

PRAISE FOR *WORSHIP FORMATION*

“*Worship Formation* is an invaluable resource for all those seeking greater depth and meaning from Sunday services. Steven Brooks draws on a wealth of experience leading and planning worship to offer churchgoers practical ideas on how to engage the various aspects of corporate worship for the purpose of spiritual formation. This book is a must-read for all believers. I guarantee it will make you want to go to church and help you glean more from your Sunday worship experience.”

—RORY NOLAND, Director, Heart of the Artist Ministries; Director of Worship Studies, Hope International University

“Steven Brooks is an experienced worship leader, university/seminary professor, and conference speaker. He knows his subject thoroughly, walks the talk, and practices what he preaches. This book reminds us that worship is a gift of God by which he speaks to us, we speak to him, and are transformed into his likeness.”

—WILLIAM LOCK, Professor of Church Music (retired), Biola University

“The Holy Spirit is moving powerfully in our day! Brooks’ wise insights and poignant guidance in *Worship Formation* are yet more clear and beautiful evidence of that. Church leadership looking to encourage faith formation more deeply will find Brooks an incisive read ‘for such a time as this.’”

—ANDREW BRAINE, President, Worship Resource Media

“In *Worship Formation*, Steven Brooks rightly posits that worship is ‘the most important priority of the church’ and that through active engagement with worship, and all of the activities involved with worship, we are spiritually formed to be more like Christ. That perspective is at the very center of why we exist and how we are to live—to glorify our Creator by becoming like him. This *theosis*, or becoming like God in Christ, summarizes the entirety of our *raison d’être*. Feasting on Christ the Living Word and partaking of his Body and Blood, we become Christ broken for the life of the entire created order. Nothing is of greater importance than that. Dr. Brooks’ love for God and his passion to see God’s people adopt a posture of continuing formation through worship is evident and clear.”

—JAMES R. HART, President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies

“For those who play a role in shepherding our worship gatherings, this book has much to offer. Brooks has clearly articulated the ways in which we are directly shaped as a result of the formative power of Christian worship. This is a clear and concise volume, effectively connecting the dots between Christian liturgical practices and the nature of spiritual formation.”

—STEPHEN MARTIN, Assistant Professor of Music, Worship Studies Program
Director, Azusa Pacific University

“Worship is both a taste of transcendence and proclaims our witness to the world. The Urdu term for worship is *Ibadat* (John 4:24)—a term denoting both that a worshiper is a slave (*abd*) to his Creator, and that worship is a sacrificial service to glorify God’s holiness. Whether the worship be congregational or personal, consisting of songs, Scripture reading, administering of sacraments, sermon, stillness, or supplications, all these help to offer our devotion to the Divine. Steven Brooks’ work calls readers to a pilgrimage of experiencing the power and presence of God in worship. . . . *Worship Formation* is an excellent resource for worshipers around the world.”

—ERIC SARWAR, President, Tehillim School of Church Music and Worship, Pakistan

“Worship is more than music, more than sermon, more than Sunday-morning evangelism. Worship spiritually forms us—not just content but experience as well. What are the elements, according to Scripture and the history of the church, that should be part of worship that forms us as disciples of Jesus? In *Worship Formation*, Steven Brooks lays those elements out for us in a thoughtful, passionate, and practical way. He does an excellent job of giving us tools to help us determine how they will form us. Through thorough research, personal insight, and practical application, *Worship Formation* will form you as you prepare worship that will form your people through an encounter with the living God.”

—FRED J. HEUMANN, Director/Founder, MusicWorks International; Adjunct
Professor of Worship Studies, Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary

“*Worship Formation* is a manual that both educates and equips. So if you’re looking for a book that wades past shallow gimmicks and superficial strategies and into the deep waters of faith and lasting change, I invite you to live in these pages for a while, and then live them out.”

—ZAC HICKS, Canon for Liturgy and Worship, Cathedral Church of the Advent,
Birmingham, AL; author of *The Worship Pastor*

WORSHIP FORMATION

WORSHIP FORMATION

*A Call to Embrace Christian Growth in
Each Element of the Worship Service*

STEVEN D. BROOKS

foreword by Zac Hicks

WIPF & STOCK • Eugene, Oregon

WORSHIP FORMATION

A Call to Embrace Christian Growth in Each Element of the Worship Service

Copyright © 2020 Steven D. Brooks. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical publications or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: Permissions, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Any Internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) printed in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply a full endorsement of the author, nor does the author vouch for the content of these sites for the life of this book.

Interior art: Tori Tateishi

Interior graphics: Monica Wood

Wipf & Stock

An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers

199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3

Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-5326-9634-3

HARDCOVER ISBN: 978-1-5326-9635-0

EBOOK ISBN: 978-1-5326-9636-7

Manufactured in the U.S.A. 02/10/20

*Dear Lord, may I see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly,
day by day.*

—Richard, Bishop of Chichester (b.1197–d.1253)



Be sure to check out Worship Quest Ministries.

Worship resources designed to encourage and
enhance worship renewal within the church.

www.worshipquestministries.com

Contents

<i>Foreword by Zac Hicks</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
1 Worship Formation	13
2 Music as an Act of Worship	24
3 Prayer as an Act of Worship	37
4 Scripture Reading as an Act of Worship	57
5 Communion as an Act of Worship	75
6 Sermon as an Act of Worship	86
7 Stillness as an Act of Worship	94
8 Giving as an Act of Worship	102
9 Baptism as an Act of Worship	109
10 Other Acts of Worship	118
11 Sacred Space and Worship Formation	128
12 Sacred Time and Worship Formation	139
Conclusion	151
<i>Bibliography</i>	155

Foreword

WE ALL WANT CHANGE. Whether it's a car, a device, a relationship, or "the world," for every last one of us there's always something broken that needs to be fixed, something buggy that needs to be optimized, something wrong that needs to be made right. The Bible emphasizes that, despite centuries of human attempts to join or replace his efforts, change comes by the work of God alone. The longer we live, the more this becomes plain. This is because our repeated experiences teach us, mostly through failure, about how change works. We learn that it's not enough just to tweak a few things here or there. It's not enough merely to change our external circumstances. It's not enough to even develop different habits. Failures at lasting change teach us the lesson that we at our very core need something to happen, and that something is ultimately out of our control. Humanity tries hard, though. Really hard. Change always seems like it's just on the horizon.

The Bible uses a rare but strategically placed word that hits the bullseye of true and lasting change: "transformation." Used only four times in the New Testament, the original Greek term is where we get our word "metamorphosis." Two times, the word is used of Jesus—two accounts of the same event, where our Lord is "transfigured" (read: "transformed") in such a way that his real glory is at least a bit more on display (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2). The other two times, the word is used of us. After eleven chapters of outlining the story of the gospel, Paul says that we are to be "transformed" by the renewing of our minds in that good news (Rom 12:2). And in another place, that same apostle says, undoubtedly referencing the transfiguration, that as we behold the glory of Jesus's face, we are being "transformed" more and more into that glorious image (2 Cor 3:18). I have a hunch that the Bible keeps some tight boundaries around this word "transform" to prevent our self-promoting imaginations from getting away from us about all the possible ways it could happen other than through Jesus.

FOREWORD

So here's the punch line. If change ultimately happens through the work of God molding us into the image of Jesus as we behold his glory—if that's how transformation, at its deepest level, really works—then the worship service is the epicenter of world-transformation. Yes, I want to be that grandiose. And I may have once felt the need to prove this to you, but I don't feel that need anymore. Because this book does the job. It buys into the biblical vision of change through worship, and then, thank God, it breaks it down into incredibly useful nuts and bolts. We've needed a book like this for a while now. We've needed a blueprint for change in our churches and in our world that is thorough enough to offer concrete helps and pliable enough to find application in all the different worship contexts where we find ourselves some two thousand years after Jesus's death and resurrection. Soaked in Scripture, and informed by Christians in ages past who wrestled through the meaning of worship with that same Bible, *Worship Formation* is a manual that both educates and equips. So if you're looking for a book that wades past shallow gimmicks and superficial strategies and into the deep waters of faith and lasting change, I invite you to live in these pages for a while, and then live them out.

ZAC HICKS
Canon for Liturgy and Worship,
Cathedral Church of the Advent (Birmingham, AL)
Author of *The Worship Pastor*

Acknowledgements

WHEN I WAS A first-year college student, my music professor Susanne Aultz encouraged me to pray about entering full-time vocational worship ministry after graduation. Her encouragement was a catalyst in my discovery of God's plan for me to be involved in full-time church ministry, which later expanded to the world of academia, to teaching on worship theology and spiritual formation in universities and seminaries, and to the development of my ministry training organization, Worship Quest Ministries.

There have been many people who have poured into my life over the years—teaching, mentoring, and offering valuable advice that has steered me toward the writing of this book. I am deeply indebted to each of them.

First and foremost, to my friend, mentor, editor, and proof-reader William Lock: there is no doubt this book is better for having your eyes look over the pages of the preliminary manuscript. I look forward to our bi-weekly meetings because I know I'm going to be encouraged and challenged in faith and life.

Everyone should have a friend in their life like Andrew Braine. Our countless conversations on worship and the church (even now as we live two thousand miles apart) have made me think deeper and, as a result, have helped shape me into the person I am today.

I am astounded by the scope of knowledge and experience in the area of worship and ministry of those on the Worship Quest Ministries board. More than that though, their hearts and passion for God's church blesses me beyond words. I am honored to serve alongside each of them.

My university and seminary students, both in the States and internationally, continue to offer me hope for the future of the church. They regularly participate in thoughtful discussions and ask deep questions on worship and ministry. I am equally thankful to the churches who have

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

journeyed with me toward a richer understanding of the spiritually formative aspects of worship.

I also want to thank Wipf and Stock Publishers for taking a chance on a first-time author—with my book *Worship Quest*—and then jumping in once again to help progress these thoughts on worship and spiritual formation from my head, to pages of paper, and into the hands of readers. I am grateful for this opportunity.

Most of all: Brooke, Jacob, and Judah. Thank you for your unconditional love, patience with the ever-open laptop and long nights, and the tremendous joy that comes with being part of our family . . . shine for Jesus!

Introduction

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

— 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

— ROMANS 12:2

WHEN ASKED ABOUT PLANS for discipleship in his church, a pastor once said, “Just get people in the church and they’ll catch on.” When I heard this I was reminded of the saying that going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than being in a garage makes you a car. Certainly, there is an osmosis type of learning that takes place over time without any effort on our part (*sine nobis*, “apart from us”), but simply attending church does not make a person a disciple of Christ. The kind of transforming experience the apostle Paul wrote about to the churches in Corinth and Rome is the result of the right kind of worship. Jesus spoke of this right worship as he sat next to a woman of mixed race beside a well in Samaria. There, Jesus shattered the preconceived what, where, when, and how of worship and revealed that “the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24).

Jesus tells us the Father is seeking worshipers. But not just any worshipers, those who worship in a right way—in spirit and truth. The first

INTRODUCTION

thing we should acknowledge is that as those who worship, we do not initiate worship as if we have a right to do so. Our worship is a response to God's revelation, and furthermore, his seeking out true worshipers. As he reveals himself to us, and we respond to all that he has done, our response is one filled with "astonished reverence, breathless adoration, awesome fascination, and lofty admiration."¹

Are people today filled with this kind of awe and reverence as they gather to worship Almighty God? Do we indeed offer God awful worship, not in the current meaning of the word that is filled with negative implications, but in the original meaning? In the fourteenth century, awful meant "inspiring awe" and was a short version of "full of awe." So I ask the question, do we offer God worship that is full of awe? A Barna report informs us that an alarming number of Christians claim they do not experience God in a worship service: "Eight out of every ten believers do not feel they enter into the presence of God, or experience a connection with him, during the worship service. Furthermore, half of all believers say they do not feel they have entered into the presence of God or experienced a genuine connection with him during the past year."² R. C. Sproul agrees, "People do not normally feel [overwhelmed] in church. There is no sense of awe, no sense of being in the presence of One who makes us tremble. People in awe never complain that church is boring."³ Our worship gatherings should be filled with awe because we worship an amazing God worthy of "awe-full" worship. Furthermore, as we gather for worship, our great and awe-inspiring God is present in our midst.

We need to remind ourselves, over and over, that the focus of Sunday worship must be upon the living Christ among us. In truth, if Christ were bodily present and we could see him with more than our soul's eyes, all our worship would become intentional. If Christ stood on our platforms, we would bend our knees without asking. If he stretched out his hands and we saw the wounds, our hearts would break; we would confess our sins and weep over our shortcomings. If we could hear his voice leading the hymns, we too would sing heartily; the words would take on meaning. The Bible reading would be lively; meaning would pierce to the marrow of our souls. If Christ walked our aisles, we would hasten to make amends with that brother or sister to whom we have not spoken.

1. Tozer, *Whatever Happened To Worship?*, 30.
2. Barna, *Revolution*, 31–32.
3. Sproul, *Holiness of God*, 167.

We would volunteer for service, the choir loft would be crowded. If we knew Christ would attend our church Sunday after Sunday, the front pews would fill fastest, believers would arrive early, offering plates would be laden with sacrificial but gladsome gifts, prayers would concentrate our attention. Yet, the startling truth is that Christ is present, through his Holy Spirit, in our churches; it is we who must develop eyes to see him.⁴

Preacher Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon “Magnificat,” delivered October 14, 1860, challenged worshippers toward life-changing acts of worship:

Many of God’s people live as if their God were dead. Their conduct would be quite consistent if the promises were not yea and amen; if God were a faithless God. If Christ were not a perfect Redeemer; if the word of God might after all turn out to be untrue; if he had not power to keep his people, and if he had not love enough with which to hold them even to the end, then might they give way to mourning and to despair; then might they cover their heads with ashes, and wrap their loins about with sackcloth. But while God is Jehovah, just and true; while his promises stand as fast as the eternal mountains; while the heart of Jesus is true to his spouse; while the arm of God is unpalsied, and his eye undimmed; while his covenant and his oath are unbroken and unchanged; It is not comely, it is not seemly for the upright to go mourning all their days. Ye children of God, refrain yourselves from weeping, and make a joyful noise unto the Rock of your salvation; let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.⁵

Our worship must be offered in awe of who God is which will ultimately result in changing us on the inside and out. And yet, as I write these words, influential Christian leaders have recently announced the renunciation of their faith and have walked away from the church. These examples of apostasy illustrate the importance of worship services that pronounce the truth of the gospel. The apostle Paul informs us that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17). It’s difficult to retrieve your old corpse after you lose your life by dying and rising again in Christ Jesus. It seems as though these people may have never truly died. The church must do better in offering

4. Mains, *Sing Joyfully!*, 5

5. Spurgeon, “Magnificat,” 1860.

INTRODUCTION

worship that leads to the transformation of the inner being because to do otherwise is dangerous for people's souls.

If we are to offer God worship that transforms our inner beings, we must have an accurate view of who God is. Our view of God is important not only to who we are but how we worship. Seeing God for who he is pulls back the veil as we gaze upon the majesty and glory of a God who is beyond our comprehension—for a God who is small enough to understand is not big enough to worship. And so, we stand, or bow with our face to the ground, in awe. And yet, there is something else that occurs when we see God for who he is. In that moment, it is entirely natural that we see ourselves for who we are—sinners before a holy God.

Translators of the English Bible have regularly used only the single word “worship” to translate what is actually multiple words in both the original Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament manuscripts. When the variety of words used in the original Hebrew and Greek is realized, a greater depth of understanding of the word “worship” is gained. For instance, there are some that see the worshiper as an inferior being coming before a superior one. The Hebrew words are *bo* (come), *nagash* (approach), and *qarab* (draw near). Others see the worshiper as one in submission. The Hebrew words are *yare* (fear), *hishtahawa* (bow down), and *sagad* (do homage). And the Greek words are *proskuneo* (bow down) and *sebomai* (honor by a formal act). Yet others describe the worshiper as a servant, serving out of obedience. The Hebrew words are *abad* (service), *saret* (fulfill responsibility to an important personage), and *daras* (seek the will of a superior). And the Greek words are *latreia* (service) and *leitourgia* (public service). In all, these words create a vivid imagery of the way we see ourselves in relation to how we see God. Timothy Ralston states,

True worship begins with a proper self-evaluation before God, emerges in complete submission to God, and fulfills only the express actions of God. The assumption and conclusion . . . is inescapable: God only accepts acts of worship from those whom he calls his own and who are faithful to his covenant, the Word he has given them.⁶

To worship rightly then we must have a proper view of God when we come before him in worship. Scripture reveals God as he should be seen. As a result, our only proper response is, like followers of old, to respond to God by offering him our sacrifice of worship.

6. Ralston, “Scripture in Worship,” 197–98.