

EXCERPT



## ***Transforming Worship*** *Planning and Leading Sunday Services as If Spiritual Formation Mattered*

July 13, 2021 | \$18, 240 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4172-1

*“In Transforming Worship, Rory Noland makes an excellent case for re-envisioning corporate worship as a spiritual practice that will actually restore people’s souls. His re-envisioning of worship is historically grounded, deeply thoughtful, and spiritually challenging.”*

—Manuel Luz, author of *Honest Worship* and *Imagine That: Discovering Your Unique Role as a Christian Artist*

## **Communal, Experiential, Formative Worship**

I define *transforming worship* as a communal experience that combines classic spiritual practices with a formative encounter with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Notice, first, that it’s communal; it is something we do in the company of others, in partnership with God’s people. It is also experiential; the bulk of the activities are not designed for people to sit back and watch but to join in and participate. Transforming worship draws from traditional Christian disciplines such as prayer, Scripture reading, confession, the Lord’s Supper, and baptism, all of which the church has been practicing since its inception. The assumption here is that every major part of the service, not just the sermon, can be spiritually formative. At the heart of this entire experience is an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. Transforming worship does not seek to evoke a feeling or deliver teaching but to encounter a person. The ultimate goal is for worshippers to encounter the life-altering, character-shaping presence of God.

Allen Ross offers a compelling vision for worship that takes seriously its inherent potential to transform lives:

For worship to be as glorious as it should be, for it to lift people out of their mundane cares and fill them with adoration and praise, for it to be the life-changing and life-defining experience it was designed to be, it must be inspired by a vision so great and so glorious that what we call worship will be transformed from a routine gathering into a transcendent meeting with the living God.

Ross’s glorious vision of worship hinges not on the quality of our praise music but our attentiveness to the formative nature of Sunday services.

I am well aware that any talk about making adjustments to Sunday services makes church leaders nervous. One pastor told me that he was willing to hire a different worship leader and raise thousands of dollars for a new sound system but that he wouldn’t dream of introducing changes to the actual service. “Mess with Sunday morning at your own risk!” he sternly warned, as if brandishing an eleventh commandment. His foreboding admonishment was gleaned from painful experience. I completely understand such apprehension.

There is an urgent need today for church services that are more spiritually substantive. In recent decades the church has failed to make spiritual formation a priority, and the results have been devastating. The church is to be commended for making outreach and evangelism high priorities, but we have done a poor job of discipling and assimilating new believers into the life of the church. Gregory Jones laments that today’s church leaders and their congregations have been so inadequately formed in their faith that they cannot live the Christian life in all its fullness. Jones further observes that those who join mainline Protestant churches these days are not required to make any changes to the way they live;

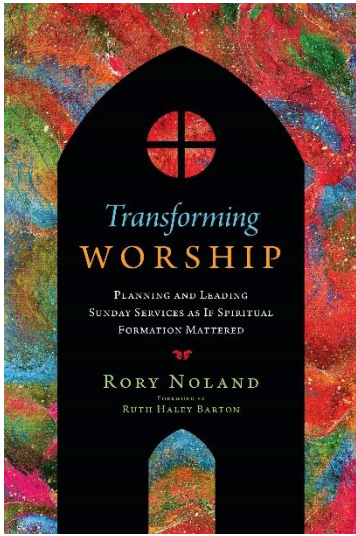


Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [tburns@ivpress.com](mailto:tburns@ivpress.com)

Krista Clayton, author interviews  
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)



[ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)



EXCERPT



**Transforming Worship**  
*Planning and Leading Sunday Services as If Spiritual Formation Mattered*

July 13, 2021 | \$18, 240 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4172-1

*"Spiritual depth and maturity are critical for fruitfulness and longevity in worship ministry. If you want to move from just leading songs to really pastoring your congregation in spiritually transforming worship, this book is a great place to start."*

—Matt McCoy, founder of LoopCommunity.com

neither are they given the resources to implement such changes. The church's inattentiveness to spiritual formation has too often resulted in nominal Christians who experienced a spiritual awakening when they came to the Lord (and perhaps a certain degree of life change), but they are no longer on the journey toward radical transformation in Christ.

I believe that transforming worship can play a pivotal role in stemming the tide of nominal Christianity. The urgency of the situation demands that our church services take on a more spiritually formative role. In other words it's time to mess with the service to bring it in line with its original design as a spiritually formative practice.

*Transforming Worship* is geared to all those responsible for making Sunday services happen: pastors, worship leaders, volunteers, and lay leaders. The book is divided into two parts; the first half examines transforming worship conceptually from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective. The second section presents five communal spiritual practices intrinsic to a transforming worship experience: prayer, Scripture reading, confession, the Lord's Supper, and baptism. Each chapter of the book ends with practical suggestions on how to implement the material that's presented in your particular setting. I hope this book encourages you, rejuvenates you, and proves helpful as you seek a more formative approach to Sunday services. May the Lord bless you as you continue to faithfully serve those you lead every week in worship.

—Adapted from the introduction, "What Is Transforming Worship?"

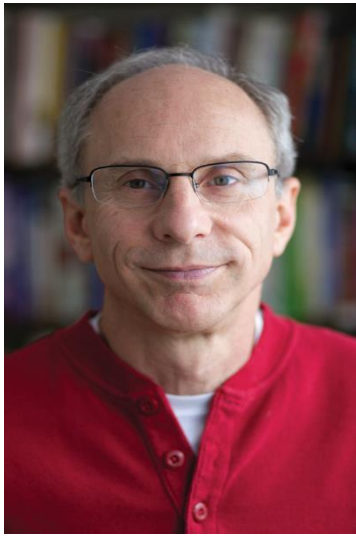


Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews  
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



## ***Transforming Worship*** *Planning and Leading Sunday Services as If Spiritual Formation Mattered*

July 13, 2021 | \$18, 240 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4172-1

Rory Noland is the director of Heart of the Artist Ministries. He holds a doctorate in worship studies from the Robert E. Webber Institute and teaches at Nebraska Christian College. Rory has served at Willow Creek Community Church and Harvest Bible Chapel. A published songwriter, he has authored four books, including *The Heart of the Artist*.

# Worship: A Life-Altering Encounter with God

**What are your two biggest passions in life, and how did they motivate you to write this book?**

**Rory Noland:** My two biggest passions in life are spiritual formation and worship. I've often wondered, *What would it look like to conceive of gathered worship as if spiritual formation mattered? How would that affect the way we plan and lead worship services?* What I'm calling transforming worship is a vision for gathered worship that takes seriously its inherent potential to transform lives. This book captures the dynamic interplay between spiritual formation and worship that awaits us every time we gather around the life-changing presence of Christ.

**What is distinctive about the central idea found in *Transforming Worship*?**

**Rory:** My thesis is that gathered worship, according to Scripture, is designed to be formational. A distinctive feature of this book is that it applies the principles of biblical worship to the modern church. *Transforming Worship* offers practical ideas for planning and leading Sunday services around spiritual formation with greater intentionality—ideas that you can implement this Sunday at your church.

**Name five main lessons you hope readers will learn from your latest book.**

**Rory Noland:** This book is not just for worship leaders but for all those responsible for planning, leading, and producing Sunday services.

1. Transforming worship does not represent a new style of praise music or a trendy, new worship philosophy but a return to a biblical vision of gathered worship as a vital spiritual practice.
2. The principles for transforming worship are based on Scripture and apply to all churches—mainline, nondenominational, independent, charismatic, liturgical, spontaneous, traditional, or contemporary.
3. Transforming worship views each Sunday service as an interactive, highly participatory, and inherently formative experience.
4. Transforming worship seeks to recover a sense of the sacred for modern worship.
5. The ultimate goal of a transforming worship service is for congregation members to encounter the life-altering, character-shaping presence of God.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [tburns@ivpress.com](mailto:tburns@ivpress.com)

Krista Clayton, author interviews  
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)