

# Worship in Spirit and Stream: Reinterpreting Psalm 100 for Digital Liturgy in Nigeria

Adewale David Ajewole<sup>1</sup> , Olusegun Emmanuel Olarewaju<sup>2</sup> 

University of Ibadan, Nigeria<sup>1</sup>, University of Ilorin, Nigeria<sup>2</sup>

ajewole.adewale@gamil.com<sup>1</sup>, pastoroyin@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

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## Description

This study integrates biblical exegesis of Psalm 100 with qualitative interviews of Nigerian church leaders to develop a contextual theological framework showing how digital worship can authentically embody the psalm's imperatives of joy, service, entry, thanksgiving, and blessing.

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## Abstract

*This study reinterprets Psalm 100:1–5 to construct a biblical framework for digital worship in Nigeria, where the migration of liturgical practices to online platforms has accelerated after the COVID-19 pandemic. It addresses the theological gap between scriptural imperatives for communal worship and contemporary digital expressions of faith. Method using a qualitative exegetical design, the research applies textual criticism and lexical analysis of the Masoretic Text (MT) and Septuagint (LXX) versions of Psalm 100, supported by secondary data on Nigerian digital liturgical practices. The study integrates these findings through the theoretical lens of digital theology and mediatization. The analysis identifies five core imperatives—*rî'û*, *'ibdû*, *bō'û*, *hōdû*, and *bārēkû*—as sequential acts of joyful participation, service, entry, thanksgiving, and blessing. The textual variant in Psalm 100:3 (“and not we ourselves” vs. “and we are His”) deepens the theological basis for communal identity in digital spaces. The metaphor of “gates” (*ša'arîm*) and “courts” (*ḥaṣērôt*) is reinterpreted as symbolic digital thresholds that structure virtual liturgies. The study proposes a contextual model for digital worship that translates Psalm 100's liturgical logic into online platforms, emphasizing participatory, ethical, and community-centered engagement. This research offers one of the first exegetical-theological frameworks that connects the Hebrew text of Psalm 100 with digital liturgical formation in African Christianity. It contributes conceptually to the field of biblical hermeneutics and practically to digital ecclesiology.*

**Keywords:** *Psalm 100; digital liturgy; worship theology; biblical hermeneutics; Nigeria*

## INTRODUCTION

Psalm 100:1–5, a timeless hymn of thanksgiving, has historically shaped Jewish and Christian worship, calling worshippers to “make a joyful noise” (*rî'û*, רִיעוּ) and to “serve the Lord with gladness” (*'ibdû*, עֲבֹדוּ). In Nigeria, where exuberant communal worship is culturally ingrained, this Psalm offers a vital foundation for reimagining liturgy in the digital age. The expansion of livestreamed services, virtual choirs, and social media worship, especially during and after the COVID-19

pandemic—has introduced both opportunities and complexities for churches aiming to remain anchored in scriptural truth (Afolaranmi & Babatunde, 2021).

During the pandemic, denominations such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Winners Chapel, and Catholic congregations shifted swiftly to digital platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Zoom, and Mixlr (A. Abel et al., 2024; E. de J. Abel et al., 2024; Aduloju, 2024). These tools became indispensable for sustaining spiritual connection amid physical distancing, enabling worshippers to “enter His gates with thanksgiving” (*bō’û*, בָּאוּ) and “give thanks” (*hōdû*, הוֹדוּ) even when apart.

This study reinterprets Psalm 100:1–5 in light of Nigerian digital liturgical practices. Using exegetical insights and digital theology, it examines how the Psalm’s imperatives—*rî’û* (shout), *’ibdû* (serve), *bō’û* (come), *hōdû* (give thanks), and *bārĕkû* (bless)—can authentically shape virtual worship. By doing so, the paper aims to demonstrate that digital liturgy in Nigeria can foster communal joy, spiritual depth, and cultural vitality—continuing the ancient vision of worship even through modern channels.

Psalm 100:1–5 stands as one of the most enduring calls to worship in the Hebrew Psalter, inviting the faithful to *rî’û* (רִיעוּ, “shout”), *’ibdû* (עֲבַדוּ, “serve”), and *bō’û* (בָּאוּ, “enter”). Historically, its liturgical use has emphasized joy, thanksgiving, and communal presence before God. However, the rise of digital liturgy in Nigeria, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and sustained in its aftermath, has redefined the modes of worship participation. Churches now engage members through livestreams, Zoom gatherings, and social media platforms, yet the theological and exegetical grounding of these practices in Scripture, particularly in Psalms, remains underdeveloped (A. Abel et al., 2024; Aduloju, 2024). The challenge is twofold: first, Nigerian digital liturgies risk replicating entertainment-driven models that dilute the covenantal depth of worship; second, there is limited exegetical engagement with biblical texts such as Psalm 100 to shape digital practices. Without theological grounding, digital worship may compromise the Psalmist’s vision of holistic service (*’ibdû*) and authentic thanksgiving (*hōdû*, הוֹדוּ).

In the past decade, the intersection of religion and digital media has undergone significant transformation, particularly in societies where physical worship is restricted or evolving. Scholarship on the mediatization of religion has established how communication technologies reshape ritual practices, religious authority, and communal identity (Hjarvard, 2013; Lundby, 2014). Recent empirical studies further emphasize that audiovisual and interactive media have become central to how religious traditions disseminate faith and reconstruct ritual practices in the digital era (Weber et al., 2023). Within the African context, particularly in Nigeria, several studies have explored the rapid migration of Christian congregations to online worship platforms following the COVID-19 pandemic (Afolabi & Babatunde, 2021). These works highlight both the potential of digital worship—enhancing accessibility, participation, and inclusivity—and the risks it poses, such as commodification and diminished communal intimacy (Wariboko et al., 2022).

In parallel, biblical scholarship on the Psalter, and particularly on Psalm 100, has examined how the psalm transforms ancient motifs of conquest into a theology of universal, joyful worship. Firth, for example, argues that Psalm 100 reconfigures “war-language” into a doxological expression of service and thanksgiving (Firth, 2021). Despite such textual richness, these exegetical studies largely remain confined to theoretical or canonical interpretation, without extending their insights to liturgical practice—especially in digital or mediated contexts. Consequently, while digital-religion studies elucidate sociotechnical shifts and biblical studies explore theological language, very few works attempt to bridge these two dimensions.

This study situates itself at precisely that intersection—seeking to integrate exegetical textual analysis and qualitative liturgical inquiry to construct a theologically grounded model for digital worship. Such integration represents an important evolution in both disciplines: extending biblical exegesis into empirical theology while anchoring digital-practice research in scriptural hermeneutics.

Although the literature is well developed in the domains of digital religion and Psalm scholarship, three major gaps persist. First, there is a missing exegetical–liturgical linkage: while Psalm 100 has been examined for its theological transformation of language, existing studies rarely extend this into operational worship models, particularly in virtual environments. Second, there is a lack of African contextualization in digital liturgy studies—most Nigerian research (Afolabi & Babatunde, 2021; Wariboko et al., 2022) describes technological adaptation without grounding it in biblical or theological frameworks. Third, text-critical awareness remains largely absent in discussions of digital worship: the implications of the Masoretic and Septuagint variants of Psalm 100:3 (“and not we ourselves” vs. “and we are His”) are seldom explored for their theological and liturgical significance.

Therefore, the current body of knowledge lacks an integrated approach that unites biblical textual criticism, theology of worship, and empirical liturgical practice in the African digital context. This study addresses that gap by applying a mixed-methods design—combining exegetical analysis of the Hebrew and Greek texts of Psalm 100 with qualitative interviews of Nigerian pastors and worship practitioners—to generate a holistic understanding of how biblical imperatives can shape digital liturgy.

The principal novelty of this study lies in its methodological integration—a fusion of biblical exegesis and empirical qualitative inquiry to develop a contextual theology of digital worship. This mixed approach marks a departure from both traditional biblical hermeneutics, which often remain text-bound, and digital-religion studies, which frequently neglect theological depth.

On the exegetical–theological level, the study conducts detailed textual criticism of Psalm 100 (MT and LXX), analysing the five Hebrew imperatives—*rî’û*, *’ibdû*, *bō’û*, *hôdû*, and *bārĕkû*—as sequential liturgical movements that express joy, service, entry, thanksgiving, and blessing. On the empirical level, it captures lived experiences of digital worship through in-depth interviews, interpreting these experiences in light of the psalm’s theological grammar.

The synthesis of these two data streams produces an integrated digital-liturgical framework where textual theology informs practice, and practice, in turn, illuminates text.

This integrative method represents a novel contribution to practical theology by demonstrating how Scripture can serve as both hermeneutical source and empirical lens for understanding contemporary worship. Furthermore, by situating the research within Nigeria's vibrant and technologically adaptive Christian context, the study provides a contextual-missional model that bridges the global North-South scholarly divide in digital theology. In doing so, it advances academic discourse beyond description toward constructive theological praxis—where biblical exegesis and qualitative engagement converge to shape the theology and practice of digital worship. Current Nigerian scholarship addresses digital worship in practice but not in direct dialogue with Hebrew exegesis of key worship terms (*rî'û*, *'ibdû*, *bō'û*, *hôdû*, *bārĕkû*). There is limited reflection on how digital worship can balance joy, thanksgiving, and communal presence in line with biblical mandates, beyond technological adoption. Thus, this study seeks to fill the gap by reinterpreting Psalm 100:1–5 for the Nigerian digital context, integrating exegetical rigor with theological and cultural analysis to construct a framework for worship that is biblically grounded, spiritually authentic, and contextually relevant.

## METHOD

This research employs a mixed-methods design that combines biblical exegesis and qualitative inquiry to bridge the gap between textual theology and lived liturgical experience. The rationale for this design arises from the study's central goal—to reinterpret Psalm 100 as a theological foundation for digital worship in Nigeria. A purely exegetical approach would offer theological depth but risk abstraction from practice, while a solely qualitative approach might capture experience without grounding it in scriptural authority. Therefore, integrating both methods provides a more comprehensive understanding of how ancient biblical imperatives can meaningfully shape digital liturgical expressions in a contemporary African context. As Creswell and Plano Clark argue, mixed-methods research allows for the convergence of different epistemologies, enabling theology to speak both textually and empirically (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The first component of the study was textual-exegetical analysis of Psalm 100:1–5, conducted using the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX) as primary sources. The analysis focused on lexical, syntactical, and theological features of the text, especially the five Hebrew imperatives—*rî'û*, *'ibdû*, *bō'û*, *hôdû*, and *bārĕkû*. These were examined using standard lexicons such as HALOT and BDB to uncover their semantic and liturgical nuances. Special attention was paid to the textual variant in verse 3 between the MT (“and not we ourselves”) and LXX (“and we are His”), which reveals distinct theological emphases on identity and divine ownership. Through this process, the exegesis sought to reconstruct the psalm's liturgical movement as a theological progression—from joyful proclamation and service to communal thanksgiving and blessing—offering a structure that could be translated into the digital worship environment (Adeboye, 2024; Ikechukwu, 2025; Okonkwo, 2025; Smith, 2024).

The second component consisted of qualitative interviews with ten church leaders and worship practitioners from various Christian traditions in Nigeria, including mainline Protestant, Pentecostal, and independent African congregations. Participants were purposively selected for their active involvement in designing or leading digital worship since the COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews, conducted via Zoom or face-to-face, explored their perceptions of online worship, participation, community, and the theological meanings they attribute to digital spaces. Ethical considerations were carefully observed: participants provided informed consent, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. The interviews aimed not only to document practices but also to capture the implicit theological imagination that guides them—how pastors and worshippers experience “entering God’s presence” through digital gates and courts, echoing the spatial metaphors of Psalm 100:4.

Data from both strands were analysed separately before being integrated through hermeneutical synthesis. The textual analysis generated theological categories such as joyful participation, service as devotion, and digital thresholds, while the interview data revealed empirical themes like creativity, embodiment, community, and gratitude. These were merged in a convergent analysis that mapped biblical imperatives onto empirical worship patterns, producing a framework that correlates scriptural meaning with lived digital practice. In this process, the researcher acted as an interpretive bridge, translating textual insight into practical theology and interpreting practice back into theological reflection—a dialectic that resonates with the methodology of empirical hermeneutics proposed by Dillen and Mager (Dillen & Mager, 2020).

Alongside exegesis, this research applies a contextual hermeneutic to bridge the ancient Israelite liturgical world with the Nigerian church context. In Nigeria, worship has increasingly migrated into digital spaces through live-streams, YouTube, and mobile apps. Churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) emphasize global digital prayer chains and worship congresses; Winners Chapel integrates multimedia in its Shiloh conventions; Deeper Life Bible Church employs livestreamed Bible expositions while maintaining doctrinal depth; and the Catholic Church continues to blend digital broadcast with sacramental liturgy. These churches provide living examples of how Psalm 100’s vision of joyful, communal, covenantal worship is mediated through contemporary digital forms, ensuring that worship remains participatory and transformative.

The choice of this methodological integration reflects an epistemological conviction: theology must be both faithful to the text and responsive to context. The mixed-methods approach thus enabled the study to move beyond descriptive analysis toward constructive theological praxis. By correlating the exegetical depth of Psalm 100 with the lived reality of digital worship communities, this study demonstrates that the boundaries between biblical interpretation and empirical theology are porous. The combination of exegesis and qualitative engagement not only validates Scripture as a living source for contemporary worship but also empowers communities to embody its imperatives through new media. This integrative approach, grounded in rigorous textual analysis and lived experience, constitutes the study’s principal methodological innovation and its strongest claim to originality.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Exegetical Study of Psalm 100:1–5

Translation The Book of Psalms 100

Table 1. Translation The Book of Psalms 100

The Book of Psalms 100 in Masoretic Text	The Book of Psalm 100 in English Translation
מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה הֲרִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: <sup>1</sup>	1. A Psalm of praise. Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all the earth!
עֲבַדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה בָּאוּ לְפָנָיו בְּרִנָּה: <sup>2</sup>	2. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.
דַּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ (וְלֹא) [וְלוֹ] אֲנַחְנוּ עָמּוּ וְצֹאן מִרְעִיתוֹ: <sup>3</sup>	3. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who made us, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
בָּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו   בְּתוֹדָה תִּצְרְתֶּיזוּ בְּתֵהֶלֶה הוֹדוּ־לוֹ בְּרִכּוֹ שְׂמוֹ: <sup>4</sup>	4. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him, bless His name.
כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ וְעַד־דָּר וָדָר אֲמוֹנָתוֹ: <sup>5</sup>	5. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His faithfulness endures to all generations.

#### Textual Criticism: Masoretic Text (MT), Septuagint (LXX), and Variants

Psalm 100, traditionally titled *Mizmor le-todah* (“A Psalm for Thanksgiving”), occupies a significant place in the liturgical corpus of Israelite worship. The Masoretic Text (MT) preserves a concise five-verse composition characterized by a series of imperatives—*rî’û*, *’ibdû*, *bō’û*, *hōdû*, and *bārēkû*—each functioning as performative summons to communal and embodied praise. Within the MT framework, these imperatives delineate worship as an active covenantal response, situating thanksgiving not merely as an affective disposition but as a tangible, participatory act within the covenant community. The rhythm of imperatives, combined with the psalm’s chiasmic structure, reinforces a theology of joy grounded in divine kingship and covenant fidelity.

In contrast, the Septuagint (LXX) renders key verbs with subtle yet theologically charged variations. The translation of *rî’û* as *alaxate* (“shout aloud”) accentuates the auditory and communal dimension of worship, foregrounding the externalized, celebratory nature of divine acclamation. This lexical choice implies an interpretive trajectory within Hellenistic Judaism that perceived praise as a public and audible declaration of divine sovereignty—an act not confined to Israel but extending to the *oikoumenē* (the inhabited world). Moreover, the LXX’s rendering of *’ibdû* as *latreusate* introduces a sacerdotal nuance: *latreia* in Greek often denotes cultic or priestly service, thereby associating worship with temple ritual and sacrificial devotion. This terminological shift reframes the psalm not merely as communal thanksgiving but as liturgical service rooted in the language of priestly mediation.

Textual comparison reveals that neither the MT nor the LXX omits substantial content; rather, they represent distinct hermeneutical trajectories. The MT underscores covenantal joy

and relational reciprocity between Yahweh and His people, while the LXX amplifies the aspect of priestly service and cosmic worship. These interpretive divergences likely reflect differing theological and liturgical contexts—the MT preserving Israel’s covenantal ethos within the Jerusalem cult, and the LXX adapting the text for diasporic worship where sacrificial service was reimagined through prayer and praise.

In contemporary hermeneutical discourse, this textual plurality invites a dialogical reading rather than a hierarchical one. Both traditions contribute to a richer understanding of *todah* as encompassing not only verbal thanksgiving but also ritual participation and priestly mediation. Within the framework of digital liturgy, where embodiment and communal participation are redefined, these textual tensions challenge interpreters to integrate the MT’s call for covenantal joy with the LXX’s vision of worship as sacrificial service. Thus, the interplay between MT and LXX extends beyond philological interest—it becomes a theological conversation about the nature of worship, embodiment, and community across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

#### *Lexical Study of Key Hebrew Terms in Psalm 100*

The Hebrew verb *rî’û* (רִיעוּ), derived from *rûa’* (“to shout, cry out”), signifies far more than casual joy; it conveys a communal and covenantal acclamation of Yahweh’s kingship. Its frequent appearance in enthronement psalms (e.g., Ps. 95:1–2) situates it within a liturgical context where the *teru’ah*—the resounding shout—functions as both praise and proclamation. Furthermore, the imperative *rî’û* embodies the inherently public nature of Hebrew worship, emphasizing that devotion to Yahweh was never intended as private contemplation but as an audible confession of allegiance that reinforces communal identity. In this sense, *rî’û* functions as an act of covenant renewal—where sound becomes theology, and praise becomes a performative declaration of loyalty.

The verb *’abdû* (עֲבֹדוּ), from *’abad* (“to serve”), encapsulates Israel’s covenantal vocation of worshipful service (Exod. 3:12). In Psalm 100:2, the phrase *’abdû et-YHWH bešimḥāh* (“serve the LORD with gladness”) explicitly rejects any conception of worship as drudgery. Instead, the joy (*šimḥāh*) that qualifies the service transforms obedience into delight. Firth interprets this as a theological bridge between cultic worship and ethical vocation, asserting that Hebrew *’abad* integrates liturgical participation and moral responsibility. Within a contemporary African context, this interpretation reminds Nigerian congregations that authentic worship must unite sacred ritual with vocational integrity (Firth, 2021).

The imperative *bō’û* (בֹּאוּ), derived from *bō’* (“to come, enter”), in Psalm 100:4—*bō’û biš’ārāyw bētôdāh* (“enter His gates with thanksgiving”)—implies intentional, covenantal approach rather than passive attendance. The verb’s spatial orientation (*lepānāyw*, “before His presence”) symbolizes entry into divine proximity. Firth underscores that *bō’û* in this context conveys liturgical participation that is both physical and spiritual, implying that access to God’s presence demands covenantal readiness and communal joy. Thus, “entering” becomes an enacted theology of relationship and belonging, rather than mere ritual formality (Firth, 2021).

The verb *hōdû* (הוֹדוּ), from *yādâ* (“to confess, to acknowledge”), embodies thanksgiving as public covenant recognition rather than internalized gratitude. In the Hebrew worldview, thanksgiving (*tōdāh*) is performative—it verbalizes God’s faithfulness before the community. That *hōdû* functions as a liturgical confession of God’s ongoing covenant loyalty (*hesed*), an act that binds the worshipper’s testimony to divine history. Applied to the digital worship context, this term challenges modern congregations to resist privatized spirituality by reclaiming *hōdû* as an outward, communal confession of divine goodness.

Finally, *bārēkû* (בָּרַכּוּ), from *bārak* (“to bless”), denotes both divine benevolence and human response. In Psalm 100:4, blessing is directed “his name” (*šēmô*), affirming Yahweh’s unchanging goodness (*tōb*) and steadfast love (*hesed*). Firth notes that *bārēkû* expresses covenantal honor rather than transactional reciprocity; to “bless” God is to acknowledge His ethical constancy and to align one’s life accordingly. Thus, in Hebrew theology, blessing becomes an ethical imperative—an act of covenantal solidarity that integrates praise, gratitude, and moral conduct (Firth, 2021).

Collectively, these lexical nuances reveal that Psalm 100 is not merely a call to liturgical joy but a theological manifesto that unites sound, service, access, confession, and blessing into a holistic vision of covenantal worship. The verbs form a progression—from proclamation (*rî’û*), to service (*’ibdû*), to entry (*bō’û*), to confession (*hōdû*), and finally to blessing (*bārēkû*)—each deepening the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and His people. This linguistic and theological coherence underscores the psalm’s enduring relevance for contemporary worship, whether embodied in physical liturgy or mediated through digital forms of communal praise.

#### *Theological Themes of Psalm 100:1–5*

In the first place, the theme of joy in worship is emphatically proclaimed through the psalm’s cluster of imperatives (*rî’û*, *bō’û*, *hōdû*) that frame the act of worship as deliberate, communal, and exuberant rather than optional or passive. The call to “make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!” (v. 1) situates worship in a universal horizon, transcending a narrow ethnic or national setting. The imperative to “serve the LORD with gladness; come before his presence with singing” (v. 2) makes joy (Hebrew *šimḥâh*) not an incidental by-product of worship, but the normative stance of the worshipping community. Many commentators note that the Hebrew verb used (“make a joyful shout” / *rûa’*) evokes the language of royal acclamation or enthronement, thus linking worship to acknowledgment of divine kingship. In this sense, worship is not simply an emotional response to favourable circumstances but a covenant-shaped orientation of the community toward Yahweh (Adeboye, 2024). Thus, in contexts where material hardship or social instability threaten the experience of joy, the psalm serves as a theological resource: it invites the worshipper to root their identity and hope in the reign and faithfulness of God, rather than in fluctuating circumstances.

Second, the theme of covenant identity emerges most powerfully in verse 3, which anchors the worship call in the confession: “Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” This verse furnishes two

crucial theological motifs: first, the Creator-creature relationship (“he made us, and not we ourselves”), which affirms divine sovereignty and human dependence; second, the shepherd-flock metaphor (“we are his people, the sheep of his pasture”) which evokes pastoral care, belonging, and divine ownership. According to the NIV Application Commentary, this verse serves as the structural pivot of the psalm—the three imperatives before and the three imperatives after are arranged around this central confession of covenantal belonging. From this vantage point, worship is not individual performance but communal reaffirmation of God’s claim on his people. The theological implication is that participation in worship is an act of recognition: the worshipper acknowledges that they do not belong to themselves, but to God; that their identity is shaped by divine calling. That may have significant implications for communities whose sense of identity is fragmented or under pressure—worship becomes the locus where divine-human relationality is reaffirmed.

Third, the theme of thanksgiving and communal worship manifests in verses 4–5: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” The imagery of “gates” and “courts” evokes the temple or cultic context, suggesting that this psalm was composed for liturgical use. The merging of thanksgiving (*hōdû*) and blessing (*bārēkû*) underscores that praise is not merely expressive but responsive—it is the community’s acknowledgment of God’s goodness, mercy, and faithfulness. Guzik’s commentary remarks on the dual dimension: entering the courts, and then offering thanks and praise, indicates that worship is both approach and response. Moreover, contemporary reflections emphasise that thanksgiving in this psalm is more than ritual procedure—it functions ethically, shaping a community that knows itself as recipients of divine covenant-loyalty, and so lives in grateful and faithful obedience.

In sum, Psalm 100 does not merely call for worship as an ancillary act of religion, but constructs it as a theological event: joyful proclamation, grounded in covenant identity, enacted in communal thank-offering and praise, undergirded by the character of God (goodness, steadfast love, faithfulness). For modern congregations—whether in contexts of plenty or of poverty—this psalm summons them to root worship in the enduring character of God rather than in transient feelings or circumstances.

#### *Wisdom’s Perspective: Competence and Honor in Worship*

Psalm 100, though liturgical, also resonates with wisdom theology by connecting competence in worship with honor (E. de J. Abel et al., 2024). The imperatives require attentiveness, discipline, and skill in entering God’s presence. This echoes Proverbs 22:29, where diligence (*hārûṣ*) leads to standing before kings. According to Opade, true worship requires both competence and covenantal faithfulness, rejecting mediocrity in spiritual and vocational life (Opade, 2023). Within Nigeria, where corruption and mediocrity often plague institutions, Psalm 100 offers a paradigm for honorable living. To worship joyfully (*rî’û*), serve faithfully (*’ibdû*), and give thanks (*hōdû*) is to embody a life of covenantal competence, contributing to both spiritual vitality and national flourishing.

The exegetical study of Psalm 100:1–5 reveals a robust theology of worship rooted in joy, covenant service, thanksgiving, and communal identity. Textual criticism shows continuity across MT and LXX traditions, while lexical insights into *rî'û*, *'ibdû*, *bô'û*, *hôdû*, and *bārĕkû* highlight the psalm's theological richness. Far from being a relic of ancient Israelite liturgy, Psalm 100 remains a living guide for Nigerian churches, especially in digital contexts where joyful proclamation, covenant service, and thanksgiving must retain their biblical depth. Its wisdom dimension challenges worshippers toward competence and honor, ensuring that worship is not only a spiritual act but also a catalyst for societal transformation.

### **Nigerian Contextual Application of Psalm 100:1–5**

Psalm 100:1–5, with its emphases on joyful proclamation (*rî'û*), covenantal service (*'ibdû*), thanksgiving (*hôdû*), and blessing (*bārĕkû*), finds powerful resonance in the Nigerian Christian context, where worship is both deeply communal and increasingly mediated through digital platforms. The Nigerian church landscape, marked by its diversity and rapid growth, provides fertile ground for reinterpreting the psalm in light of contemporary liturgical practices. Four major ecclesial traditions—Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Winners' Chapel (Living Faith Church Worldwide), Deeper Life Bible Church, and the Catholic Church—illustrate different trajectories of adapting worship in the digital age.

#### *RCCG: Global Livestreaming as Extension of rî'û Covenantal Service.*

The RCCG represents one of the most influential Pentecostal movements in Nigeria and globally. Its worship ethos is characterized by exuberant praise, mass choirs, and vibrant congregational participation, aligning closely with the psalmist's imperative to *rî'û laYHWH*, "make a joyful noise to the LORD." The annual Holy Ghost Congress and Festival of Life gatherings are streamed worldwide, often drawing millions of viewers across continents.

According to Adeboye, RCCG's digital ministry embodies "a theology of joy-in-mission," where livestreaming is not a substitute but an expansion of physical worship. By transforming *rî'û* into a global broadcast, RCCG situates praise as both proclamation and evangelism (Adeboye, 2024). Recent reports on Nigerian digital religion (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2024) confirm that RCCG accounts for one of the highest church-related data streaming activities during peak services.

In addition, Pastor Adeyemi of RCCG Chapel of Praise, Tanke, Ilorin explains that the parish leverages Facebook and Mixlr for livestreaming, while WhatsApp groups sustain prayer chains and Bible study discussions (Pastor Adeyemi, March 2025). For him, online worship embodies the Psalmist's call to *rî'û* ("make a joyful noise"), as members abroad remain connected and continue to "serve the Lord with gladness" (*'ibdû*). He stresses that this continuity reinforces integrity and discipline in society, especially among young professionals. However, challenges remain in internet connectivity and older members' skepticism toward digital spirituality.

According to Pastor Olanrewaju of RCCG Living Spring, GRA, Ilorin, the parish embraced YouTube and Zoom during COVID-19 and has sustained them, with youths driving content

creation, editing, and graphics (Pastor Olarewaju Oladipo, March 2025). He interprets online testimonies and praise as a modern embodiment of *hōdû* (“give thanks”), where gratitude is expressed before the global community. He highlights how digital worship creates entrepreneurial opportunities, with members becoming media freelancers, thereby tackling youth unemployment. Yet, infrastructural challenges—electricity instability and financial strain for equipment—continue to limit effectiveness.

Pastor Okediran of RCCG Faith Sanctuary, Sango, Ilorin notes that his parish utilizes Facebook Live, Telegram, and devotional podcasts to sustain diaspora engagement (Pastor Samuel Ajayi, March 2025). He sees online participation as fulfilling *bō’û* (“enter”), reimagining entry into God’s courts as participation in virtual spaces. For him, streaming sermons on integrity provides a digital pulpit that influences civil servants, entrepreneurs, and political leaders toward accountability. However, he laments the shortened attention span of digital audiences, as multitasking often dilutes spiritual focus during online worship.

Pastor Ajayi of RCCG City of Refuge Agbo-Oba, Ilorin affirms that the parish relies on Instagram Live for youths and Mixlr radio for members with limited internet. He interprets *bārĕkû* (“bless”) as fulfilled when members post testimonies and gratitude messages on digital platforms, making online worship a public witness (Pastor Esther Ogunleye, March 2025). The parish also trains youths in digital diligence, linking worship to skill development. Yet, high data costs hinder accessibility, and there is a tension between innovation and the risk of adopting secular media aesthetics that compromise sacredness.

Collectively, the four pastors demonstrate that: Digital platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Mixlr, Zoom, Instagram, Telegram) are now central to RCCG’s liturgical practice in Ilorin. In their views, Psalm 100’s imperatives—*rî’û*, *’ibdû*, *bō’û*, *hōdû*, *bārĕkû*—are reinterpreted within the digital space, showing continuity between ancient covenantal worship and modern streaming. National relevance emerges as digital worship not only sustains faith but also equips youths with skills, fosters integrity, and encourages civic responsibility. Challenges persist, especially infrastructural (power, data, internet) and theological (distraction, sacredness vs. digital aesthetics). Thus, RCCG in Ilorin reflects a microcosm of Nigerian Christianity’s encounter with digital liturgy, balancing innovation with fidelity to Psalm 100’s vision of joyful, thankful, and covenantal worship.

However, scholars such as Musa (2025) caution that the digital amplification of joyful worship risks shifting emphasis from covenantal participation to spectacle. Joy becomes consumable content, raising questions of depth and discipleship. Yet, the RCCG’s digital joy-making illustrates how Psalm 100 can be embodied through mediated platforms that extend covenantal praise beyond geographical boundaries.

#### *Winners’ Chapel: Media Excellence and Digital Outreach*

Winners’ Chapel, founded by Bishop David Oyedepo, is notable for its emphasis on excellence, prosperity, and global outreach. Its massive headquarters at Canaanland, Ota, houses Faith Tabernacle, one of the largest church auditoriums in the world, alongside state-of-the-art media infrastructure. This reflects a commitment to the wisdom perspective of

competence (*ḥārûṣ* in Proverbs 22:29), applied in worship and digital engagement. Okonkwo notes that Winners' Chapel integrates Psalm 100's imperatives into a digital liturgical strategy (Okonkwo, 2025). The *rî'û* of praise is broadcast with high technical quality, while *'ibdû* is framed through a theology of covenant service linked to prosperity and dominion. Faith Tabernacle's livestreaming platforms, including Domi Radio and Covenant Hour of Prayer, demonstrate media as mission, aligning with *bō'û*—"enter his presence"—through accessible online portals.

The three pastors interviewed—Pastor Daniel O. Adebayo (Tanke), Pastor Grace I. Adekunle (GRA), and Pastor Michael T. Olalekan (Fate Road)—shared common insights on how Winners' Chapel has embraced media excellence and digital outreach in the context of worship and national transformation. Winners' Chapel has strategically adopted YouTube, Facebook Live, Mixlr, Zoom, and Instagram Live as platforms for streaming services, conducting online cell fellowships, and sharing devotional content. WhatsApp and Telegram are also used for prayer chains and discipleship materials. These platforms have allowed the church to reach not only members in Ilorin but also audiences across Nigeria and the global diaspora. Significantly, media units have become hubs for training young professionals in photography, video production, sound engineering, and content creation, ensuring technical excellence in worship delivery.

The pastors emphasized that Psalm 100's call to "make a joyful noise to the Lord" and "serve the Lord with gladness" finds new expression in digital worship. Online platforms have become extended sanctuaries where members "enter His courts with thanksgiving" (v. 4) regardless of physical location. Testimonies, thanksgiving services, and online choirs all embody the spirit of covenant gratitude and joyful service described in Psalm 100. In this way, digital worship not only sustains the biblical theology of praise but also amplifies it through global accessibility.

The pastors agreed that digital worship contributes to Nigeria's growth by empowering youths, creating entrepreneurial opportunities, and fostering value reorientation. Many young people trained in church media now run professional businesses, reducing unemployment and enhancing creativity. Furthermore, digital worship spreads biblical ethics and integrity messages, equipping members to be responsible citizens and nation-builders. Thus, digital platforms become channels of both spiritual renewal and socio-economic transformation. A 2025 report by the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission highlights Winners' Chapel as a model for faith-based digital broadcasting, particularly for its integration of multimedia production into church life. Critics, however, raise concerns of over-professionalization, where worship risks being reduced to a performance industry. Still, the commitment to media excellence reflects Psalm 100's linkage of joy and competence, ensuring worship remains both celebratory and credible in a digital age (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2024).

Despite the gains, the pastors highlighted persistent challenges. High data costs and unstable electricity supply hinder consistent access to online services. Financial investment in digital equipment is heavy, making sustainability a challenge for many congregations. In addition, digital worship faces spiritual distractions, as some members treat online services

casually or are drawn into entertainment while worshipping. Ensuring reverence and sacredness in online spaces remains a pressing issue.

### *Deeper Life: Conservatism Meeting Gradual Digital Adaptation*

Deeper Life Bible Church, under the leadership of Pastor W.F. Kumuyi, is historically known for its conservative liturgical ethos—emphasizing simplicity, holiness, and a strict separation from worldliness. Traditionally, this conservatism limited the church’s embrace of digital technology. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic forced significant adaptation, as services moved online. Nwachukwu observes that Deeper Life’s digital transition illustrates the tension between tradition and adaptation (Nwachukwu, 2024). The imperative ‘*ibdû*—“serve the LORD with gladness”—has been cautiously mediated through digital platforms, with online Bible studies and evangelistic crusades reaching broader audiences. Unlike RCCG or Winners’ Chapel, Deeper Life retains a subdued approach, where *rî’û* is not loud proclamation but reverent proclamation.

Pastoral insights from Deeper Life Bible Church in Ilorin (Offa Garage, Ganmo, and Fate Road) reveal how the denomination is adapting to digital worship in line with Psalm 100’s call to joyful, covenantal service. All three pastors—Pastor John O. Adekunle (Offa Garage), Pastor Mary A. Kolade (Ganmo), and Pastor Peter T. Alabi (Fate Road)—emphasized the growing use of YouTube, Mixlr, Telegram, Zoom, and WhatsApp for services, prayer meetings, and follow-up. While YouTube and Mixlr allow livestreaming of Sunday services and crusades, WhatsApp groups remain crucial for evangelism coordination and house fellowship engagement. Podcasts and audio broadcasts are also being used to reach members with limited internet access (Adekunle, 2025; Alabi, 2025; Kolade, 2025).

For Pastor Adekunle, digital worship embodies *rî’û*—“making a joyful noise”—as members in diaspora join in worship beyond church walls. Pastor Kolade highlighted *hôdû* (thanksgiving) and *bārĕkû* (blessing), noting that online testimonies extend God’s praise to wider audiences (Adekunle, 2025). Pastor Alabi interpreted *bō’û* (“enter His courts”) as believers entering digital spaces with gratitude, ensuring the communal spirit of worship remains alive. Together, their reflections show how Psalm 100 finds new expression in digital platforms (Alabi, 2025).

The pastors agreed that digital worship strengthens values essential for national development. Pastor Adekunle stressed youth discipline and skill acquisition through media volunteering. Pastor Kolade emphasized that online holiness and integrity messages shape workers, traders, and students for societal transformation. Pastor Alabi pointed to the role of digital sermons in encouraging accountability and ethical leadership, thereby fostering civic responsibility and public trust. Despite these opportunities, the pastors acknowledged persistent challenges. Pastor Adekunle pointed to poor electricity supply and costly data subscriptions. Pastor Kolade noted issues of casual participation, with members treating online worship lightly. Pastor Alabi stressed the perception among some members that digital worship is inferior, coupled with distractions at home that hinder deep spiritual engagement. Nigerian newspaper reports (The Guardian Nigeria, 2024) confirm that Deeper Life’s global

crusades now attract hundreds of thousands online, signaling a cautious but significant digital embrace. While some members resist digital liturgy as “compromise,” the church demonstrates that even conservative traditions can reinterpret Psalm 100’s imperatives in mediated spaces, preserving integrity while expanding outreach (Adekunle, 2025; Alabi, 2025; Kolade, 2025).

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Ten Interviews Revealed Four Dominant Categories

Theme	Representative Quote	Interpretation
Joyful Participation	“Online worship is still worship when hearts connect—even through screens.” ( <i>Participant</i> )	Digital gatherings replicate communal joy through music, comments, and emojis, echoing <i>rî’û la-YHWH</i> .
Service and Creativity	“Serving God digitally means using our media skills as ministry.” ( <i>Participant</i> )	The imperative <i>‘ibdû YHWH be-šimhāh</i> manifests as volunteer media service, livestream production, and digital evangelism.
Sacred Entry (Threshold Metaphor)	“When I log in, it feels like entering church—it’s our new gate.” ( <i>Participant</i> )	Digital platforms (Zoom, YouTube Live) function as “gates” ( <i>šā’arîm</i> )—ritual thresholds for sacred participation.
Thanksgiving and Community	“We share testimonies and emojis of thanks in the chat—it’s our digital amen.” ( <i>Participant</i> )	Online thanksgiving re-creates communal gratitude through textual and audiovisual cues, corresponding to <i>hōdû</i> and <i>bārēkû</i> .

The interviews also surfaced challenges: distractions, digital fatigue, unstable connectivity, and concerns about embodiment (“it’s harder to feel God’s presence when not physically gathered”). Yet participants emphasized spiritual continuity—that God’s presence transcends physicality, echoing the psalm’s universal inclusivity.

### Dangers or Effects of Reinterpreting Psalm 100 for Digital Liturgy in Nigeria

*Reduced Sense of Sacred Presence and Embodiment:* Digital worship often lacks embodied practices such as singing together, touch, and shared sacred space, which are crucial for experiencing God’s presence (Horsfield, 2023). *Shallow Engagement and Distraction:* Online platforms encourage multitasking, leading to shallow participation and reduced contemplative engagement with Psalm 100’s call to thanksgiving (Okoro, 2024). *Unequal Access and Digital Divide:* Many rural churches in Nigeria lack stable electricity and internet, creating exclusion and reinforcing socio-economic divides (Oluwaseun, 2024). *Privacy, Security, and Exploitation Risks:* Digital liturgy exposes worshipers to privacy violations, cyber-exploitation, and fraudulent activities when media governance is weak (Ngugi & Kamau, 2024). *Diminished Community and Interpersonal Relationships:* Virtual worship can weaken pastoral bonds, fellowship, and accountability, eroding the communal fabric central to worship (Muriithi, 2025). *Potential for Liturgical and Theological Dilution:* Liturgy may be simplified or altered to fit digital media formats, compromising the theological depth of Psalm 100’s themes

(Horsfield, 2023). Consumerism and Passive Consumption: Digital worship risks turning liturgy into “content” for passive consumption, weakening the ethic of active discipleship and communal responsibility (Okoro, 2024).

### Relevance to Broader Nigerian Churches

The reimagining of Psalm 100:1–5 within the context of digital liturgy bears significant relevance for the broader spectrum of Nigerian churches beyond denominations such as RCCG, Winners’ Chapel, Deeper Life, and the Catholic Church. The Nigerian ecclesial landscape is marked by diversity in theology, liturgical practice, and technological adoption. However, across these differences, the principles embedded in Psalm 100—joyful proclamation (*rí’û*), covenantal service (*’ibdû*), communal thanksgiving (*hòdû*), and covenantal acknowledgment (*bārěkû*)—serve as unifying theological anchors. These themes provide both a corrective and a transformative framework for churches navigating the tension between tradition and digital modernity.

Recent scholarship highlights that Nigerian churches increasingly operate within a mediatized religious environment where worship practices are shaped by digital tools and streaming technologies (Okonkwo, 2025). The integration of digital liturgy has thus moved from being an emergency response to COVID-19 to becoming a sustained model of spiritual engagement. The capacity of churches to remain faithful to Scripture while engaging in new media spaces will determine the strength of their witness in Nigeria’s pluralist society (Ikechukwu, 2025).

For Pentecostal churches, such as RCCG and Christ Embassy, digital liturgy enables global connectivity and missionary expansion. Adeboye argues that livestreamed services function as “digital revivals” that carry the ethos of Psalm 100’s joyful noise into transnational spaces, allowing Nigerians in the diaspora to remain spiritually integrated (Adeboye, 2024). Similarly, Catholic parishes have used online Masses to sustain sacramental participation, revealing that digital mediation can coexist with liturgical tradition when approached theologically (Eze, 2025).

At the same time, conservative groups such as Deeper Life Bible Church reveal that hesitancy toward digital innovation is often rooted in concerns about maintaining holiness and reverence. Yet, as Kolawole observes, even conservative churches are finding pathways to adapt selectively—integrating Bible study livestreams and digital discipleship without abandoning in-person communal sanctity (Kolawole, 2025). This balance resonates with Psalm 100’s call to enter God’s courts (*bō’û*) with thanksgiving, which today includes both physical sanctuaries and mediated digital courts.

The relevance of digital liturgy to broader Nigerian churches also lies in its socio-ethical implications. Worship as service (*’ibdû*) demands integrity, diligence, and civic responsibility. In a nation battling corruption and weakened moral frameworks, churches have the opportunity to use digital spaces to disciple citizens into godly values that transcend denominational boundaries (Olawale, 2024). This aligns with the national quest for human flourishing and sustainable development by embedding biblical ethics within the digital public square.

Thus, the reinterpretation of Psalm 100:1–5 in Nigerian digital liturgy is not limited to specific denominations but extends as a resource for the entire Christian community. Whether through Pentecostal vibrancy, Catholic sacramentality, or Evangelical conservatism, all Nigerian churches face the challenge and opportunity of reshaping worship for a mediated age. The broader relevance is clear: digital liturgy, when rooted in Scripture and theological reflection, enables Nigerian churches to preserve covenant identity, foster communal thanksgiving, and model integrity for society at large.

### Recommendations

First, Promoting Digital Equity: Government agencies and church leaders should collaborate to expand affordable internet access and digital tools in rural communities. Second, Developing Contextual Liturgies: Churches must design online worship expressions that integrate indigenous languages, songs, and cultural symbols. Third, Equipping Leaders and Laity: Training initiatives should be established to build competence in digital liturgy among pastors, worship leaders, and congregants. Fourth, Safeguarding Ethical Practices: Christian communities should resist the commodification of online worship by emphasizing authenticity, accountability, and spiritual depth.

### CONCLUSION

This study reinterpreted Psalm 100:1–5 as a theological framework for digital liturgy in Nigeria through a mixed-methods approach that combined exegetical textual analysis and qualitative interviews. The exegetical investigation of the Masoretic Text (MT) and Septuagint (LXX) revealed that the psalm is structured around five imperatives—*rî'û*, *'ibdû*, *bō'û*, *hôdû*, and *bārĕkû*—each representing a distinct movement of worship: joyful proclamation, participatory service, covenantal entry, thanksgiving, and blessing. Meanwhile, qualitative data from ten Nigerian church leaders demonstrated that these same liturgical movements manifest organically in digital worship environments. Participants associated online worship with joy, service, and community, while recognizing “digital entry” as a new form of sacred threshold. Integrating these two dimensions, the study concludes that Psalm 100’s theological imperatives remain viable within digital worship practices, provided they are intentionally structured and contextually adapted. This confirms that digital liturgy is not a technological deviation from sacred practice but a continuation of covenantal worship through mediated presence.

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