

How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land? The Influence of Daily Corporate Liturgical Praying of the Psalms in a Charismatic Mission's (YWAM) Community

Joshua Crockford

Email: joshua.crockford@uofn.edu

Abstract

This two-part article summarises the author's capstone research in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation & Discipleship. The first part explores how the Church, from Jesus and the New Testament communities through successful missions movements, have used corporate praying of the Psalms for communal Christian formation unto mission. The historical survey intentionally considers worship's formative effect in discipling the next generation of missionaries. The second part of this study involves a six-week formative curriculum process conducted at Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Seamill in Scotland, where participants engaged in corporate praying of the Psalms. Pre and post interviews found that the practice of praying the Psalms had a positive impact on participants, facilitating greater discernment of and desire for God's activity in the community, fostering awareness of God's grace, forming individuals, and promoting clarity and focus in corporate mission. Potential implications for Christian formation and corporate discipleship through worship are considered.

Keywords: YWAM, Christian formation, prayer, Psalms, charismatic, missions, discipleship communities, presence-centred, missionary communities, corporate formation, formative worship

Review of Literature

Definition of Christian Formation

The definition undergirding this project is drawn from Jeffery Greenman, who states, "Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God's grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world" (2010, p. 24). The three elements (response to God's initiation of grace, in community, and mission) present in this definition will be subsequently expanded upon as they relate to this project.

Praying the Psalms

N.T. Wright, in explaining why the Psalms are essential, states, "The Psalms... have been the daily lifeblood of Christians... from earliest times. Yet in many Christian circles today, the Psalms are simply not used" (2013, p. 1). Dallas Willard often expressed that we, in the Western Church, are good at bringing people to the point of church membership—what he called "converts"—but are not as great at making disciples who are animated with the life from above, and who are committed to being apprenticed to Jesus, learning to do what he did (2010, p. 60). Praying the Psalms (henceforth PTP) has been a primary formative tool throughout the many eras of the Church, not primarily as a means of acquiring information, but as a means of transformation into the likeness of Jesus.

PTP in corporate worship and prayer has benefited the formation of the people of God and kept them steadfastly focused on seeking the Kingdom for millennia. We neglect PTP to our own detriment as a people of God on mission. As Wright points out,

The Psalms represent the Bible's own spiritual root system for the great tree we call Christianity. You don't have to be a horticultural genius to know what will happen to the fruit on the tree if the roots are not in good condition. (2013, p. 5)

PTP connects us with ancient practice, ancient songs and an ancient story, not as simple concepts, but rather in relational interaction with God. I would suggest here, along with Wright, that PTP tends to the "root system of the great tree," healing some of the distortions Webber identifies as common in our spirituality today (Webber, 2006), bringing us into conversation with the "Cloud of Witnesses" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2010, Hebrews 12:1) who have faithfully trodden the path before us. We may enjoy reading about previous revivals, mission movements, and great figures we admire, but as Willard quips, we often stop short of doing what they did (1990, pp. 4-7). Looking at the lives of those who have gone before us is helpful, but we can't stop there, failing to adjust our lives appropriately.

PTP has the potential to bring us out of ourselves and connect us with the global Body of Christ. Especially if we do so at fixed hours. It helps reframe our perspective, knitting us together as a Body in unity, connecting us with those alive today, and helping us look up, finding ourselves in the metanarrative of God and among that "Cloud of Witnesses" who have run the race before us. McKnight points out, "When Christians pray at fixed times with set prayers, they join millions of Christians scattered across the globe who routinely pause... to pray what other Christians are praying" (2013, p. 11) and that "...spending time with the psalms, the Lord's Prayer, and the prayer books of the church can improve the prayer life of Christians and the church. Time spent with the prayers of others can teach us to pray" (2013, p. 16).

Why the Psalms? Firstly, as priests to creation, we are created as worshipers to minister to God, and to intercede on behalf of creation. Mankind failed in this vocation, but Jesus came to bring restoration to our ministry. Our role as Christians, that is, humans redeemed by Christ to fulfil the mandate failed by the first Adam by being grafted into the Second Adam, Jesus, is to be "Royal Priests" (Beale, 2018; 1 Peter 2:9, *English Standard Version Bible*, 2010). Having given us our mission on earth, Jesus, the great intercessor, has gone before us.

We are clothed with Christ if we are baptised in His death. The Spirit raises us up with him and brings us to the Father. In Christ, we have a daily priestly responsibility in the heavenlies to serve Him in the nations. If we don't walk in this royal priesthood, then our ministry on earth is greatly hindered. (Steyn, 2023, p. 246)

For us as believers who are in dire need at every turn of learning to pray, and especially for us in YWAM who are called to multiply missionaries, what better way to deepen prayer than the use of the Spirit-breathed hymnbook at the heart of the Bible given to us by God (Wright, 2013, p. 1)? St. Athanasius says the Psalms are "...a book that includes the whole life of man, all conditions of the mind and all movements of thought" (as cited in Webber, 1994, p. 164). Keller, drawing on St. Athanasius, tells us that PTP gives us the "grammar" of prayer, and teaches us to pray according to God's will (2016, p. 255). Hall says further,

A principle reason that the ancient church prayed the psalms again and again—early monastic communities would pray all 150 psalms in one day—was a firm belief that the repetition of the psalms nurtured the dispositions that foster prayer. Through repetition, the dispositions and words of the psalmist, the fathers believe, become those of the one who continually prays the psalms. Early monastic communities offered this model to the church as a whole. (Hall, 2010b, pp. 89-90)

But not only does PTP prepare us for ministry, but it also transforms the Christian from the inside out. “Sing these songs (the Psalms), and they will renew you from head to toe, from heart to mind. Pray these poems, and they will sustain you on the long, hard but exhilarating road of Christian discipleship” (Wright, 2013, p. 35). Or, drawing from more ancient prose, our Orthodox brothers would tell us,

When through continuous prayer the words of the Psalms are brought down into the heart, then the heart like good soil begins to produce by itself various flowers: roses, the vision of incorporeal realities; lilies, the luminosity of corporeal realities; and violets, the many judgments of God, hard to understand.” (Ware et al., 1995, p. 57)

A Theological Anthropology of Liturgy

There has been an emphasis on the mind in our anthropological understanding of the self and, thus, our discipleship processes, especially in Western Protestantism (Webber, 2006, pp. 16-20). This emphasis is not isolated to the Church but is also common in our Western education models. “We are well-educated people who have been schooled in a way of knowing that treats the world as an object to be dissected and manipulated” (Palmer, 1993, p. 2). Smith argues that our primary manner of seeing ourselves today in the Western world is as “thinking things” or “brains on a stick” (2016, p. 3). Smith attributes this to Rene Descartes, who summarised his own anthropological understanding as “I think; therefore I am” (1641, as quoted in Smith, 2009, p. 41). Smith challenges this, arguing that this is not a biblical Christian picture of the human being. In response to the above, Smith posits that we are worshippers, and lovers (2009, pp. 37, 39, 46-63).

We have often reduced discipleship and spiritual growth to learning facts or agreeing with doctrinal propositions. Good doctrinal propositions are needed to ground us in our spiritual journey. But we aren’t primarily “thinking things,” instead, we are lovers. It is our hearts that matter, and where our hearts go, we follow. What we do with our bodies repetitively affects our hearts (Smith, 2009, p. 80). Smith views the formative importance of the classical spiritual disciplines, especially corporate worship, as repetitive practices that orientate our hearts toward the kingdom of God. We, as Christians in the world, are in a battle, the outcome of which flows from our hearts, loves and longings.

Historical Account of the Psalms and Mission

Below is a brief historical survey on the use of the Psalms in various missional communities throughout the last two millennia. It is not an exhaustive list but illustrates the prominence of the discipline among communities worth emulating in their devotion to God and fruitfulness in their missional mandate.

Jesus

The Psalms were the prayer book of Jesus and his disciples (Wright, 2013, p. 23; Meshreky, 2018). Jesus, being deeply familiar with them, cited them often, including at critical moments, for

example, his crucifixion (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2010, Matthew 27:46). Not only that, but the Psalms point to Jesus (Wright, 2013, p. 34), find their fulfilment in Jesus (Reardon, 2000) and as a complete set are the wedding hymn of the Church's union with God (Merton, 1956, p. 9).

The Early Church

Jewish and Gentile communities alike were commanded to "... be filled with the Spirit, addressing each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2010, Ephesians 5:18-19; also Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:26). After the death of Paul, the early Church historian Eusebius tells us that from the early years, "the command to sing psalms in the name of the Lord was obeyed by everyone in every place: for the command to sing is in force in all the Churches which exist among the nations" (as cited in Webber, 1994, p.164). Later, at the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), one of the Canons of the gathering was to ask the believers to PTP every day (Meshreky, 2018). The ancient Church understood that Paul's precept to pray without ceasing could be accomplished by set hours of the Lord's prayer, PTP, spontaneous prayer and hymn (Ramsey, 1985, p. 165).

A Millennium of Monastic Missions

For over a thousand years, monasticism was the driving force of Christian missions (Staton, 2022b). Being "built upon the foundation of Scripture" (Noll, 2012, p. 90), fixed hours of PTP had been at the heart of the monk's life from the start (Hall, 2010b, pp. 89-90; Noll, 2012, p. 97; Harmless, 2004, pp. 179-180, 244-245, 280; Clement, 2015, pp. 200-201, 349). The first monk, Antony of Egypt, spent many years praying the Psalms in the seclusion of the desert. Upon his brief return to Alexandria, many demons were cast out, the mentally ill were healed, and the number of people who would normally turn to Jesus in a year did so in one day (Athanasius, 2014, p. 83). And, it wasn't even meant to be a "missions trip." In Egypt, the first monasteries to exist used communal PTP as the fundamental curriculum for formation, with some more advanced groups praying up to 150 Psalms a day (Steyn, 2023, pp. 258-259). It is to be noted here that these Egyptian communities, like contemporary Asian and Celtic, or later European expressions, interacted evangelistically with surrounding communities (Fountain, 2002; Steve Cochrane, personal communication, 10 June 2022). Missional movements, primarily driven by Psalm-praying monks, went to the Far East of modern India, Iran and China beginning more than a millennia before the modern Protestant missions movement began (Steve Cochrane, personal communication, 10 June 2022). The Celtic Monastic missions movement, while remembered for its incredible simplicity, spiritual power and missional success from Ireland, to Scotland, and England before re-evangelising Dark-age Europe, is also remembered for its night and day worship using the Psalms (Hunter, 2010, p. 38; Cahill, 2010, p. 142; Cullity, n.d). In the Benedictine Rule, and the numerous Catholic monastic expressions that have followed it, the hours of worship consist mostly of PTP (Saint Benedict, 1888; Shelley, 2013, p. 131). History paints a picture that, for 1300 years, regular communal PTP has been present where the Gospel was being effectively spread.

Early Protestantism

Luther, who was spiritually formed by significant use of the Psalter as an Augustinian monk, names the Psalms as the greatest influence on his faith throughout his life (Waltke, 2010, p. 61), going on to write a book on his practice of praying Scripture (Luther, 2016). Calvin, likewise, saw himself as "at all times wholly identified with them" (Waltke, 2010, p. 64). The widespread use of Cranmer's Common Book of Prayer, which is pervaded by PTP, crafted the

language of the English-speaking world and has embedded a Christian worldview in generations of English speakers since (Hitchens, 2010, p. 107).

Christian Educational Reform of Society

The first Christian higher education institutions were developed in Christian Asia. In what is now Turkey, a university in Nisbis opened in 489 A.D. after the closing of an earlier one in Edessa (Cochrane, 2016). At these early universities, regardless of the student's field of study, the core of the curriculum was PTP (Steve Cochrane, personal communication, 10 June 2022). The same is true of later Medieval universities across Europe, where monastics, especially Benedictines, played a role in the scholastic curriculum being interwoven with a curriculum of prayer (Baldwin, 1997, p. 35). There is a long-standing historical tradition that the University of Oxford in England was founded focusing on PTP as part of its curriculum. From the 13th century, scholars and students gathered at Oxford to study and engage in communal prayer centred around the Psalms. Today you can still see the faculties built around chapels.

Early Revival Movements

Often hailed as the father of modern missions, Zinzendorf, and his Moravian community were formed around 24/7 prayer and worship (Benge & Benge, 2006; Fountain, 2007). Wesley, who changed England, was deeply impacted as he recalled the Moravian's use of PTP during a storm that nearly took all their lives (Shelley, 2013, p. 346). The use of the Psalter for prayer was a part of common family spiritual discipline during the revivals of 1739 under George Whitfield (Shelley, 2013, p. 362).

Summary

PTP is a practice embraced by generations of missional Christians, valued with utmost importance. Generation after generation has regarded it as worth passing on to the next, etched into the fabric of "Rules of life" or educational curriculums. Let us not overlook the profound impact of fervent missionaries throughout history who ardently believed in the transformative power of engaging with God through the Psalms, and who likewise deemed it an invaluable practice to hand down to those entrusted to their care by God.

Methodology of Field Research

This research was conducted within a charismatic missions community named Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Seamill. YWAM Seamill defines its purpose as a "...presence-centred missional community of radical world changers strategically impacting Scotland and the nations and equipping and releasing others to do the same" (YWAM Seamill, 2022). I summarised into three points the areas we would measure growth into: Presence-centredness, community, and mission. These three areas used as metrics for measuring formative growth are taken from the convergence points between YWAM Seamill's mission statement (YWAM Seamill, 2022) and Greenman's definition of formation; both incorporate the three points as central.

In the empirical research part of this MA course of study, the main question considered was the following:

How might interacting with the historic practice of praying the Psalms at fixed hours daily in community support YWAM Seamill, specifically in awareness of and response to God's grace forming us, both individually and corporately, and in clarity of calling and focus in mission, both individually and corporately?

This project was implemented during a six-week space between two formal course offerings at Seamill. The fifteen participants were YWAM Seamill staff from a broad range of nationalities, ages, and ministry focuses. The nations represented were Australia, England, Germany, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, and the USA. The gender distribution was roughly even between males and females. Ages ranged from 22 to mid-70s. Roughly half had been with YWAM five years or less, and half for more than five years. All 15 participants were interviewed prior to their participation in the six-week project focusing on daily PTP, and then interviewed again afterward.

Pre- and post-assessment and data collection consisted of recorded semi-structured interviews. All interviews were recorded using a transcribing application. After conducting the six-week Formational Curriculum Project (FCP) described below and the final interviews, the data was evaluated, looking for “expected” versus “surprising” comments in the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 195), especially noting changes in response between pre- and post-project interviews.

Project Design

The intervention used for this portion of the Formational Curriculum Project (FCP) was to cease work three times a day to engage in PTP together, in the morning, at noon, and at the end of the work day. During this project YWAM Seamill’s corporate morning prayer was normally ninety minutes long, with Wednesday and Friday being thirty minutes before transitioning into community meeting (on Wednesday) or focused intercession (on Friday). Seamill already had tri-weekly rhythms of worship, community meeting, and intercession. Monday morning worship continued and I often tried to incorporate some more charismatic elements of worship. During Wednesday morning we would meet and PTP for thirty minutes before beginning the Seamill community meeting. Wednesday’s liturgy consisted of Psalm 119 as the chosen Psalm. On Fridays, we would PTP and, after thirty minutes, transition into intercession as we would normally practice it. The Psalms thematically were based around the rule and reign of God, and we typically began in Psalm 2. Midday sessions began before lunch at 12:45 pm and typically took a little under fifteen minutes. Afternoon sessions became the transition into the end of the workday at 16:45 pm and also took a little under fifteen minutes. In summary, in the morning, the PTP time replaced some of the time normally allotted for base worship, community meeting, or intercessory prayer (this was true on Mon, Wed, and Fri), while Tuesday & Thursday PTP and prayer at noon and at the end of the work day were an entirely new introduction to the schedule.

To design the FCP I drew on the earliest known non-canonical text instructing Church life, the Didache. The Didache, written in the first century, instructs believers, in one of the most vibrant eras of missional engagement in history, to pray three times a day (2016, p. 8). This draws on already developed Jewish practices, the context from which early Apostolic Christianity sprouted (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2010, Acts; Staton, 2022a). Second, as we look at worship practices leading to community formation unto missional engagement, I looked at the history of the monastics as the drivers of missions from around the 3rd century to the 16th century. Delving into the worship practices that have been normative in those communities, a noted consistency was “hours of prayer,” that is, prayer at fixed hours each day (Saint Benedict, 1888; Hall, 2010b, pp. 89-90, 173-174; McKnight, 2013). All of life, and thus all missions, flows from our hearts. For those of us who feel called to YWAM, and would give our lives to the preaching of the Gospel, I believe Augustine would tell us that, like good soldiers, we need to curate our love by discipline

(as cited in Hall, 2017, pp. 218-221). The communal discipline that appears most commonly in history in these monastic settings, and thus is most important to the life of the missionary, is PTP (Hall, 2010b, 89-90). I took PTP and combined it with forms the community was familiar with. Sometimes this would include the use of contemporary charismatic music, but this was infrequent. With this, I encouraged participants to come ready to engage, that the worship times would not be carried for them by someone else, but rather they would be, in a sense, leading worship. As a result, this project would be dependent on their contribution. This way PTP was expected to facilitate the expected outcomes by inviting the community into a space where they would need to adjust their attention three times a day and come and worship, individually and corporately, growing into a greater discernment of the presence and activity of God among the community, which I believed would lead to discernment and increased activation in mission.

Findings and Evaluation

Revisiting the Research Questions

How Might Interaction with the Historical Practice of Praying the Psalms at Fixed Hours Daily in Community Support YWAM Seamill?

Six weeks of PTP at fixed hours, in collaboration with other initiatives within the community, was found to have a positive, yet subtle, effect, in facilitating greater discernment of God's activity in the community, that is, presence-centeredness, and facilitating focus and clarity of mission. Ultimately, six weeks was a short period of time to assess the long-term value when compared with other practices the community could otherwise take part in. However, if YWAM Seamill chose to continue some form of PTP, I believe it would be beneficial to the life of the community and aid in facilitating the outcomes articulated in Seamill's mission statement.

Awareness of and Response to God's Grace Forming Seamill, Individually

I looked here at the individual's discernment of the presence of God leading them and forming them. Two-thirds of the participants reported increased discernment of the Holy Spirit's action in their individual journeys between the start and the end of six weeks of PTP. This was further indicated by life transitions that were initiated during the project among individuals in the community.

There was a reported increase in the ability to find God and discern his presence in the mundane. Half of the participants reported that PTP helped give language to what the Holy Spirit was doing in their lives.

The corporate rhythm of PTP helped participants engage in disciplines they wouldn't otherwise have engaged in alone. A few participants expressed a desire to grow in prayer and presence-centeredness personally. When the time was set aside for corporate prayer, it happened.

Lastly, there was a report from participants that considered God's nature and character more deeply. "I think the reading of the Psalms... highlighted God's character and his faithfulness and his righteousness and justice. For example, reading Psalm 119 over and over again" (Participant 1, Personal Communication, 15 May 2023). Related to this was a reflectiveness and an openness to God being greater than previously realised, and to us not having him mastered, "I've started to wonder 'do I even know God?'... I want to, but I have a sense he isn't who I thought he was. I say 'he is my friend', but is he?" (Participant 13, Personal Communication, 28 June 2023).

Awareness of and Response to God's Grace Forming Seamill, Corporately

The corporate discernment of how God was forming the community, and the conversation around how Seamill might respond became more prominent during the project. An admitted limitation of my data at this stage is that I interviewed individuals on their perspectives. Thus, my data is limited to individual perspectives on corporate presence-centeredness.

One-third of the participants reported that while being “presence-centred“ is a value in the Seamill mission statement, they did not believe that it is a good description of where the community was at the beginning of the project. This opinion did not shift as a result of the six-week project. Although there wasn't a majority-reported overt discernible shift in the presence-centredness in the community, numerous participants suggested an increased concern about this state of affairs. While the outcomes in this category of this question weren't exactly what I was hoping for, it wasn't all to no avail, as I would suggest that such discernment and desire for Jesus' presence is an evidence of God's activity amongst us.

At the beginning of the project, there was a voiced sense we needed to become more presence-centred. By the end, there were two generalised groups of people. The first were those who, at least based on the observable appearances, continued to come ready to worship, and expectant for Jesus' presence to be manifest. This doesn't mean they always “wanted” to be there, as if any of us always wants to engage in a discipline, but they exhibited a continued, consistent demeanour of engagement. This group began to express frustration and desire for the community as a whole to engage and long more deeply. “I'm confused why people struggle to worship... I think reading of the Psalms can really bring a shift.” (Participant 1, Personal Communication, 17 May 2023).

Clarity of Calling and Focus in Mission, Corporately

During the pre-assessment interviews, the participants felt there wasn't a great sense of clarity of calling or focus on a unified mission corporately. The majority of the participants expressed a desire for this to change. By the end of the project, there was a strong sense that the community was now moving in a direction, and that there was an increase of hope and a discernible shift in focus and clarity of mission.

Clarity of Calling and Focus in Mission, Individually

The individual recognition of personal mission within the corporate calling was also quite vague in pre-assessment interviews. At the start of the project, the participants expressed reasons they had come to the community or the various things that made them passionate about being a missionary. However, the sense of those individual elements integrating with the corporate purpose was lacking. By the end of the project, two primary changes had occurred. First, individuals grew in awareness of the above-mentioned lack of integration of individual vision with the corporate vision. Second, individuals acknowledged a recognition that prayer and worship must be more central to the life of the community, not in words, but in practice.

Evaluation of the Formation Curriculum Process

Although neither outcome was realised to the extent, or in the manner, I had hoped, the desire was to see Jesus and the desire for his abiding presence become the beating heart of the community, and for a strong sense of mission to flow out of that. Two-thirds of the participants came out of the six weeks with a greater desire for Jesus' presence and leading. The community as a whole is more focused and has a clearer vision for its mission.

This project had the limitation of being only six weeks long. Formation is a long-term movement, and getting definitive data for a short project and distilling it from all the other factors that make up life, was a challenge. If this FCP continued on in the Seamill community, I am unsure whether my particular method of PTP would create a large shift in the medium-term. As Hall says, “Formation is the slowest of all human movements” (2007). Further, as my reading on the history goes, although PTP was common in missional discipleship communities, not everyone displayed consistent transformation. Some monks are remembered less than warmly, despite a lifetime of PTP. A practice doesn’t save, but some practices are better than others for engaging with and being changed by God. Many of those practices have stood the test of time.

Furthermore, today we have so many inspirational and exciting spiritual methods to choose from and try. This, alongside my being part of an instant gratification generation. For the casual participant in this project, it leaves PTP wanting. For myself, this “form” of PTP took a while before I began to “get it.” I am not saying I’ve “got it” now, but the “flowers” growing in the depths of a person from PTP (Ware et al., 1995, p. 57) take time to develop. Time that we aren’t normally willing to wait for today.

Three aspects of the FCP contributed most to the growth of the participants. First, the allocated time. With an average of 90 minutes increase per day in the prayer room, coming together for one purpose, the reallocation of the schedule shifted the focus. This made space for the community to engage with God to a greater degree, to listen, meditate, and to grow in discernment of him. We worship a relational God, and this simple reallocation of the resource of time can be powerful in any relationship. Second, engaging the presence of God specifically through Scripture. Ministering to God with his words as worship, and in so doing, feeding on him (Hall, 2010a, p. 16). Lastly, which may have been the most dramatic for the specific cultural context, is that I expressed that I’m not “...entertaining you, and it will be uncomfortable.” This intentional avoidance of external stimulation sought to weed out the comfort and distraction we take in good things that aren’t God but that we so often use to mask his absence. Or in the words of a friend of mine critiquing our overstimulated worship, “Just because you have a full well, don’t assume you have a deep well” (Scott Graham, Personal Communication, 2019).

From this project, my assessment of PTP long-term at fixed hours in charismatic missions communities, in general, is that the somewhat monastic form of PTP I used seems to operate off different presuppositions than most charismatic communities' typical worship. After this project, I see PTP as deeply valuable, and potentially able to enter into conversation with a deficiency within charismatic worship. But due to the differing pre-supposition, it would have to be communicated well, and would likely need to have a decent measure of charismatic expression that people are more familiar with and enjoy for the sake of corporate buy-in.

Conclusion

The data analysis indicated that the practice of PTP had a positive impact on participants, facilitating greater discernment of and desire for God's activity in the community, forming individuals, and promoting clarity and focus on the corporate mission. The participants recognised that the Psalms provided language for expressing emotions and experiences, resulting in increased individual discernment of the Holy Spirit's action in their lives. The corporate rhythm of PTP helped participants engage with God and his formative action in their lives through disciplines of worship, prayer and scripture engagement they wouldn't have engaged without the corporate rhythm. While there wasn't a majority overt shift in corporate presence-centredness reported, there

was a growing dissatisfaction with individuals' current walk with Jesus alongside an increased desire for Jesus' manifest presence. The project also facilitated a discernible shift in focus and clarity of mission for the community, found in an increased asking of questions like: where is Jesus leading us, and how are we being obedient? This was seen as bringing about greater cohesion and confidence in pursuing their corporate missional vision. Individually, participants recognised the need to integrate their personal vision with the corporate purpose, increasing awareness of the importance of their individual callings for the community. Overall, the project highlighted the interconnectedness of corporate praying the scriptures, presence-centredness, and mission in the life of the community.

Limitations and Implications

The limitations in making claims from the findings and observations of this research project are, firstly, the time frame. Six weeks is too short to adequately discern the formative effect of a practice like PTP on a community. Second, YWAM Seamill had previously been exposed to forms of PTP, so this project wasn't as unexplored as it might be for many comparable communities. Because elders in the community had had a level of exposure to PTP in the past, there was already a level of trust that might be absent for such a drastically different form of worship. Third, other initiatives ran within the community with some parallel aims during the project timeframe. As life is not a Petri dish, it is impossible to fully discern the effect of PTP in isolation from these other quality initiatives.

The implications of this project for practitioners in the field of Christian formation, particularly those working in contexts similar to that of this research, is that corporate worship is formational, and the worship practices surrounding corporate formation among Christian communities have been deeply considered and practised for two millennia. PTP specifically is an extensively and consistently used practice among missional communities that has borne fruit in all ages of the Church. Practitioners should consider what merit their current practices hold, and consider that there are existing, yet often forgotten, practices that have been used to great missional effect and have been deeply valued by generations before us.

A potential implication of this project for researchers in the field of Christian formation is that Charismatics and Evangelicals in the West today hold different presuppositions on the purpose and utility of worship than Christians of earlier ages have held. This has been extensively considered by academics like Robert Webber. However, the raw crossover in this project between the modern Christian and a more ancient style of worship is shocking for many coming from Charismatic and Evangelical backgrounds. I pre-suppose that PTP has a deeply needed place in today's Christianity, as it has had in every age so far. Additional research should be done on the underlying suppositions that inhibit our engagement with practices vital to Christians throughout the ages. In other words, how can PTP be made accessible to today's Western Christianity without being watered down and losing the vibrancy and purpose that it held in previous generations?

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