SYNOPSIS

Pastoral Scholar Series: Part 2 Dr. David Moore
This series features interviews and discussions with scholars and academics who reflect on worship and leadership, giving us insights from their expertise and background.

KimGentes.com's 15 minute micro-courses

Dr. David Moore. The Rev. Dr. David N. Moore, Jr. is an ecumenical teacher and author. David serves as the lead pastor for both New Covenant Worship Center in Santa Barbara, CA and Church for the Nations in Oxnard, CA. He earned his Master's degree from St. Stephen's University in New Brunswick, Canada, and currently holds an appointment to adjunct faculty there, teaching Ancient Mediterranean History. David also holds a Theology doctorate from the University of South Africa. Find Dr. Moore on Twitter (@dmooresb) or email (dmooresb@gmail.com).



Micro-course: "Backs Against the Wall Worship"

with Dr. David Moore

I first met Dr. David Moore as a student in one of his lectures at St. Stephen's University. I believe his passion and deep understanding of the communities of dissenting voices in ancient Christian history is an important component for a more complete comprehension of the message of Jesus. I learned from David that the gospel is as much about the marginalized views and lives of the dissenters as it is about the prevailing doctrine and histories of the teachers whose ideas prevailed as church orthodoxy.



-Kim Gentes

1 People Express Common Heartfelt Experience

In the historical church, people expressed (in a heartfelt way) something of their experience, particularly if it is a common experience. As a metaphor, this is illustrated interestingly in the "worship scene" of the popular movie, "Avatar". In that scene, we see a species/culture in jeopardy of attack and whose very existence is at stake. In this context, the avatars are consumed in worship together to the point that there is no longer anyone in charge. The entire community is simply in the moment together without any kind of "worship" leader. They are consumed by the threat in the moment. This state of being consumed (and united) by the threat of the moment is what Howard Thurman called "the people with their backs against the wall."

It's the people who have their backs against the wall who engage one another in worship. And this is actually what we are after in gathered worship. We are not after personal experiences isolated from everybody else who are gathered. The purpose and dynamic of people coming together in worship involves pouring out their lives together and, in doing so, living a common story.

This goes back to the beginning of the church when Jesus spoke to people who had a shared experience of being on the margins. At this time, the Jewish people hung on the hope of their common story found in the literature and history of their nation. Though they were under the power of the Roman empire, Jesus brought them hope and the people resonated with his message.

2 Jesus Followers Right After The Resurrection

The initial visible response of the disciples immediately after the resurrection appears to be disbelief, even discouragement. However, once we see the visitation of the Holy Spirit and a time of living in persisted community, then comes the beginnings of joy. The disciples, at this point, are Galileans living in Jerusalem under Jesus command to do so. Their lives and support systems are back in Galilea. Their backs are against the wall. They are together with no other practical support. Jesus told them to wait together. That is what worship is. And this is what worship leaders must do- you are dealing with people whose backs are against the wall and have nowhere else to go with the goal of bringing them into the presence of God. And you are trying to do it without being in the way, until there is really no leader.

In the days and years that follow, the message of the gospel speaks to people who have nowhere to turn. According to church historian Ramsey McMullen, most of the people in the earliest church were not involved in the house churches, but instead met in graveyards and outside the city- where their backs were literally against the wall of the city. These catacombs and graveyards of the martyrs became places of worship.

3 Worship, Liturgy & Story

We can't be effective importing a liturgy that doesn't connect with people's story.

Corporate worship doesn't fulfill its purpose if there is no cognizance of the pain and the stories in our midst. The practical outworking of this is that in order to get connected with people's story, a worship leader must be a pastor. A worship leader has to get his hand off the guitar and get out there and get it on people's lives.