

**JORDAN, JOHN MICHAEL. *WORSHIP IN AN AGE OF ANXIETY: HOW CHURCHES CAN CREATE SPACE FOR HEALING*. DYNAMICS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. DOWNERS GROVE, IL: IVP ACADEMIC, 2024. 248 PP. \$32.00.**

*Worship in an Age of Anxiety* centers on the argument that worship can and should function as a healing space. As Jordan observes, “worship should be a sanctuary where anxiety is acknowledged and accepted as part of the human experience, but where we also discover ways to live creatively and authentically as beloved children of God, denying anxiety the power to rule our lives” (4).

Jordan structures the book into two main parts, each addressing distinct aspects of anxiety and worship practices. Part one (chapters 1–3) explores the concept of anxiety in depth, while Part two (chapters 4–8) shifts the focus to healing through worship practices, examining how specific liturgical elements can serve as a sanctuary in an age marked by anxiety (5).

Chapter 1 examines anxiety treatment through Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) integrated with Christian spirituality in worship. The chapter also interrogates whether worship environments support or exacerbate anxiety, particularly for those in therapy (29). It calls for worship practices that promote healing and inclusivity, rather than inadvertently marginalizing individuals struggling with anxiety. The chapter further advocates for a reevaluation of worship’s role in mental health, suggesting an *anxiety-informed* approach that emphasizes healing through a focus on God’s presence (30).

In chapter 2, Jordan examines the influence of revivalist movements on American evangelical worship practices. Pioneers like Dwight L. Moody (43) and Billy Graham (48) significantly shaped revival events and local church services, introducing revival music (51), the altar call (54–55), and the anxiety-repentance-relief (35) cycle as central elements of worship. Originally intended to facilitate conversion, this cycle has become a recurring feature of evangelical services, reinforcing emotional experiences in worship (51).

Chapter 3 investigates the rise of *spectacle* in contemporary evangelical worship (75), particularly in large churches such as Elevation and Willow Creek. These churches employ cutting-edge media and technology to create immersive worship experiences, often prioritizing spectacle over genuine community engagement. While these experiences may attract attendees,

they can also foster isolation, as the emphasis on polished, transcendent encounters may exclude individuals who do not conform to the aesthetic. The chapter critiques the consumer-driven approach to worship (76), noting its potential to heighten anxiety by focusing on temporary emotional highs rather than addressing deeper spiritual needs.

Jordan begins part two by analyzing, in chapter 4, the challenges of individualized devotional practices within evangelical circles, particularly for individuals struggling with anxiety. The chapter contrasts these practices with the communal and shared worship practices of monastic communities and parachurch organizations, suggesting that such spaces provide a non-anxious environment for worship (105–6).

Chapter 5 addresses the impact of technology, particularly screens and stage setups, on contemporary evangelical worship. While technology can enhance accessibility and inclusivity, it can also create a sense of detachment, diminishing personal connections within the church community (127). Jordan argues for a liturgical approach in which technology serves to enhance the deeper purpose of worship, rather than dominating it (133).

In chapter 6, Jordan continues exploring how contemporary worship music often reflects and reinforces demographic divisions within the church (159). The homogeneous unit principle, which suggests that worship should cater predominantly to one demographic group, limits the potential for churches to build diverse communities (160). Jordan advocates for a reconsideration of worship leadership and the role of music in shaping spiritual identities, addressing both personal and societal anxieties (161).

Chapter 7 examines the connection between preaching and anxiety. The chapter encourages preachers to recognize the anxieties of their listeners and avoid romanticizing anxiety. Preaching should focus on trust, faithfulness to Scripture, and an understanding of both the preacher's and the congregation's realities (198). By modeling conviction and action, preachers can guide listeners into a deeper relationship with God and the church, thereby helping to alleviate anxiety (199).

In chapter 8, Jordan highlights the theological significance of the sacraments, specifically baptism and Communion, as symbols of God's identity and grace. These sacraments are not merely rituals of personal expression but means of participating in the broader narrative of salvation, affirming one's identity as God's beloved child (226). The chapter presents the sacraments as tools that connect believers to God and invite them into a deeper understanding of grace and redemption (221).

Jordan concludes by addressing the pervasive presence of anxiety in modern evangelical circles, particularly among young people. Jordan argues that the traditional evangelical approach has failed to integrate mental health with spirituality, leading to a disconnect between faith and emotional well-being (228). However, worship can serve as a powerful means of healing anxiety, offering a space to reflect on identity, encounter God, and experience emotional healing (229). Jordan emphasizes that addressing anxiety through worship is not only beneficial for those with diagnosed conditions but for all believers, as everyone experiences uncertainty and emotional struggles (230).

While Jordan's book raises crucial issues—particularly concerning anxiety in worship and the role of emotionalism in evangelical practices—there is room for deeper theological engagement and practical exploration. The critical insights presented would be further enriched by specific examples, case studies, and a broader discussion of potential solutions to the challenges outlined. Regardless, this book is an essential resource for church leaders, worship planners, and anyone seeking to understand the relationship between faith, mental health, and worship in the twenty-first century.

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