches must equip their people to recognize theological error, even when it comes packaged in beautiful melodies. If we care about truth, we must also care about what we sing. This also applies to evaluating whether to remain in a church that consistently uses music from theologically compromised sources. Is the leadership aware? Are they taking steps to teach discernment? Is the use of this music an isolated issue or part of a broader theological drift? These are serious questions that require prayerful reflection.

Many faithful pastors may not be aware of Bethel’s theology. A gracious conversation can open the door to deeper study and correction. But when music becomes a hill to die on—exalting style and brand over substance and truth—it’s time to reevaluate.

Returning to Biblical Worship

Biblical worship is God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-empowered, and Word-saturated. It flows from hearts renewed by grace and minds shaped by Scripture. The songs we sing should reflect sound theology and help believers grow in maturity, not just emotion.

Historically, the Church has valued congregational singing rooted in doctrine. The Psalms, the hymns of the Reformation, and even many 19th-century gospel songs were rich in biblical content. Today, we must recover that legacy—not by being old-fashioned, but by being faithful.

Worship is not entertainment. It is not about generating a feeling or chasing an experience. It is the gathered Church lifting praise to the Triune God, shaped by His Word and in reverence of His holiness. Churches would be wise to evaluate their worship songs not only for lyrical content but for theological source, doctrinal depth, and congregational edification. A worship culture shaped by biblical truth will produce fruit far beyond a Sunday morning high.

Conclusion: Truth Matters in Worship

The influence of Bethel Worship (and others of the like) is immense, but so is the responsibility of the Church to be faithful. We cannot afford to be careless in what we sing or who we platform. Theology matters—especially in worship. If we truly believe that worship is for God and not for man, then our music must reflect His truth, not our preferences.

Let us return to worship that is rooted in the Word, rich in doctrine, and reverent in tone. Let us sing songs that proclaim the gospel clearly, exalt Christ rightly, and build up the Church faithfully. Discernment is not division. It is love for the truth and protection for the flock. And in our worship, as in every other area of life, we must test everything by the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Bethel's No Good, Very Bad Vibrations

By Dawn Hill



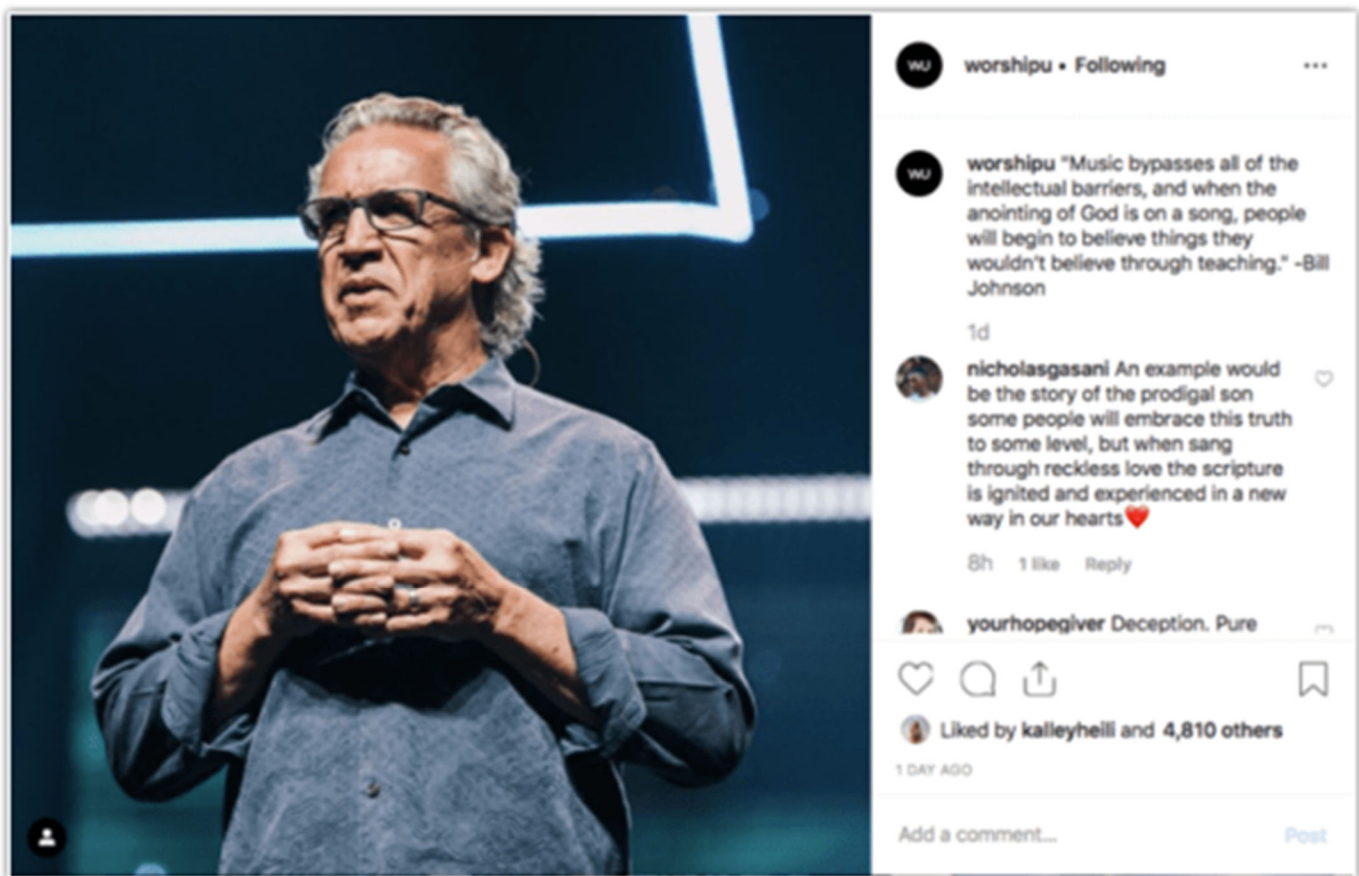
“For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!” (Psalm 47:7). Music is a powerful thing. Many of us can recall songs from our childhood, and the words once filed deep within our

minds emerge easily from our lips. Many of us have put things into music when studying for exams and trying to memorize various facts because it makes learning easier and retainable.

Music is an important part of our praise and worship unto the Lord, and the words we sing to Him reflect our theology. I am a firm believer that doxology reflects our theology, and it matters what we are singing to God. If we have a

poor or confused understanding of who God is in our lives and how He is to be exalted, then praise and worship music may become more self-focused with God at the periphery. It is important that we understand the importance of singing songs that are doctrinally sound and truly glorifying God.

I have mentioned concerns regarding Bethel Church in the past, and worship is another aspect of concern when hearing some of their teaching involving worship and praise music. Bill Johnson, the senior pastor there, has been on record in saying, “Music bypasses all of the intellectual barriers, and when the anointing of God is on a song, people will begin to believe things they wouldn’t believe through teaching.”



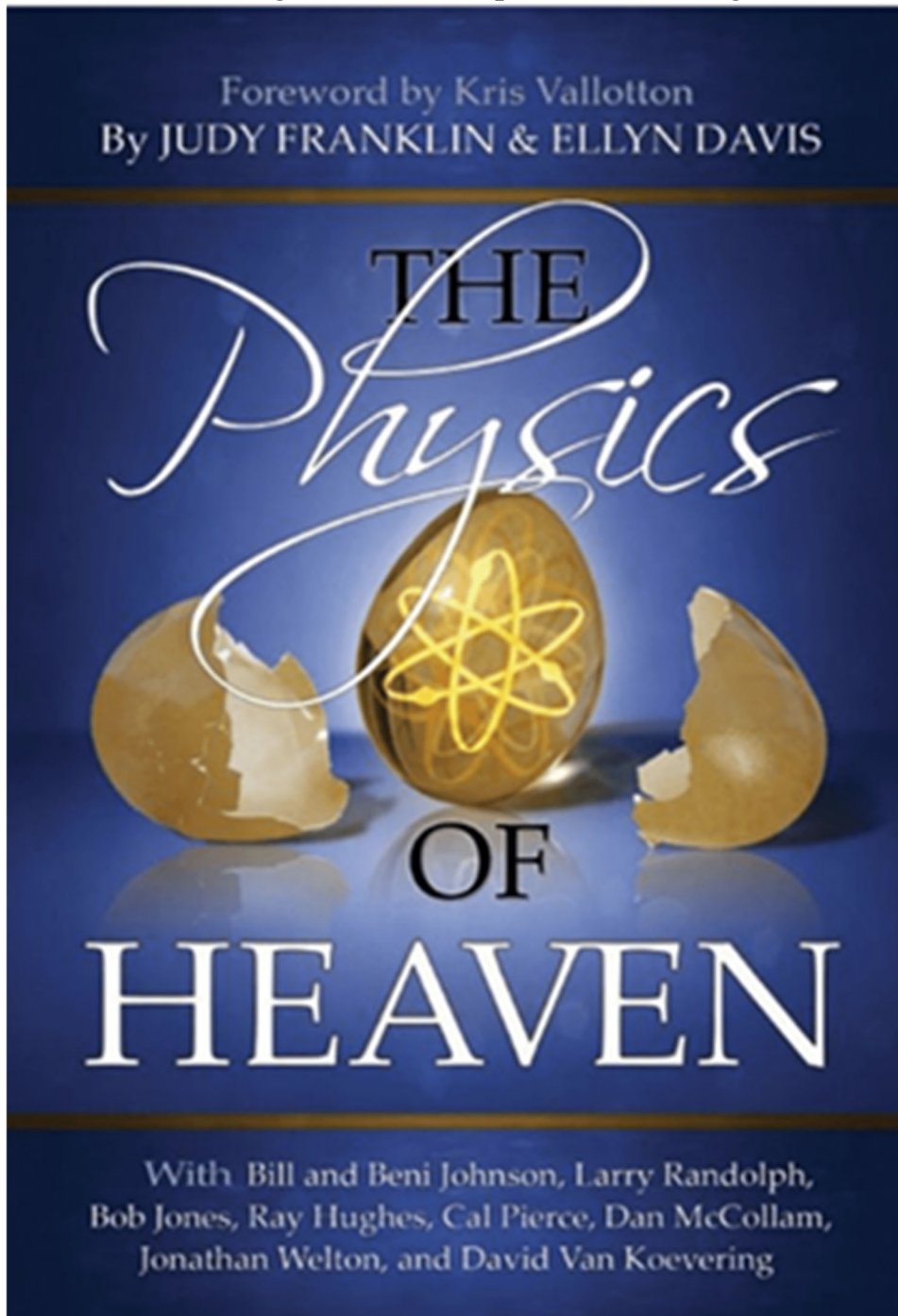
You will notice this post (pictured above) came from the social media of *WorshipU*, which is a group created by Bethel Church, where they “believe in equipping worship teams to lead people into a profound experience with God that transforms lives.” I am familiar with this group as I was formerly part of a worship team that paid monthly to be part of *WorshipU*’s online courses and teachings. One of the teachings that is found on this website centers around the importance of the “God vibration.”

There are several videos available from an instructor named Dan McCollam, and he teaches the students about frequency, vibrations, and entrainment (the synchronization of two or more oscillating systems, where they adjust their rhythms to align with each other). In a few of the videos, he emphasizes the importance of everything having a vibration and that when a sound wave is encoded with an intention, it becomes a carrier-wave, accomplishing the purposes of God.

McCollam teaches these students that if their words are resonating on God’s frequency and His words are resonating in them, then the universe will respond to their words as if it is God speaking. He attempts to use various Scriptures to support this teaching, such as John 15:7, Matthew 18:19, and Isaiah 42:9-10. He even instructed that this teaching is why Psalm 47:7 says, “*Worship the Lord with understanding*”, implying that understanding about vibrations and entrainment is necessary for effective worship unto the Lord.

This type of teaching is very concerning for several reasons, but what we need to recognize is the strong foundation of New Age practices within McCollam’s teaching. This is also found within the book, *The Physics of Heaven*, published by Destiny Image and written by various Bethel contributors, including Bill Johnson, Kris Vallotton, and Dan McCollam. At the time of this article’s publication, this book has been pulled from their online bookstore, but it was available for years. It has spawned tremendous concern as it contains

heavy elements of New Age beliefs and practices throughout each chapter.



CHAPTER 8: THE GOD VIBRATION

BY DAN MCCOLLAM



Modern scientific discoveries have recently joined the voice of ancient sacred writings to pull back the veil of ignorance that once shrouded the power of sound in God's universe. Today these applied sciences and theologies can be woven together towards the redemptive understanding of sounds that heal, deliver, destroy, and open up portals in the heavenly realms. This chapter shares a little of Dan McCollam's insights about the amazing power that God has hidden for us in sound.

Quantum physics serves as one of the great scientific disciplines bridging the river of confusion between science and biblical kingdom thinking. One of the basic tenants of quantum physics states that the universe is in a constant state of vibratory motion. Simply put, everything has a vibration at the center of it. The chair you are sitting in right now is vibrating. Your body vibrates. The book you are holding resonates with vibrations. Yes, the whole universe, according to quantum physics, is filled with vibrations.

Do we really need to understand vibrations in order for our praise and worship to be more effective? No, we do not. When listening to these teachings, it is sad to observe that the focus is more on perceived personal greatness than on the majesty and splendor of God. Worshipping the Lord with understanding is focused more on His sovereignty and power over all the earth. It has nothing to do with a sound wave having an intention and becoming a carrier-wave so that God can fulfill His purposes.

This seems to create a "god" that needs our assistance, otherwise, he cannot do anything. But the God of Scripture does not match this interpretation. In fact, this is gross misunderstanding and error. The God of the universe is in

need of nothing, and we are most certainly in need of Him. What a beautiful privilege He allows us to have in lifting up His holy name in song and to fulfill the purpose of worshiping Him with our lives and glorifying Him.

I do not say this lightly, and I say it as someone who for years subscribed to Bethel's teachings and sang their songs privately and led worship to many of them: **run from Bethel!** A theology with New Age trappings is a dangerous one because it leads away from the exaltation of Jesus Christ and down the path of self-exaltation. It leads to another "christ." Doxology reflects theology. If these types of teachings are engrained into Bethel's worship, it is sobering to think of what else may be passed off as "divine revelation", teachings that are "bypassing" those "intellectual barriers" and being identified as "the anointing." We are to include our mind while worshiping God, whether in song or any other area of our lives. The Bible commands it, and that is enough.

Avoiding Worship Music from Apostate Sources

By Amy Spreeman



In Leviticus 8–10, we read about the incident of “strange fire”, when Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, made an incense offering at the

tabernacle that God had not commanded. The Hebrew word for “strange” can mean *unauthorized, foreign, or profane*. Because their offering was not in line with God’s instructions for holy worship, He judged their actions severely—sending fire to consume them.

It is a descriptive verse of course, but we also know that God cares about worship, and He hates any kind of profane, false elements such as syncretism and extra-biblical revelation.

Should a church use worship music from sources that are proven to be in doctrinal error? What if the *song itself* is biblical? Does the source matter? Shouldn’t a song be judged on its own merits and not the source?

These are questions that many church leaders struggle with, along with their congregants. That’s because most of the music licenses that churches purchase for Sunday morning worship services originate from the “Big Three”, that is: **Bethel Church** in Redding California, **Hillsong United** in Australia, and **Elevation Church** in Charlotte, North Carolina.

All three of these organizations and their leaders have proven, over and over again, that they teach a completely different gospel than the one taught by Jesus and His Apostles. Their music is intentionally emotionally-manipulative, in order to create manufactured “religious experiences.” And all three of these organizations often—in their teachings, para-ministries, and music—take the focus off of Jesus and place it onto the worshipper. When congregants recognize the source of this music, many are rightfully alarmed.

But what if the lyrics are biblical? Consider this: plenty of songs that are biblically true were written by and for Mormons. Most Christians would agree that we should never use songs from sources which have false, or even heretical, teachings. No matter how sound the lyrics are, knowing that they come from heretical sources should cause leaders to eliminate those songs from their church services.

Five Reasons to Stop Singing Bethel, Hillsong and Elevation Music

One: Unholy, Dangerous, Apostate Teachings

There are many research articles written over the last two decades by hundreds of trusted Christian scholars and pastors who warn about Bethel, Hillsong, and Elevation—the top three apostate organizations that make up the bulk of today’s false “church.”

These three multi-million-dollar organizations are the most well-known teachers of the “signs and wonders”, the dominionism movement known as the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), and the Word of Faith movement—also known as the “little gods” ideology, “name it and claim it” doctrine, and/or the “prosperity gospel.”

All three of these organizations believe and teach that their leaders are “Big A” *Apostles*, as well as *Prophets*, even though their “prophecies” are very often wrong.

Bethel, Hillsong, and Elevation are proven to teach some of the most aberrant, unbiblical heresies in modern times. And while some of their music lyrics seem biblical, the source is anything but. The top leadership pastors and teachers are known “wolves in sheep’s clothing”, who must—according to God’s Word—be marked and avoided.

Two: Your Financial Support

The music licensing fees paid by congregations to use this music financially supports these organizations, and by extension, all of their activities, such as conferences, books, webinars and more. Every time your church performs one of these worship songs, there is a monetary benefit to the artist through licensing.

According to CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing Institute), 7 of the top 10 modern songs sung in churches today are affiliated with Bethel, Hillsong, and Elevation. Yet there are thousands of alternative songs to select from. (i)

Three: The Influence on Your Flock

The main objective of the worship music arm of Bethel, Hillsong, and Elevation is to intentionally attract and maintain their target audience of youth and young adults and introduce new audiences of Christian consumers to (into) their movement. All while making millions of dollars. Bill Johnson, founder and lead pastor of Bethel, has said that he sees Bethel Music—including Bethel’s *Jesus Culture*—as a tool to export NAR teachings into non-NAR churches:

Music bypasses all of the intellectual barriers, and when the anointing of God is on a song, people will begin to believe things that they wouldn’t believe through teaching. (ii)

A recent post from Bethel’s *WorshipU* Instagram account repeats Johnson’s quote. *WorshipU* says it “believes in equipping worship teams to lead people into a profound experience with God that transforms lives.” (iii)

Holly Pivec states, “And the truth is that many of the people in these churches sing along, having no idea that these songs come from a leading church in an aberrant movement. I, myself, have sung along with songs in church or on the radio, only later to discover that those songs came from Bethel Music. Churchgoers who are aware of the songs’ origins sometimes feel conflicted singing along. And worship leaders face a dilemma of whether to include anything from Bethel Music in their weekly song selection.” (iv)

Four: Your Green Stamp of Approval

Worshiping God through music on a Sunday morning is a beautiful and uniting act. Congregants trust their leaders to protect them from “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” Singing even solid-sounding songs tells your trusting congregants that either: (A) You’ve checked out these sources and approve of them, or

(B) You haven't checked out these sources and are unaware you are bringing apostate sources into your church.

If your church is leading music from a group that has theologically compromised the Truth of the Word, your church is lending credibility to that source. Worshipers have your "green light" to sing and enjoy music from these sources, because they trust their leaders to protect them from harm and are comfortable to trust this source and even pursue this group through video downloads, music purchases, and perhaps following the musicians and their theology. Congregants often share the musicians' music videos on social media, thus spreading false teaching from apostate sources.

Five: Harming the Hurting

Ex-NAR Christians say when they were first drawn into the NAR movement, it was because of the music they heard in church. They began researching the musicians and following Bethel, even joining conferences and enrolling in the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry—a three-year, full-time program

“...Exodus 2:20 (and many other verses) says that God is not pleased when we invite a false spirit into our worship, and we cannot go to the altar of God and sit at the table of demons at the same time.”

where students learn to perform “miracles” and how to “prophesy.” Those who’ve come out of the program say that the music was a gateway into the NAR movement. It takes a lot of time for people coming out of these apostate and manipulative NAR and Word of Faith movements to heal and to find a new church they can trust.

Ex-NAR and Word of Faith followers have said that they are “triggered” or spiritually harmed by seeing/hearing this music performed in their new church.

Christians looking to read further on this subject may want to check out this helpful resource titled, *Breaking the “Theological Bricks” and Unlearning Lies*. It tells the testimony of Jesse Westwood, a 3-year alumni of Bethel Church in Redding California, who attended Bill Johnson’s mystical Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, and has since walked away from the cult. (v)

What God’s Word Says

Here are some biblical reasons that the source of worship music matters. Matthew 17:18 tells us that a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. And unfortunately, the Bethel, Hillsong and Elevation music empires are rotten to the core. Additionally, Exodus 22:20 (and many other verses) says that God is not pleased when we invite a false spirit into our worship, and we cannot go to the altar of God and sit at the table of demons at the same time (1 Corinthians 10:21).

- *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1).*
- *“For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).*
- *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30).*
- *“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).*

- *“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping” (2 Peter 2:1-3).*

False Teachings of Bethel, Hillsong and Elevation

One: Bethel Church, Redding, CA

Bethel Music’s songs are among the most played contemporary worship music in American churches and their albums have reached the *Billboard Top 200* multiple times. The global music label and publishing group has many songs with tens of millions of views on YouTube, and their songs and albums have been among the most streamed and downloaded Christian music. In 2023, the organization earned more than \$18 million dollars. (vi)

Bethel’s False Teachings

Bethel Church is a “Super Apostle” church and is known for its leadership role in the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) movement. Bethel’s leader, Bill Johnson, prefers to call himself “the General” rather than the “lead Apostle”, and his second in command, Kris Vallotton, is its “Prophet.” NAR is a dominionism movement which asserts that God is restoring the “lost offices” of church governance—namely the offices of Prophet and Apostle.

Facts about the NAR:

- Its founder was C. Peter Wagner, who claimed that the Church of the 21st Century will be ruled by Apostles and Prophets. Before his death in 2016, Wagner anointed himself the NAR’s “Presiding Apostle.”

- Stemming from the *Latter Rain* movement, the NAR is linked with the Kansas City Prophets, who brought grandiose claims that a “new breed” of super prophets were beginning to arrive on planet earth, who would “change the world forever”; likewise were the teachings of the Word Faith and Pentecostal movements.
- NAR is not governed by an official denomination; it is led by alleged “apostles” and “prophets.”
- NAR leaders teach that “prophets” and “apostles” alone have the power and authority to execute God’s plans and purposes on earth. They believe they are laying the foundation for a global church, governed by them.
- These NAR teachers place a greater emphasis on dreams, visions and extra-biblical revelation than they do on the Bible, claiming that their “revealed teachings” and reported experiences (e.g. trips to heaven, face-to-face conversations with Jesus, visits by angels) cannot be proven by the “old” Scripture. (vii)

Bethel Church focuses on miracles. It teaches that all miracles described in the Bible can be performed by believers today and happen regularly, including faith healing of everything—from curing cancer to regrowing limbs, raising the dead, speaking in tongues, casting out demons and prophecy. Its Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry is a three-year, full-time program where students learn to “perform miracles” and how to prophesy. (viii)

“Bethel teaches the heretical *Word of Faith* doctrine...”

Bethel teaches the heretical *Word of Faith* doctrine, also known as *Positive Confession*, and states that it is *always* God's will to heal. Bethel teaches and practices occult activities such as Destiny Cards (ix) (a church version of Tarot cards), "sucking" the "anointing" (x) from a dead person in "grave soaking" trips to cemeteries. Bethel church attendees have witnessed mysterious manifestations of "gold dust", (xi) "angel feathers", (xii) and "glory clouds" (xiii) during worship services.

Bethel uses *The Passion Translation (TPT)*, a man-made counterfeit "Bible" publication, which is not scholarly or Holy Spirit inspired. TPT has been enthusiastically endorsed by NAR advocates, such as Bill Johnson, Che Ahn, Bobbie Houston, Lou Engle, John and Lisa Bevere, Patricia King, Heidi Baker, Wesley and Stacey Campbell, and more.

Two: Hillsong Church, Sydney, Australia

Hillsong United's music empire was founded in 1991, stemming from the first Hillsong Conference in 1986. Its music is produced by Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia as well as offshoot churches—Hillsong London and Hillsong Kiev. Hillsong albums are released and distributed by Hillsong Music. The main groups are **Hillsong Worship**, **Hillsong United**, **Hillsong Young & Free**, and **Hillsong Kids**. As with Bethel Music, youth are Hillsong's primary target.

As of 2018, Hillsong Music has sold over 18 million albums globally. And as of 2019, Hillsong music has been downloaded 1.1 billion times. CCLI estimates 50 million people sing Hillsong songs in church each week.

Hillsong's Teachings

Hillsong Church in Australia (until recently) was led by co-founders and senior pastors, Brian Houston and Bobbie Houston. Brian Houston stepped down in 2021. The Australia-based organization has been plagued by scandals and its false teachings over the years, including the heretical Word of Faith and NAR (New Apostolic Reformation/Dominionism) teachings.

From the Hillsong website: “We believe that God wants to heal and transform us so that we can live healthy and blessed lives in order to help others more effectively.”

In Pastor Brian Houston’s 1999 book, *You Need More Money*, he promotes the prosperity gospel: “Poverty is definitely not God’s will for His people. In fact, all His promises talk of blessing and prosperity.” (xiv) At its conferences, Hillsong regularly features the major prosperity preachers of the Word of Faith movement, such as Joyce Meyer, Joel and Victoria Osteen, and Oneness Pentecostal Word of Faith mogul, T.D. Jakes.

Facts About Hillsong and its Leadership

- Brian Houston has often stated that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. (xv)
- Hillsong’s ordination of women as pastors is in contradiction of Scripture’s teaching that men are to be the spiritual leaders of the Church (1 Timothy 2:11–12). (xvi)
- Hillsong New York City also had a homosexual music leader. (xvii)
- Hillsong’s music is a mixed-bag of somewhat biblical lyrics as well as downright heretical lyrics. (xviii)
- Like Bethel, Hillsong uses *The Passion Translation*.

Three: Elevation Church

Elevation Worship is a contemporary worship music collective from Elevation Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. (xix) The label was founded by their lead pastor, Steven Furtick. Elevation has grown into a global phenomenon, drawing a weekly attendance of more than 25,000 with locations from Toronto to Orlando; in addition to their worldwide online audience. Elevation Worship reaches more than 3 million monthly listeners on Spotify, more than 760 million views on YouTube, and 1.5 million+ U.S. album sales. (xx)

By any worldly measure, Steven Furtick is quite successful. According to

Money Inc., as of January 2021, his estimated net worth is \$55 million. (xxi) He lives in a 16,000-square-foot mansion situated on nineteen acres of wooded land, valued at approximately \$1.7 million in 2013.

Elevation's False Teachings

Steven Furtick teaches *Modalism*, which is a heresy from the first century. Modalists deny the Trinity as defined in Scripture, and instead state that God is a single person who, throughout biblical history, has revealed Himself in three *modes* or *forms*.

He is known to teach the Word of Faith "Little gods" (xxii) heresy, as well as claiming that Jesus is limited by our lack of faith:

"Even Jesus cannot override your unbelief. I see y'all looking at me like, 'Is that true? I thought He could do anything.' It said, 'He could not.' He wanted to. He was prepared to. He was able to. The power of God was in Nazareth, but it was trapped in their perspective." (xxiii)

His church has long been involved with the New Apostolic Reformation movement, when Furtick traveled to Australia for the Presence 2012 Conference (xxiv) with John Bevere for "a golden fire of anointing, vision and miracles..." He has since continued to host NAR prophets, seers, and miracle workers. (xxv) Steven Furtick teaches that God breaks the Law. (xxvi) He also teaches that his vision is authoritative: "We are united under one vision. Elevation is built on the vision God gave Pastor Steven. We will aggressively defend our unity and that vision." (xxvii) Below are some additional concerning facts about Steven Furtick.

- He promotes female pastors and has invited several to speak at Elevation, calling Joyce Meyer the "greatest Bible teacher alive today." (xxviii)
- He has come under fire for writing a spontaneous baptism how-to guide, emotionally manipulating church attendees by fake baptisms.

(xxix)

- Elevation church is also using and promoting the New Age non-Christian enneagram. (xxx)
- Furtick was recently quoted as saying, “I am God Almighty.” (xxxi) Many say he was taken out of context, and the video addresses that.

For these reasons, as well as the evidence provided above concerning all three major NAR churches/ministries, it is imperative that our church leaders (including worship leaders) reject the use of music stemming from these sources. As always, stay alert and be vigilant to the wiles of the enemy. Keep your eyes focused on the Lord.

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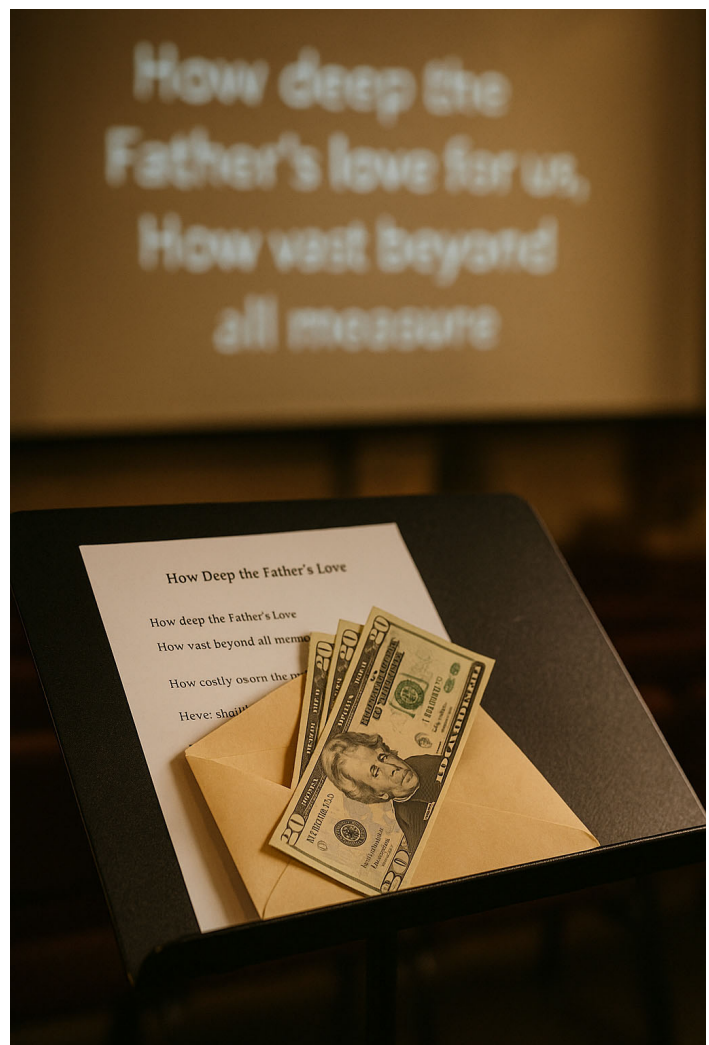
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Why the Royalties to Bethel Church Matter

By Richard Moore

After 10 years of detailed, thorough research into Bethel Church in Redding, California, I have concluded that I could never in good conscience recommend a single resource put out by Bethel Church. Not a book, not a podcast, not a sermon, not a conference, not even products sold in their Bethel online store. Their theological aberrations are to be found in nearly everything that they produce. If I cannot, in good conscience, recommend any of the myriad resources that Bethel Church puts out, why would I not feel the same about the music and the “worship” resources that they produce?

In this article I will demonstrate



why the royalties to Bethel Church, Bethel Music, and their conglomerates matter, and not only matter, but keep the Bethel machine chugging along, allowing it to continue to purvey its particular form of aberrant, heterodox, and unorthodox theological perspectives, teaching, and practices to a global audience.

Bethel Church in Redding, California, is one of the most influential spiritual brands in the world today. Its reach extends far beyond Redding—into Spotify playlists, YouTube algorithms, polished conference stages, and monthly Bethel TV subscriptions. At the heart of this movement is not merely aberrant theology, an improper emphasis on revivalism, and a misplaced hunger for signs and wonders (Christ taught that an evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign Matthew 16:4; Mark 8:12; 12:39; Luke 11:29), but a sophisticated, monetized, and monopolistic media operation—one that thrives on copyright enforcement, emotional manipulation, a polished public relations image, and global influence.

In this article, I will give evidence that the exorbitant amount of revenue and royalties pouring into Bethel and its affiliates are not incidental and not innocuous. They are the result of deliberate strategy—a spiritual-industrial complex that converts their aberrant and heterodox theology into commerce and dominion doctrine into subscription. Bethel’s illegal copyright claims on critics, particularly lately as seen in famous YouTuber Mike Winger among other many smaller YouTubers like myself, is an illegal form of digital hijacking, wherein Bethel illegally seeks to suppress critique by making copyright claims on critics’ materials on YouTube. Bethel’s branding and licensing structures are not simply about protecting creative works; they are also about silencing critique, protecting revenue streams, and perpetuating a mystique of apostolic and prophetic anointing, built on discernable false teaching and false prophecy.

Heterodox and Unorthodox Theology Hiding in Plain Sight

By now, Bethel’s heterodox and precarious teachings have been exceedingly substantiated through public critique, by this publication, and via with many

other books, podcasters, and by a plethora of evangelical critics that Bethel is at least heterodox and at worst theologically unorthodox — outside historic Christian Theological Orthodoxy (see appendix of resources). This point is often disputed that they stand outside of historical Christian orthodoxy, because their statements of faith on their websites seem to hold to Orthodoxy. However, the pattern of history in regard to false teaching, heresy, and aberrant movements is that those aberrant movements, and those heretics do not announce themselves as such.

Take Arias for example. In Church history he did not announce to the Church, “I am a false teacher. What I believe and teach is heresy, and you should avoid me.” No declared heretic in all of Church history, that I’m aware of, has ever said such a thing. Therefore, Bethel is following the pattern of history in not announcing themselves, but rather hiding under the guise of Christian Theological Orthodoxy by infiltrating theologically faithful congregations with the theological Trojan horse of their music brand.

But make no mistake, after years of looking into their theology, teachings, and practices at length, they do not align with their statements of faith as presented publicly. If heterodoxy and unorthodox views are hiding in plain sight, then the royalties they receive from the broader global Church are the revenue stream keeping them viable.

Why do these royalties matter? Because they point to a deeper concern: the commodification of Christ’s bride, the Church, into a branded experience where the heterodoxy and quite possible unorthodox false teaching is spread and empowered through the support of the global Church’s often unknowing financial support. And when critique or questions arise, they are punitively handled with algorithmic takedowns and copyright claims.

I have been involved in critique of Bethel for quite some time, as a YouTuber. I have become aware that easily a dozen other very large YouTubers have

also had punitive copyright claims placed on their material for their critique. This shows that Bethel is not open to theological and biblical critique or answering questions. Bill Johnson, himself, in his book, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, has made it clear that he is not open to those who would critique their movement. More specifically, he is not open to critique of the beginnings of their movement, which he claims is the Toronto Blessing.(i) Instead they punitively attack anyone who would critique them.

Rather than reflect and repent from unorthodox teaching, theology, and practice, they punish those who would dare to critique them with frivolous and unlawful copyright claims, hamstringing content creators. Fair use laws in the United States allow for people to use other people's content for critique, comment, and news reporting among other things.(ii) However, Bethel and many others in the NAR are not open to being critiqued, and therefore they ignore the law of the land—specifically “fair use laws.”

A Monetized Movement Masquerading as Evangelical

Bethel is not just a church. It is a global content network. Its music dominates Christian streaming platforms, its Schools of Supernatural Ministry are multiplying worldwide, and its sermons reach millions via YouTube (and other streaming platforms). Each of these arms—music, teaching, media—is revenue-producing. The result? A self-reinforcing economic ecosystem that feeds off spiritual hunger and translates it into subscription fees, merchandise, donations, and licensing rights. Despite Redding, California's meager population of under 96,000, Bethel boasts 11,000 local members,(iii) transcending its role as a mere church to become a global movement.

Bethel's influence extends through the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM),(iv) with an enrollment fluctuating between 3,000 to 5,000 students annually, drawing individuals from around the world. According to Bill Johnson, the senior leader, Germans comprise the largest nationality within BSSM, a fact

that I confirmed during my 2020 visit. My interest grew years ago as to Bethel's influence in Germany and Europe because their influence directly affects my missionary ministry in Germany. BSSM's impact spreads further through its school planting initiative, aiding the establishment of similar institutions worldwide.(v) Bethel also encompasses various educational ventures and oversees seven satellite churches, (vi) solidifying its extensive reach within and far beyond California alone.

Bethel Music, an integral part of Bethel Church, holds immense global popularity. Its contemporary songs resonate across modern churches worldwide, including Germany, where they are frequently sung. With 5.05 million YouTube subscribers and videos garnering up to 50 million views, Bethel Music's influence is undeniable. Brian Johnson, son of Bill Johnson and a prominent Bethel worship leader, recently shared his staggering Spotify streaming numbers on Instagram, totaling 192.4 million streams in 2023 alone.(vii) With royalties estimated at 3-5 cents per stream, the potential earnings could have surpassed 5 million dollars from Spotify platform alone, highlighting the financial impact of Bethel artists.

Bethel music albums, typically, after being released end up at the top of streaming charts, iTunes, Spotify, and they have even had a billboard number one chart, have been nominated for 28 Dove awards, two Grammy awards, and one Billboard music award (Jenn Johnson—1 Dove Award; Brian Johnson—1 Dove Award; Bethel Music—3 billboard nominations, and 4 Dove Awards).(viii) With 16 current Bethel artists on their label and 15 former artists who are all still involved in the music industry, their influence and reach are unmistakable. These instances of their musical success highlight the revenue which is generated by their music. Another thing that generates revenue for Bethel Church is Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). Data from September 2022 reveals Bethel's dominance, with eight of the ten most widely used songs li-

censed by CCLI originating from Bethel-related churches or artists. Additionally, a recent study found that between 2010 and 2020, the majority of top CCLI songs came from Bethel and other New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)-aligned churches, (ix) shaping evangelical worship practices globally.(x) Bethel's teachings, disseminated through conferences, music, books, and online platforms, impact millions of Christians worldwide, influencing theological perspectives and spiritual practices. However, potential theological errors or excesses within Bethel's teachings can reverberate throughout the global Church, leading to confusion and division.

Take for instance, the song “*Reckless Love*”, by Cory Asbury. It was at one

“Therefore, I recommend that churches and ministries disallow Bethel Music or their affiliates so that these tough theological decisions are not left to theologically untrained worship leaders.”

time extremely popular and won the GMA Dove award for the Song of the Year. The problem is that it describes God’s love as reckless. God is not reckless. Therefore, He cannot act recklessly, and neither is His love reckless. This is one simple example of how Bethel and their music artists smuggle in aberrant theology and teaching about God.

Should we make worship leaders differentiate between theological

differences within Bethel Music? I would argue that disallowing Bethel Music would be a better option, because we make theologically untrained worship leaders decide what would or could be theologically unsound from Bethel music. Therefore, I recommend that churches and ministries disallow Bethel Music or their affiliates so that these tough theological decisions are not left to theologically untrained worship leaders. If we do this, we leave very difficult theological

discernment challenges between what's theologically solid and what is theologically dubious to untrained worship leaders. In all practicality, leaving them with very difficult theological decisions and circumventing elder/pastor governance of such theological decisions.

Bethel's revenue impact extends beyond music, encompassing various ministries and initiatives. BethelTV, with an estimated 144,000 subscribers generating substantial revenue, offers a platform for spiritual content subscribers

paying roughly \$9.99 per month—before accounting for special events, one-time purchases, or premium upgrades. The pricing may seem innocuous, but multiplied by subscribers this is a mountain of recurring revenue. And that's not counting premium content, event passes, and merchandise. This model of digital "revivalism" promotes a theology where access to spiritual power is mediated by subscription. This is pay-to-play Christianity. Those who take part are led to believe they are participating in a special stream of divine favor, healing, and other apostolic and prophetic coverings. It is emotional capitalism disguised as ecclesiology.

Bethel Church hosts numerous conferences throughout the year: "Open Heavens" conference, "School of the Prophets" conference, "Wonder Conference", "Bethel Healing School", "BraveCo Men's Conference", "Prophetic Conference", and many other smaller conferences. (xi) Additionally, Bethel's ministry, "SOZO" — another revenue stream — focuses on what is hindering your connection and reconnecting with each member of the Godhead.(xii) SOZO is gain-

"While many Bethel followers may assume that tithes and streaming royalties go toward missions or charitable efforts, the evidence suggests otherwise."

ing traction in Germany, German-speaking countries, and Europe at large.

Consider Bethel Music: its artists generate tens of millions of streams monthly. My previous estimate of Brian Johnson's yearly Spotify streams doesn't even account for iTunes, Amazon, YouTube, or licensing income from churches purchasing song usage rights through CCLI and other services. But perhaps the most telling aspect of this empire is its aggressive control over the narrative, as substantiated in the exposé by the Firm Foundation Podcast.(xiii)

Bethel has repeatedly filed copyright claims against critics—even when the material in question is protected clearly by fair-use laws for commentary. These are not random defensive actions. They are calculated efforts to suppress dissent while raking in ad revenue from videos that viewers assume are freely available. In this system, revival is no longer a sovereign work of the Spirit. It is a product—marketed, streamed, monetized, and litigated. And the pastors are not just shepherds, they are brand managers.

Lavish Leadership: Where the Money Goes

While many Bethel followers may assume that tithes and streaming royalties go toward missions or charitable efforts, the evidence suggests otherwise. Bethel's leadership—especially in the music and teaching arms—live in considerable luxury.(xiv) From high-end homes and exorbitant speaking fees, to private travel and concert tours, the lifestyles of Bethel's key figures resemble those of celebrities more than pastors. Brian Johnson's public boasting about his streaming revenues only underscores the financial motivations behind much of Bethel's content creation. The money created through all streams of revenue in Bethel Music and Bethel Church flow to the top of the apostolic and prophetic mountains in their structure. Landing in the main senior leaders' laps. These leaders are the tip of the spear in relation to false teaching in the Bethel stratosphere.

Bethel is certainly a proponent of the prosperity gospel. This is seen most clearly in their offering declarations, made weekly before their offering is collected.(xv)

And the book written by senior leader and prophet at Bethel, Kris Vallotton, *Poverty, Riches and Wealth: Moving from a Life of Lack into True Kingdom Abundance* (xvi) and the recently controversial appearance of Kenneth Copeland, a famous prosperity preacher, at Bethel.(xvii) The prosperity gospel would have us believe that our “health, wealth, and prosperity” were won for us by Jesus on the cross. Tell me, how could Jesus have won something for us that could lead to, as Paul says, temptation, a snare, or into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction? Why would Jesus have accomplished something that is a “root of all kinds of evil”? Even worse, could Jesus have accomplished something for us that could eventually make us “wander away from the faith” and “pierce us with many pangs”? *Impossible!* Jesus has won for us on the cross our eternal redemption and propitiation; not health, wealth, or prosperity. Jesus is a good God. He would never win something for us that could lead to our destruction, ruin, or walking away from the faith.

As Paul warns in 1 Timothy 6:3–10:

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing... imagining that godliness is a means of gain... But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

This “prosperity” is the condition afflicting Bethel’s leaders and their empire of excess. By their emphasis on prosperity, they certainly falsify and pervert the gospel.

The Business Model of Modern Apostolic and Prophetic Churches

The New Apostolic Reformation has restructured church into a global franchise, where worship leaders are content creators, sermons are ad-revenue opportunities, and “revival” is a product line. Through church-plants, music licensing, online schools, and publishing deals, Bethel and its affiliates are creating new beachheads for their “Apostolic” and “Prophetic” brand worldwide.

Local, historic genuine expressions of Christianity are replaced by Bethel’s identity—centered on Bethel’s distinct aesthetics, which often turn into doctrinal coups, where regular faithful and doctrinally sound churches are taken over by the Bethel paradigm. While the *Christianese* remains, Bethel’s methods mirror Silicon Valley and Hollywood more than the authentic early Church found in Acts 2.

Biblical and Ethical Evaluation

Scripture is not silent on such practices. The Apostle Paul warned against those who peddled the Word of God for profit (2 Corinthians 2:17). Jesus overturned the tables of those who turned the temple into a marketplace (Matthew 21:12–13). Peter rebuked Simon the Sorcerer for trying to buy the power of God (Acts 8:18–20). Bethel’s empire—built on royalties, monetization, and branding—is a modern equivalent. Its leaders fit the pattern of those who use godliness as a means of gain (1 Timothy 6:5). Bethel replaces truth with spin, silencing righteous judgment, devising legal schemes against fellow believers, and profiting from promises of their false brand of revival, healing, and spiritual power that are empty of any biblical substance.

Conclusion: Why the Royalties Matter

The royalties to Bethel Church (and its affiliates) matter because they reveal a deep spiritual problem. Not just the love of money, but the redefinition of ministry into a monetized enterprise. Not just greed, but control. Not just branding, but blasphemy. This is a call to discernment. A call to recognize when people peddle God’s Word (2 Corinthians 2:17). And it is a call to return to the simplicity and power of the true gospel—freely received, freely given (Matthew 10:18). Let

the Church not be a franchise. Let Christ—not royalties—be the reason we gather, worship, and proclaim the truth.

Royalties to Bethel matter because your hard-earned dollars might go to support a heterodox and/or theologically unorthodox movement. Secondly, your streams, the singing in church, and your views on YouTube and will go to support the Bethel cash cow, keeping it afloat. Bethel would not gain royalties if there weren't viewers, listeners, or those who purchased their materials. Thirdly, you might accidentally be drinking the theological poison mixed into the Kool-Aid and not know it. Fourthly, you might not be able to differentiate between the theological poison, and the truth because there is some truth mixed in with the poison. Fifthly, you might be unconsciously drawn in to the NAR and Bethel theology. You might be opening the door in your church or in your own life to aberrant and heterodox teaching. Sixthly, by listening, supporting, or giving royalty money to these leaders and teachers, "apostles", and "prophets" in this movement, you are unknowingly spreading their "leaven" of false teaching and false prophecy. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9).

Arias was an early Church leader that taught, a form of heresy that was later condemned and coined as "*Arianism*." This heresy taught that Jesus was not eternal and was the first born of the Father. "There was a time when he was not" was a phrase coined by Arias. Arianism was spread in that era through music, sea shanties, and jigs that were popular at the time. This phrase actually was part of a song that Arias wrote. It was because of Arias' clever usage of music that his heresy (Arianism and its aberrations) took such a foothold in the early Church.

Athanasius was the Church father who opposed Arias. We actually know very little about Arias and what he taught. Here is quote taken from Athanasius' opposing work, *Against the Arians*, in which he quoted Arian's errant lyrics below:

*God Himself then, in His own nature, is ineffable by all men.
Equal or like Himself He alone has none, or one in glory.
And Ingenerate we call Him, because of Him who is generate by nature.
We praise Him as Unoriginate because of Him who has an origin.
And adore Him as everlasting, because of Him who in time has come to be.
The Unoriginate made the Son an origin of things generated;
And advanced Him as a Son to Himself by adoption.
He has nothing proper to God in proper subsistence;
For He is not equal, no, nor one in substance with Him.(xviii)*

Doxology is the form which Christians employ to worship God. Orthodoxy is the right, straight, or correct teaching of who God is and what He requires of man. Doxology affects orthodoxy, and vice versa. Neither Orthodoxy nor Doxology live in a vacuum. How, and by what means, and what resources we use to worship God affects what we believe about Him. If we use aberrant sources in our doxology, we will eventually have aberrant theology. As seen in the case of Arias, if you want to affect Orthodoxy change Doxology.

I recommend that churches stop singing Bethel Music immediately. It is a theological Trojan horse.(xix) In their book, *Counterfeit Kingdom*, Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec argue in one whole chapter that Bethel Music and their subsidiaries are a great source of toxic worship music. Furthermore, they show how Bill Johnson, the Senior Leader at Bethel, has encouraged his worship leaders to imagine what the church should look like theologically in five years, and then write songs incorporating that specific theology so that people will “sing their way into it.” If that does not scare us or give us pause as to the intentions of Bethel Church, then nothing else will. They are trying to reshape the face of the Church. That’s why royalties to Bethel matter. They are reshaping the face of evangelicalism, and we are giving them our money to help them do it.

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A Brief Timeline of Modern Worship Movements (1970s— 2020s)

Key Shifts in Evangelical Worship Culture Over Five Decades

1970s – The Jesus Movement & Folk Praise

- Rise of informal worship gatherings on the West Coast.
- Artists like **Love Song** and **Larry Norman** pioneered folk-style Christian music.
- Introduction of “praise choruses” as a supplement to traditional hymns.
- Calvary Chapel and Vineyard churches influence worship format: acoustic guitars, simple lyrics, and personal expression.

1980s – Praise & Worship Explosion

- Growth of the “**Praise & Worship**” model led by ministries like **Integrity Music** and **Maranatha! Music**.
- Worship becomes more emotionally expressive, and music driven.
- Songs like “*As the Deer*” and “*Majesty*” become Sunday morning staples.
- First wave of worship leaders as public figures emerges.

1990s – The Worship Industry and Globalization

- **Hillsong** and **Passion Conferences** gain global popularity.
- Worship shifts toward arena-style music with professional production.
- Rise of CCLI licensing system—measuring worship trends through song usage.
- Contemporary Worship Services (CWS) become the norm in evangelical churches.

2000s – Seeker-Sensitive and Megachurch Influence

- Worship shaped by the seeker movement (e.g., Willow Creek, Saddleback).
- Emphasis on atmosphere, lighting, and “worship experiences.”
- **Chris Tomlin**, **Matt Redman**, and **David Crowder** dominate church setlists.
- Blending performance with praise becomes common.

2010s – The Rise of Worship Collectives

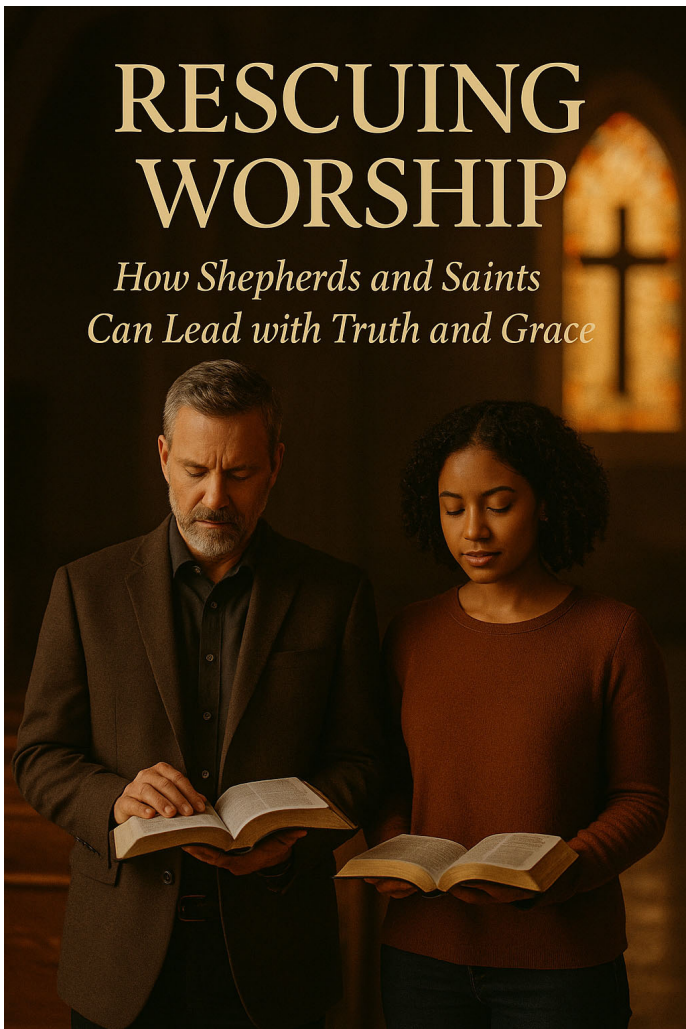
- Groups like **Bethel Music**, **Elevation Worship**, **Jesus Culture**, and **Maverick City Music** emerge.
- Increasing use of spontaneous worship, emotional build-ups, and repetitive lyrics.
- Greater emphasis on personal encounter, breakthrough, and presence language.
- Worship concerts and YouTube/streaming expand reach and influence.

2020s – Fragmentation & Discernment

- Continued dominance of large worship collectives—but growing theological scrutiny.
- Concerns rise over doctrinal vagueness, celebrity culture, and worship as entertainment.
- Many churches reconsider historic hymns, Psalms, and liturgical worship.
- Emergence of reformational worship renewal: more churches seeking **Word-saturated, Christ-exalting worship** rooted in Scripture.

Rescuing Worship: How Shepherds and Saints Can Lead with Truth and Grace

By Dave Jenkins



Picture this: It's a Sunday

morning. The sanctuary is dim, pulsing with colored lights. A haze machine quietly fills the stage with fog as the band launches into a soaring anthem. The melody is moving. The atmosphere is emotionally charged. But the words are vague—about breakthrough, blessing, and feeling God's presence—with little mention of Christ, the Cross, or the Word.

For many today, this scene is all too familiar. In churches across the world, worship has drifted from its biblical moorings. And while some may debate musical style, the issue at hand is not about preference—it's about truth.

Now contrast that with a small

rural church, where the congregation sings "Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery" with voices untrained but hearts engaged. No fog machine, no flashing lights, just the people of God, gathered under the Word, singing truths that echo eternity. This too is worship—quiet, rich, anchored.

“Just because it sounds powerful doesn’t mean it’s biblically faithful.”

Worship is not a concert. It is not a tool for self-expression. It is the Church’s sacred response to the God, who has revealed Himself in Scripture. And when worship drifts from God’s truth, it must be rescued.

Worship and the Authority of Scripture

From Genesis to Revelation, worship begins with God’s revelation of Himself. In Exodus, the Lord prescribed exactly how Israel was to approach Him (Exodus 20:1–6; 25:40). The Psalms give us inspired examples of worship that is theological, emotional, and corporate.

Jesus confirms this in John 4:24: *“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* Real worship is never detached from doctrine. It is never a free-form experience, shaped by feelings alone. It is our response to the truth of God’s Word.

Colossians 3:16 calls us to let *“the word of Christ dwell in us richly,”* and that includes through singing. Songs are sermons with melody. What we sing will shape what we believe. Likewise, Romans 12:1–2 reminds us that worship is not confined to music but includes presenting our whole lives as a *living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*. It is spiritual, rational, and transformative. If the Word

of Christ is not central, then our worship is not Christian.

When Worship Drifts

Today, many churches find themselves drifting. Emotionalism has replaced exegesis. Lyrics emphasize “personal breakthroughs” more than God’s holiness. Worship leaders are trained in stagecraft rather than sound doctrine. This drift is not harmless. It shapes what people believe about God. As A.W. Tozer warned, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that a time would come when people would accumulate teachers to suit their own passions (2 Timothy 4:3). In many ways, the same is happening with music. Worship becomes entertainment, and the church becomes an audience. We need more than a shift in style. We need a return to substance.

Consider how the modern worship movement has been shaped by the celebrity culture. With millions of views on YouTube, worship leaders often become “influencers.” Production budgets rival music videos. But where is the focus? If worship becomes indistinguishable from a performance, we must ask: are we exalting Christ or building a platform? Pastors must equip their churches, not only to evaluate music, but to exercise media discernment. Just because it sounds powerful doesn't mean it is biblically faithful.

The Reformers and Worship Renewal

The Protestant Reformers understood this well. Worship was not peripheral to the Reformation—it was central. Martin Luther recovered congregational singing with rich theological lyrics. John Calvin emphasized simplicity, reverence, and the singing of Psalms.

Calvin wrote, “We may not adopt any device which seems fit to ourselves, but look only to what he has commanded.” This is the essence of the *Regulative Principle of Worship*: God alone determines how He is to be worshiped.

Luther saw music as a servant of theology: "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." He composed hymns like "*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*" that taught doctrine while stirring the soul.

The English Puritans, too, cared deeply about biblical worship. They rejected anything that distracted from God's Word. Their liturgies were not lifeless—they were focused. They saw reverence and truth as friends, not enemies. When the Reformers removed extra-biblical ceremonies and restored the Word to the center of the Church's life, worship was rescued from superstition and returned to Scripture. That same work continues today.

The Pastor's Role: Leading with Conviction and Compassion

Pastors are not just preachers—they are worship shepherds. Their responsibility is to lead the church in worship that reflects God's character and truth. This begins by:

- Evaluating every song as carefully as a sermon.
- Teaching the theology of worship from the pulpit.
- Discipling worship leaders to be theologians, not entertainers.
- Modeling reverence and joy in corporate gatherings.

A faithful pastor will ask hard questions:

- Does this song exalt Christ?
- Does it align with Scripture?
- Does it edify the church or simply stir emotion?

Worship is not a neutral space; it shapes souls. And pastors must be vigilant stewards of that formation. Worship reform requires courage, but it also bears deep and lasting fruit.

The Congregation's Call: Worship with Discernment and Delight

Worship is not a spectator event. Every believer is a worshiper. Paul calls believers to “*present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship*” (Romans 12:1). Worship includes how we live, speak, and gather with the Body of Christ. As worshipers, we should:

- Engage with our minds (1 Corinthians 14:15).
- Examine lyrics in light of Scripture.
- Sing boldly and joyfully.
- Encourage biblical worship in our churches.

When congregations hunger for God’s truth in song, it encourages leaders to pursue greater faithfulness. Worship renewal is not just top-down, it’s communal.

Worship and the Presence of God

One of the most misunderstood aspects of modern worship is the idea of “ushering in God's presence.” But Scripture teaches that we don't generate God's presence through emotional songs—

we *respond to* His presence through faith in His Word. Exodus 33:14–16 reminds us that God's presence is what distinguishes His people. Hebrews 10:19–22 tells us we now enter God’s presence through the blood of Jesus, not through mood or music.

This gives us confidence and reverence. Worship becomes about responding to the finished work of

Christ, not conjuring up a spiritual experience. The glory of biblical worship is not in what we *feel*, but in the reality of *who God is* and *what He has done*.

“Worship becomes about responding to the finished work of Christ, not conjuring up a spiritual experience.”

Teaching the Next Generation

Many younger Christians have grown up with worship experiences shaped

more by platforms than by Scripture. If we want worship to be biblical for generations to come, we must intentionally disciple younger believers.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 calls parents and leaders to teach God’s commands diligently to children. Psalm 78:4–7 reminds us to declare the praises of the Lord to the next generation so they may set their hope in God. This means teaching students:

- Why the lyrics we sing matter.
- How worship connects to theology and daily life.
- That truth leads to deeper, more lasting joy than hype.

Youth and college ministries should model Word-centered worship. Pastors and parents should talk about music choices. Sunday services should show the beauty of reverent, joyful praise. If we fail to teach them, the culture will form their worship. But if we equip them, they will stand firm and sing faithfully.

Discernment Through Song: Examples to Consider

Here are two examples that show the importance of theological clarity:

- **Faithful example:** *"Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me"* – Christ-centered, gospel-rich, rooted in Scripture.
- **Cautionary example:** Songs that emphasize vague emotional language without clear gospel anchors (e.g., *"I feel Your fire"* repeated endlessly with no mention of God’s character).

Discernment is not about nitpicking. It’s about faithfully guarding the church’s confession through its singing.

Leading with Truth and Grace

In the effort to reform worship, we must be as gracious as we are truthful. Second Timothy 2:24–26 reminds us that the Lord’s servants must not be quarrelsome, but kind, patient, and able to teach. Some in our churches simply have

not been taught what biblical worship looks like.

Our tone matters. Reform isn't rage. Correction without compassion becomes cruelty. Shepherds must love the sheep enough to lead them gently but firmly back to the green pastures of God's Word. And saints must humbly receive and support that work.

Five Steps to Rescue Worship in the Local Church

In order to guide our churches in the right direction, let's consider these 5 steps listed below:

1. **Audit Your Songs** – Remove theologically weak or unsound songs.
2. **Teach on Worship** – Include worship theology in preaching and classes.
3. **Train Worship Leaders** – Help musicians become musical theologians.
4. **Recenter on the Gospel** – Let every gathering proclaim Christ crucified.
5. **Pray for Renewal** – Ask God to reform hearts, not just styles.

It's the responsibility of every Christian to be faithful to the Word of God, and that includes the words we sing during worship. In addition to the above steps, take time to reflect on these questions and give honest answers.

- Does our church's worship reflect the holiness and truth of God?
- Are we singing songs that exalt Christ and proclaim the gospel?
- How can I personally encourage worship that is full of grace and truth?

Conclusion: Worship Worth Rescuing

Worship is worth fighting for – not because of tradition or preference, but

because of God's glory. Let us, as pastors and people, recover worship that is Word-saturated, Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, and joyfully reverent. Let us sing with understanding, lead with courage, and rejoice in the God who is worthy of all praise.

Let the Church rise to worship in spirit and in truth. Let the next generation see that beauty and depth are not at odds with joy. And let every local church be a beacon of Christ-exalting, Scripture-filled praise. Let us rescue worship—for the glory of God and the good of His Church.

Recommended Reading on Worship

These resources are curated to help readers grow in theological depth, historical awareness, and spiritual discernment as they seek to worship the Lord in spirit and truth.

Core Titles

- *Worship Matters* – Bob Kauflin
- *God-Centered Worship* – Bryan Chapell

Deeper Study

- *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* – Jonathan Gibson & Mark Earngey
- *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* – David Peterson

Discernment & Cultural Engagement

- *True Worshipers* – Bob Kauflin
- *Strange Fire* – John MacArthur

General Introductions to Christian Worship

- *A Taste of Heaven* – R.C. Sproul
- *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship* – Michael Horton
- *Worship* – Hughes Oliphant Old
- *Gospel Worship* – Jeremiah Burroughs
- *Recalling the Hope of Glory* – Allen P. Ross

I hope that these books will encourage you and strength your walk with the Lord.

In Christ alone,

Dave Jenkins, Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

Reading the Bible Daily with Dave
August—October 2025
Reading Calendar

August 2025 – 1 Kings through 2 Kings

Week 1

August 1 – 1 Kings 6

August 2 – 1 Kings 7

August 3 – 1 Kings 8

Week 2

August 4 – 1 Kings 9

August 5 – 1 Kings 10

August 6 – 1 Kings 11

August 7 – 1 Kings 12

August 8 – 1 Kings 13

August 9 – 1 Kings 14

August 10 – 1 Kings 15

Week 3

August 11 – 1 Kings 16

August 12 – 1 Kings 17

August 13 – 1 Kings 18

August 14 – 1 Kings 19

August 15 – 1 Kings 20

August 16 – 1 Kings 21

August 17 – 1 Kings 22

Week 4

August 18 – 2 Kings 1

August 19 – 2 Kings 2

August 20 – 2 Kings 3

August 21 – 2 Kings 4

August 22 – 2 Kings 5

August 23 – 2 Kings 6

August 24 – 2 Kings 7

Week 5

August 25 – 2 Kings 8

August 26 – 2 Kings 9

August 27 – 2 Kings 10

August 28 – 2 Kings 11

August 29 – 2 Kings 12

August 30 – 2 Kings 13

August 31 – 2 Kings 14

September 2025 – 2 Kings (Continued) through 1 Chronicles

Week 1

September 1 – 2 Kings 15

September 2 – 2 Kings 16

September 3 – 2 Kings 17

September 4 – 2 Kings 18

September 5 – 2 Kings 19

September 6 – 2 Kings 20

September 7 – 2 Kings 21

Week 2

September 8 – 2 Kings 22

September 9 – 2 Kings 23

September 10 – 2 Kings 24

September 11 – 2 Kings 25

September 12 – 1 Chronicles 1

September 13 – 1 Chronicles 2

September 14 – 1 Chronicles 3

Week 3

September 15 – 1 Chronicles 4

September 16 – 1 Chronicles 5

September 17 – 1 Chronicles 6

September 18 – 1 Chronicles 7

September 19 – 1 Chronicles 8

September 20 – 1 Chronicles 9

September 21 – 1 Chronicles 10

Week 4

September 22 – 1 Chronicles 11

September 23 – 1 Chronicles 12

September 24 – 1 Chronicles 13

September 25 – 1 Chronicles 14

September 26 – 1 Chronicles 15

September 27 – 1 Chronicles 16

September 28 – 1 Chronicles 17

Week 5

September 29 – 1 Chronicles 18

September 30 – 1 Chronicles 19

October 2025 – 1 Chronicles (Continued) through 2 Chronicles

Week 1

October 1 – 1 Chronicles 20

October 2 – 1 Chronicles 21

October 3 – 1 Chronicles 22

October 4 – 1 Chronicles 23

October 5 – 1 Chronicles 24

Week 2

October 6 – 1 Chronicles 25

October 7 – 1 Chronicles 26

October 8 – 1 Chronicles 27

October 9 – 1 Chronicles 28

October 10 – 1 Chronicles 29

October 11 – 2 Chronicles 1

October 12 – 2 Chronicles 2

Week 3

October 13 – 2 Chronicles 3

October 14 – 2 Chronicles 4

October 15 – 2 Chronicles 5

October 16 – 2 Chronicles 6

October 17 – 2 Chronicles 7

October 18 – 2 Chronicles 8

October 19 – 2 Chronicles 9

Week 4

October 20 – 2 Chronicles 10

October 21 – 2 Chronicles 11

October 22 – 2 Chronicles 12

October 23 – 2 Chronicles 13

October 24 – 2 Chronicles 14

October 25 – 2 Chronicles 15

October 26 – 2 Chronicles 16

Week 5

October 27 – 2 Chronicles 17

October 28 – 2 Chronicles 18

October 29 – 2 Chronicles 19

October 30 – 2 Chronicles 20

October 31 – 2 Chronicles 21

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About the Authors:



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Dave Jenkins is happily married to his wife, Sarah. He serves as the Executive Director of Servants of Grace Ministries, the Executive Editor of *Theology for Life Magazine*, the host of several podcasts. He is the author of *The Word Explored: The Problem of Biblical Illiteracy and What to Do About It* (House to House, 2021), *The Word Matters: Defending Biblical Authority Against the Spirit of the Age* (G3 Press, 2022), and *Contentment: The Journey of a Lifetime* (Theology for Life, 2024).



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Theology for Life equips Christians to think biblically about all of life—through Scripture-rich, theologically faithful, and culturally-aware content.



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