



The effectiveness of Praise and Worship Services in increasing Congregational Faith in Churches

Yoel Betakore¹, Fredik Melkias Boiliu², Jowel Elia Zakaria³, Daniel Pribadi³
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Indonesia¹, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Real Batam Indonesia²,
SMK Cendrawasih Jakarta Barat Indonesia³, Sekolah Yayasan Pancaran Berkah Indonesia⁴
boiliufredik@gmail.com

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Abstract

Praise and worship service plays a very important role in the worship system of some Christian denominations. Generally, praise and worship is an expression of the heart overflowing with gratitude to glorify God's name revealed through music. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of praise and worship service in increasing the congregations faith in the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang, South Tangerang Indonesia. The research method used in this research work is a descriptive qualitative one. Qualitative research aims to uncover symptoms in a holistic-contextual manner where data collection takes place naturally and researchers serve as the key instruments. To obtain information related to the effectiveness of understanding praise and worship service in increasing the congregation faith in the church, researchers conducted a literature study, and held interviews with a church pastor and some of the congregation. The results showed that there has been an application of praise and worship services carried out by the congregation so that it has experienced faith growth, but it needs to be further enhanced so that it is more effective and sustainable.

Keywords: Praise, worship, church, congregation, faith, Indonesia

Introduction

A praise and worship service is basically the most important part of worship in the church. Worship is essentially a manifestation of believers' obedience to God for what is deemed to be a necessity for one's spiritual growth by being devoted to God, as His people. According to Budiman and Katrina, worship is where the congregation as God's people gather to serve God and to listen to God's word (Katarina & Budiman, 2021). Djadi states that, one of the most important factors for spiritual growth is knowing the true nature of worship (Djadi, 2013). This means that praise and worship services are believed to contain elements of worship and total surrender to God. Andrew Murray a Christian pastor, said that communal praise and worship within churches is very important for Christians (Wijayanto, 2017). Thus, it can be understood that worship is the most important thing for believers to surrender completely to God earnestly. Worship can be said to be a gathering of believers to praise, worship and listen to the truth of God's words. This means that through praise and worship services a person can experience a growth in their faith.

Praise and worship services thus play an important role in the worship of the church. According to Murray, praise and worship service is a very important liturgy of worship in addition to prayer, offerings and the word of God. Praise and worship is an expression of the heart overflowing with gratitude to glorify God's name revealed through music (Nuh et al., 2019). In the



performance of praise and worship, the church needs creative praise and worship leaders, who can process an existing liturgy into a whole and make the atmosphere of worship come alive (Naldi, 2022). According to Sitompul, praise and worship of God is an inseparable part of worship which involves the glorification of God by man (Sitopul, 2020). In harmony with this, Johnson said that the Lord Jesus Christ is the centre of praise and worship services in the church (Johnson, 2011). Margareta also said praise and worship is both a means and a way to build an intimate relationship with God, so that one gets closer to God (Margareta, 2020). Thus, it can be understood that praise and worship services are also an expression of pride in having God, raising exaltation and worship of God the Creator, and offering thanks before God for His glory. Praise and worship as an expression of prostration, praise and acknowledgment of the existence of the presence, and the power of God believed to be present in the service is very important.

The praise and worship aspect in the church worship agenda has a strong influence to attract people to worship so that they have a more sincere spiritual life with God (Wungou & Lidany, 2021). This means that through praise and worship services the congregation can feel the presence of God, the congregation can be more intimate with God and the congregation can also more easily express what is in their hearts relating to God. Andrew Murray (2006) reminds us that praise and worship is important because the consciousness of the Holy Spirit's presence takes place while congregants worship. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. (Nehemiah 8:6). Music has always been a powerful medium for communicating the good news of Jesus to all people. Moses and the Israelites sang once they had crossed over the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-21). David and others who wrote Psalms, composed songs and they sang accompanied by tambourines and cymbals and the trumpet, and a spirit of ecstasy abounded (Psalms: 145 -150). So it is clear that music, instruments and human actions bring glory to God.

The main purpose of praise and worship service in the church is to increase the faith of the congregation in the church. Praise and worship is not only a complement to worship, but also an important point for the growth of faith in God. Wellem Sairwona argues that the growth of one's personal faith becomes an aspect of appreciation that provides reinforcement for the person so that the growth of one's faith takes place dynamically. The dynamic growth of faith is characterized by visible joy in the life of the person, who lives his life with many changes happening in his or her life. Faith based on truth will grow also in its truth, which is the truth of God's own revelation to His people. In Hebrews 11:1, it is explained that "faith is the foundation of everything we hope for and the evidence of things we do not see" (Sairwona, 2017).

The application of praise and worship has a considerable influence on worship to increase the faith of the congregation. The increase in faith of the congregation can be seen from daily life through prayer, reading the Holy Bible, praising and worshipping God, addressing problems and always relying on God in any situation (Boilliu & Sinaga, 2021). It can be seen that the application of praise and worship services plays a role and has the potential to have an influence in increasing the faith of the congregation. The application of praise and worship certainly requires creative praise leaders, adequate music and singers who are able to balance praise leaders so as to bring the congregation to feel God's presence through a sincere expression from the bottom of their hearts.

Related to the application of praise and worship service in the church carried out by the congregation, based on the observations of researchers at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang, South Tangerang Indonesia, it was found that they have indeed



applied praise and worship service in their worship. The praise and worship service applied in worship so far is still in the process of overhauling to reach the peak that is said to be the most effective. This researcher observes in terms of praise or songs used in praise and worship in the church that these should ideally be synchronized from the opening, worship, word, intercessory prayer and offering. Researchers observe that synchronization is still lacking so that the impact for congregations to feel God's presence through praise and worship is still lacking.

Based on the results of the researcher's interview with church pastor about the application of praise and worship at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang, according to the church pastor, there has been an application of praise and worship service in the church carried out. The pastor also said that praise and worship is applied following the times, namely by using contemporary songs or the latest hymns. The congregation also said that praise and worship service applied at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang was improved. For example, they used praise such as exciting worship songs, full band music, praise leaders, singers and a tambourine player. For the congregational growth, the application of praise and worship service can and does increase the growth of the congregation such as diligence and faithfulness in following the worship that is always conducted. This scenario has encouraged the researchers to conduct an in-depth study of the application of praise and worship praise in services to increase the church growth in terms of numbers of congregants.

Method

Regarding the problems raised, the approach used in this study is research with a qualitative field approach through interviews and a literature review. This study aimed to uncover symptoms holistically-contextually through natural data collection and using researchers as instruments (Sugiarto, 2015). This research uses a type of qualitative descriptive research method that aims to obtain a detailed picture of the subject/object studied. Moleong has asserted that qualitative research is research in understanding phenomena that occur in research subjects related to attitudes, behaviours, perceptions, actions, and is described through words (Moleong, 2014). Moleong also argues that qualitative research will produce descriptive data such as written and spoken words of the subject or object under study (Moleong, 2014). According to Eko Sugiarto, qualitative research is a type of research that does not use numbers in its findings or the data is not obtained based on statistics. Qualitative research aims to uncover symptoms holistically-contextually where data collection takes place naturally and researchers serve as key instruments (Sugiarto, 2015). This research is descriptive, meaning that the data collected is in the form of words or writing and the behaviour of the people studied, not emphasizing numbers.

Data collection techniques are very important for researchers to know because by knowing the correct and appropriate data collection techniques, the data to be obtained will be more accurate. The purpose of various settings is that data can be obtained naturally (natural setting), various sources means that data can be obtained from primary sources (directly), and secondary sources (indirect), such as documents; various ways, means that data can be obtained and through observation, interviews, combined documentation / triangulation (Sugiono & Waruwu, 2021). Data collection techniques in this study are literature studies and interviews. In this study, the researchers conducted direct interviews with some church pastors, worship leaders, singers, musicians and congregants who attended worship services at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang, South Tangerang Indonesia.



Results and Discussion

There has been an application of praise and worship service in the church

The application of praise and worship service is the most important part of worship in the church. Based on the results of the study, it shows that there has been an effective application of praise and worship services in the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang, South Tangerang. According to Wibowo, the application of praise and worship services is a joint activity that supports others and it often seems similar when expressed outwardly, but in fact this is not the case. Each aspect has its own form and purpose (Wibowo, 2020). The application of praise and worship as both a means and a way for people means they can have an intimate relationship with God, and even bring people into a new and higher level of familiarity with Him. It means that man is given a way through praise and worship to express his pride in having God, increase his exaltation and worship of God the Creator, and offering his thanksgiving before God for His glory. Thus, it can be understood that the existence of believers is to worship God, and only God. In addition, having to understand this meaning, all aspects of our lives will undergo rapid and radical changes in our relationship with God (Wungou & Lidany, 2021).

In the application of praise and worship at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang, the congregation felt joy in their lives and were contented with the application of worship praise. According to Nobel Siagian et al, praise and worship should function according to the will and not one's emotions. Every believer must be willing and decided to praise God even when he is not happy to do so. Praise does not depend on the feelings of the heart, but is based on the greatness of God (Psalm 103). The main characteristic of praise is the presence of celebration and overflowing joy. It is expressed by singing, playing musical instruments, dance and other outward expressions. The direction of praise is something that we address directly to God (vertically) in exalting praise. In this case, something we reveal to others about God (is horizontal). Praise is often a preparation for worship, which means praise as a guide to the congregation before entering into worship. Praise and worship can also be said to be the gateway to worship (Siagian et al., 2020).

The application of the praise and worship chanted is the result of intimacy between God and His people, thus creating a melody from the heart directed to God, and it is indeed more than a show of talent, or entertainment for the listeners (Hughes, 2011). Correspondingly, the praise and worship is no longer dependent on place, that is, influenced by the atmosphere or facilities outside of man, but is born from within the heart of the worshipper himself (Kgatle, 2012).

Praise and worship in the form of songs accompanied by various contemporary music are characteristic of most Pentecostal worship patterns. The songs can elicit expressions from worshippers that can consist of suggestions or emotional feelings, symbolic worship such as raising hands, jumping, crying, and verbal praise that can trigger a sense of closeness to God's presence (Verayanti et al., 2020). Various music performed in harmony and performing hymns can allow the congregation to dive into the presence of the Holy Spirit and prepare people to receive His Word. Songs in the Bible are used to show thanksgiving (Psalms 126:2) worship in the House of God (1 Chronicles 13:8; 2 Chronicles 23:18), lamentation (2 Chronicles 32:25), and for participation in a therapy or exorcism of evil spirits (1 Chronicles 16:14-23) (Kgatle, 2019).

The application of praise and worship service is understood as an expression of love and praise to God (Wijaya, 2015). It is then a form of expression by giving one's whole heart to



God. The form of worship carried out by the early church was to gather daily in the temple. The expression of their worship is to praise God and pray. Henny says that the form of worship in the early church and apostles was to praise God and pray fervently. Praise is thus an important element in all worship. The word used to "praise God" is *αἰνέω* (aineo) which is derived from the word *αἴνός* (ainos). The word *aineo* refers to the praise of joy for God in hymns or prayers performed by individuals, groups, or communities. While *αἴνός* is a word used for praise in a religious sense (Rudi et al., 2023). So what the early church did was worship by raising praise for God in the community. The activities carried out by the early church were inseparable from worship activities. Their expression of worship is evident in the praise offered to God.

Praise and worship is important because Christianity, as a religion, presents in social capital as the foundation on which a social group or network of believers is formed into a congregation and is exclusive. Christianity is of course also totally inclusive. Timothy says, "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4) so praising and worshipping God is critical for our salvation and it reflects a deep and intimate connection between believers and the Lord and Him (Du Toit & Nicolaides, 2022).

The praise and worship leader chooses hymns according to the theme

The praise and worship leader in the worship hymn leadership at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang determines the songs according to the theme of the sermon offered. Based on the results of the study, it was found that leading praise and worship in the praise of the congregation, they felt joy through the praises sung. Andrew Murray (2006) said a good professional worship leader is very important because a truly professional worship leader is able to lead and direct the congregation in praising God. A worship leader who is able to bring the congregation to praise together is able to build social congregational capital (Du Toit & Nicolaides, 2022), pray together, clap together, make offerings together and be ready to hear the word together. This means that creative praise leaders, who are able to process existing praise and worship into a whole and make the atmosphere of worship come alive (Wijayanto, 2017).

A worship leader or praise leader is responsible for carrying out the task of leading praise well, so that the praises sung will sound compact and harmonious. Thus, a worship leader is expected to play his or her role as a leader of praise in worship. Early preparation of a leader is a very important part of a praise and worship leader's role, because it is seen as influencing the success of the worship in an ecclesiastical service. The initial preparation includes two aspects (Wijayanto et al., 2015). These are as follows: self-preparation, before beginning the ministry of praise and worship, a worship leader should prepare well, by building mental and spiritual readiness through prayer. This prayer preparation can be done privately or in a prayer group that has been scheduled by the church. Secondly, for the praise and worship team, prayer preparation is an important thing that is believed to be critical in obtaining God's approval and this is what moves the Holy Spirit to visit every congregation present in worship times. If this happens, then they believe that the restoration and miracles that come from God will be revealed in the worship, especially when praise and worship are properly raised before God by the praise and worship team and the congregation in general.

Jefry Wungowa et al., have stated that true praise and worship services will attract people, in the sense that a church that really presents and carries out praise and worship correctly, uses praise and worship as a hallmark of its being, and this will invite or attract people's attention,



which can certainly lead to growth (quantity) in its church membership (Wungou & Lidany, 2021). Praise and worship in church worship is important not only because it has a strong influence in attracting people to worship in a church, but also since praise and worship can be a door or entrance for everyone to a more sincere spiritual life with God. Praise and worship is not the only access to achieving church growth according to biblical standards, but it is the primary key to inviting God's mighty visit for a revival that results in church growth according to the truth of God's Word (Wungou & Lidany, 2021).

Thus, in the application of praise and worship it is necessary to understand some important things that are the main objectives in worship praise so that it must be conducted as effectively as possible.

First, the statement of faith that is Christian faith believes that worship is all activities, deeds, words and thoughts aimed at the glory of God's name. So that the notion that this is only a Christian activity in a church building is not the correct understanding. These activities are part of worship that becomes general thanksgiving. Praise and worship means that the church gives an expression of faith and gratitude to God (Rudi et al., 2023). Through praise, the congregation can feel the solemnity of every lyric that contains many meanings about God's goodness or God's greatness. Every statement chanted in praise can make the heart and faith stronger in the Lord.

Second, the bridge into God's presence means that in this day and age, many new spiritual songs are found and so many creative ways are used in praising and worshipping God. The Bible records that praising God is often commanded to man as an obligation (Sitompul, 2020).

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Fourth, revival is understood as a worship leader directing each congregation to experience an encounter with God through constructive words. Through praise raised with sincerity and total submission to the involvement of the Holy Spirit there will be an impact on those who hear, in this case the congregation that is present (Nuh et al., 2019). This means that there needs to be the intervention of the Holy Spirit who visits everyone in praising God. That reliance does not make the human side ignored or denied, but rather encourages increased spiritual potential to flourish.

Fifth, intimacy with God is known as praise in worship, speaking of the experience of encountering God. The image of an encounter with God is thrilling and transforms a person from within and they experience God's presence. Every church that comes to God has various heart situations, there are congregations that come to God with broken hearts, sad hearts, many hurts, happy hearts, expectations and so on. Charismatic Pentecostals of the congregation believe that intimacy with God can change the condition and attitude of the heart (Prasetya et al., 2021). The form of relationship with God is not only when in church, but it also builds intimacy through personal prayer to God, and contemplation of God's word in any place or time.

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Pentecostals of the congregation believe that intimacy with God can change the condition and attitude of the human heart (Hutahaean, 2020)..

The congregation has a good understanding of the faith

Based on research related to faith, it was found that the congregation at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang already understood what faith means and includes. This can be seen from the results of the answer from the congregation, namely faith is to believe sincerely even though you have not seen. Faith is "faithfulness", or "trust". As Hebrews says, faith is the foundation of everything we hope for and the evidence of things we do not see (Hebrews 11:1). It can be understood that in everything we expect there is a belief that underlies it, and a belief in everything that we do not see. Thus, believing in God, then at any time must also involve faithfulness, so belief is not only "cognitive", but there must be "action" to be faithful to God. This aspect of faith is the aspect that concerns the vertical relationship, that is, God with man, between the Creator and the created, so that faith is the basis or principal of Christian belief, namely belief in God and His revelation (Baskoro Paulus Kunto, 2021).

Faith is shown by discarding all trust in the sources that come from one's own strength. Faith can also be interpreted as surrendering oneself without any conditions to the grace of God. Faith means also holding fast to God's promises in the Lord Jesus Christ by relying completely on Christ's work, and on the power of the Holy Spirit who guides daily life. The Holy Spirit also leads us to all the truth of God, so that those he leads may avoid the tactics of deception (Arifianto, 2020). So finally, faith also includes trust and absolute obedience to God. True faith according to the Bible is a confident obedience to God's word under any circumstances which may arise in life.

The Christian faith is the result of a person's process of belief in Jesus Christ. Faith cannot be formed instantly without struggle, but faith is formed from every test, trial, and also suffering experienced. This is clear from the life of faith shown by the early church who experienced great persecutions (Nicolaidis, 2010). Thus, if a Christian says he has faith, he or she must be ready to face every trial and challenge that occurs in his or her life. In other words, faith must be manifested by works, because without faith it is impossible for a person to please God (Dorah et al., 2022).

The Christian faith as a living reality has at least three very essential dimensions: oneness, faith, second, trusting relationships, and third, the living agape life. Considering that we are here talking specifically about the Christian faith, and this faith is viewed as a living reality, these three dimensions are expressed in faith activities as: one, faith as believing, second, faith as trusting, and third, faith as doing. Faith as a believer (Fide, 2016).

The congregation has applied faith

Teaching faith to the congregation is an important thing that must be done by the pastor in the church. The church is a place where the pastor can foster and teach Christian faith to the congregation in daily life so that the congregation is not only limited to understanding the faith but can be practicing it in daily life (Purba & Kumala, 2022). In teaching faith to the congregation, of course, the emphasis must be on faith here not on faith in things, but rather on saving faith. Perhaps the most famous verse of the Bible is John 3:16, "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And for the same use of the word, in John 3:18, 36; 6:47;



7:38; and 11:25-26. "*pistuein*" (to believe) in the Gospel of John means to acknowledge Christ as the Savior sent by the Father into the world, surrender to Him and trust Him (Sirait & Korintus, 2022). Thus, it can be understood that it is through such faith that one obtains eternal life, not as a hope in the future but also as something that is already possessed now. For John emphasizes not the glory of what is inherited by faith in the future, but rather the fullness of the present joy that salvation brings because of that faith.

Teaching congregations to apply faith in daily life is part of spiritual formation. In this respect, the term spiritual formation has a diversity of perspectives. Terms used include faith formation, student spiritual development. These terms describe the activities carried out at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang which are done so as to help the congregation to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Conceptually, the term spiritual formation is an effort to equip the congregation to function as members of the body of Christ through programmes on campus where the congregation is prepared to acquire knowledge and skills in ministry (Sinaga, 2021). It is understood that the efforts made on campus to prepare structured services bring the congregation 'into a person' who changes from an ordinary congregation to being a servant of God. That is, the main purpose of spiritual formation of the church is to bring them to fellowship in Christ and to make believers mature in the knowledge of Him. One sign that congregations are growing and maturing is taking on responsibilities in the ministry (Prasetya et al., 2021).

The congregation has experienced growth in faith

The results show that the congregation at Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang, experienced faith growth. Yesika Indrian said the preaching of God's Word is one of the tools to grow one's faith in a Christian community at the local or regional level. Faith growth is one of the qualities of church growth and the growth of congregational faith both individually and communally at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Live Pamulang South Tangerang is evident. This faith growth has two very striking dimensions in the growth of faith of the congregation itself, namely horizontally and vertically. This is the main source of the personal growth of the congregation's faith which will be a source of witness to their neighbours. The preaching of the word of God is not the only factor for the moral formation of the church that strives towards Christlikeness (Purba & Kumala, 2022).

In this case, to experience faith growth, faith beliefs vary from a faith that heals a person from disease, to a faith that involves spiritual healing and awakening spiritual healing. Prioritizing spiritual beliefs is a challenge for researchers because spiritual beliefs are a complex arrangement of beliefs, and they are not one simple "level" like "total cholesterol". Spirituality is a collection of beliefs that serve to give life meaning (Sirait & Korintus, 2022).

It means that a person experiences growth in faith because God opens His heart and He reveals His love and the grace that He has made manifest in Jesus Christ. Faith begins in God's character and what He has done for us in Christ. God has revealed Himself in His word, but faith is given when the Holy Spirit makes the word live for us personally. So, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). Faith is a response to something or someone outside of himself-in this case, a revelation of God in Jesus and His faithfulness to that revelation. Faith is the same as seeing Jesus, being humbled to respond to Him, relying on Him and allowing Him to be Him in the various intentions He has proclaimed. Faith also means the ear of the spirit that has heard His Word, and what makes us eager to rely on Him and let Him be Him in all His stated intentions. When Faith looks upon, and



surrenders itself to all of God's intentions that He has revealed, man's weakness is eliminated and becomes one with divine power (Baskoro Paulus Kunto, 2021).

Conclusion

Growth is the utmost challenge facing the modern church. Many churches have tried several ways of attracting and retaining members. Paul teaches us that we need to come down to the level people and meet their needs without sacrificing the very basic integrity of the truth (1 Corinthians 9:20). Related to the discussion of the effectiveness of praise and worship service in increasing the congregation's faith in the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang South Tangerang, it can be concluded that praise and worship is very important to apply, especially for the congregation's growth. The activity of praising God as an act that continues beyond the boundaries of habit, is personal, and is an expression of spontaneity and joy in praising the Lord. This suggests that praising God is possible when done in the form of contemporary worship rituals that of course use contemporary music and dance. The results showed that the congregation already understood the faith and also applied it in daily life. In this case, to understand faith and apply it certainly requires continuous teaching at the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang, South Tangerang Indonesia. This is done by teaching the congregation about faith and also in applying faith. It can be understood that the congregation has a good understanding of faith depending on the teaching done. In addition, the congregation will experience faith growth also depending on the activities carried out by providing understanding in theory and also in practices. The inclusion of modern music in praise and worship is vital in modern society. Churches must strive to at all times follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and be led by Him.

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