



Worship in an Age of Anxiety *How Churches Can Create Space for Healing*

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“J. Michael Jordan is a beautiful soul, and this book is a beautiful book. Worship in an Age of Anxiety—about the intersection of worship, church, and our internal lives—is a jarring invitation to God’s people to find their trust in the love of the Trinity. This is an excellent book, and one you need to pick up.”

—A. J. Swoboda, associate professor of Bible and theology at Bushnell University and author of *After Doubt*

A Healing Approach to Worship

What led to your interest in and now sharing about the interaction between worship and mental health?

J. Michael Jordan: As the Dean of the Chapel at a Christian college (Houghton University), I get to know many students with anxiety and related diagnoses in what some call “the stress tradition.” Many times those students have a really hard time integrating the way that mental health describes their interior life with the way the Christian faith describes it. And so they have their diagnosis and treatment for mental health on the one hand, which offers real healing, and their church life on the other, which also seems important, and they don’t want to let either go, but they’re not sure how the two work together. I hope that this book is a step in helping these two worlds integrate, by thinking about how (mostly white) evangelical worship spaces do and don’t serve people with anxiety well.

What is your main thesis in *Worship in an Age of Anxiety*?

Jordan: I begin by looking at how anxiety is understood and treated today, and then show how there’s this strange dichotomy. On the one hand, anxiety is pathologized in evangelical communities, and yet on the other, we have a rich history of explicitly using anxiety within worship to accomplish goals (like getting people to become Christians). We also have several implicit ways in which the logic of anxiety is at work in our churches too. The last two-thirds of the book are given over to talking about discrete worship practices, how our current practices could be unhelpful for people with anxiety, and how we might worship in a way that’s informed by the experience of people with anxiety, and particularly the sorts of things that they are learning that are contributing to their healing.

What do you hope your book contributes to the study of worship?

Jordan:

1. It introduces the idea of the anxiety-repentance-relief cycle as part of evangelical worship history, with significant impact on the present.
2. It takes a granular look at specific worship practices and the potential they have to help or harm people with anxiety.
3. It provides helpful guidance for practitioners looking to make swift and decisive change to the way they lead.



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