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## Davis and Lerner's "Worship together in your church as in heaven" (Critical Book Review)

Lindsay Van Sicklen

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# Critical Reviews

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Davis, J. & Lerner, N. *Worship together in your church as in heaven*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015. 202 pp. \$22.99. ISBN 9781426788062.

Van Opstal, S. M. *The next worship: Glorifying god in a diverse world*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. 194pp. \$18.00. ISBN 9780830841295

Discovering the joys of multicultural (global) worship has been an experience that has and continues to transform my life. My earliest exposure was via the late Dr. William (Bill) Supplee a beloved professor at Columbia International University (formerly Columbia Bible College). When he retired he devoted a considerable amount of time educating missionaries (predominantly in Central and South America) regarding the importance of cultural sensitivity in how our faith is communicated. Given that music was his specialty, his focus was hymnody. Many years passed before I participated in an Ethnodoxology workshop at Ouachita Baptist University in May 2011. It was a “taste of heaven” being taught and encouraged by the presenters Dr. Rob Hewell gathered. The workshop reinforced and added to what I’d gleaned from Dr. Supplee via Robin Harris and Paul Neeley of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (<https://www.worldofworship.org/>), yet another dimension was added. Imagine worshipping the Lord together on earth as in heaven! This aspect was added as I was introduced to Proskuneo Ministries ([www.proskuneo.org](http://www.proskuneo.org)) and its founder/director Josh Davis. Serving the “world at our doorstep” (also known as International Students Ministry via International Friendships Inc.) has been my calling for many years, subsequently the field of ethnodoxology is a natural companion.

*Worship Together In Your Church As In Heaven* is authored by Josh Davis and Nikki Lerner. Josh is the founder of Proskuneo Ministries ([www.proskuneo.org](http://www.proskuneo.org)) in Clarkston, Georgia, which promotes unity in the Body of Christ through multilingual and multicultural worship gatherings, worship resources and worship training for leaders. He has two heart languages given he was raised in both the United States and in the Dominican Republic. Nikki serves as the worship ministry director at Bridgeway Community Church, a large multicultural congregation near Baltimore, Maryland. Davis and Lerner both coach, speak and teach worldwide.

Before the topic of leading a multicultural worship service is broached, the authors lay a firm foundation of developing relationships leading to a diverse worshipping community. Topics addressed are: why God desires the nations worship together, the importance of immersing in other cultures and the attitude of the worship leader being other focused (pastor, staff & congregation). As exciting as being a multicultural worship leader can be, they are trail blazers and hence challenges abound. Only after covering preparatory issues do the authors delve into the practicalities of multicultural worship. Topics in this section include: who and what do you have, worship is more than music, the power of language, introducing multiple languages and models of multicultural worship.

I highly recommend this title for use in developing a multicultural mindset in any congregation and for specifics for someone leading a worship team. The reflection sections throughout make it a great choice for a textbook and/or tool for pastoral staff, worship teams, etc. Several institutions in both the United States and United Kingdom have adopted it for their curriculums. The readability will further stimulate and stir the hearts of interested laypersons.

*Next Worship: Glorifying God In A Diverse World* is authored by Sandra Maria Van Opstal. She is a Chicago born, second-generation Latina and a leading practitioner of multiethnic worship. She was worship director for the Urbana Student Missions Conference and serves regularly as a worship leader and mission trainer with Christian colleges, conferences and local churches. She is a pastor at the Grace and Peace Community in Chicago and has written *The Mission of Worship*.

Before delving into the how to of multiethnic worship, she devotes considerable space to challenges and opportunities, myths we tightly cling to and initial steps towards reconciliation in worship. She addresses our narrow-minded view that worship is music indicating it is so much broader. An underlying and often repeated thought is the necessity of an environment that exemplifies hospitality (we welcome you), solidarity (we stand with you) and mutuality (we need you). I really appreciated the repetition of this theme which has been lingering in the depths of my being. The practical aspects include shared leadership, models and components of diverse worship. As changes surface in a given setting, the reader is urged to remember to train others.

This book is a must read not only for worship leaders but for others on the pastoral team as well. The author uses stories and illustrations to clarify her thoughts. Each chapter concludes with sections entitled: key concepts, for reflection, for discussion and a prayer making the book an excellent tool to work through in a group setting. Her appendices on topics such as: worship movements and artists, order of worship

examples, components of worship, songs for crossing cultures and teaching language songs all offer specific insights. The concluding notes along with the appendix entitled additional resources provide an abundance of pointers to other readings and websites.

Though works abound on this topic, I believe the author's personal background and readable style make it a very valuable tool for the journey.

Both titles are similar in their approach. The authors of both books wisely laid a firm foundation regarding the importance of understanding other cultures. I believe I gleaned a fuller appreciation via Ms. Van Opstal's many stories and "down to earth examples." My personal connection with Josh Davis and Nikki Lerner along with others involved in Proskunee via my initial class and ongoing relationship as a volunteer leaves me predisposed to worship together in your church as in heaven as I consider the section on developing worship leaders. Highlighting main points and questions designed to move the reader forward makes both of these books a good choice for using as a tool for local churches or in a classroom setting.

**Reviewer**

Lindsay Van Sicklen