

ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER STUDY AS A TOOL FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND LIFE TRANSFORMATION

by

George M. Wasson

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes of participants as a result of completing the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study. This research was an evaluative study that utilized a pretest, posttest, and focus group design with no comparison group. The sample for this study included three churches of diverse theological identities.

Three scales were used in this research: the Religious Behavior Scale, the Christian Orthodoxy Scale, and the Religious World View Scale. A statistically significant change occurred on all three scales as a result of completing the Christian Believer Study.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
AN EVALUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER STUDY AS A TOOL FOR
DISCIPLESHIP AND LIFE TRANSFORMATION

presented by

George M. Wasson

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

Virginia J. Holme

Mentor

April 29, 2002

Date

Bill T. Amott

Internal Reader

April 29, 2002

Date

Paul F. Tanker

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

April 29, 2002

Date

Keslie A. Andrews

Vice President for Academic Development
And Distributed Learning

April 29, 2002

Date

**AN EVALUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER STUDY
AS A TOOL FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND LIFE TRANSFORMATION**

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

George M. Wasson

May 2002

© 2002

George Mitchell Wasson

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter	
1. Overview of the Study	1
Background	1
Christian Believer	6
Overview of the Study	10
The Problem	11
Statement of Purpose	14
Research Questions	14
Definition of Terms	15
Context of the Study	17
Methodology	17
Sample	19
Variables	21
Instrument and Data Collection	21
Limitations and Generalizability	23
Overview	24
2. A Selective Review of the Literature	25
Literature Review	25

Anthropology	.....	26
Culture	.....	28
Worldview	.....	32
Western Worldview	.....	40
Biblical Worldview	.....	44
Conclusion	.....	50
Linguistics	.....	51
Language Defined	.....	51
Characteristics of Language	.....	52
Functions of Language	.....	56
Language as Communication	.....	61
Process of Communication	.....	64
Conclusion	.....	66
Theology	.....	66
Communicating Theology	.....	68
Theology of Luke	.....	74
Father Language	.....	77
Conclusion	.....	84
Summary	.....	84
3. Research Design	.....	86
Design of the Study	.....	86
Research Questions	.....	86
Research Question #1	.....	87

Research Question #2	87
Population and Sample	87
St. Luke’s United Methodist Church	88
Zionsville United Methodist Church	88
Memorial United Methodist Church	89
Methodology	90
Variables	91
Instrumentation	92
Data Collection	94
Data Analysis	95
4. Findings of the Study	97
Profile of Subjects	98
Reliability	99
Descriptive Data	100
Changes in the Sample	101
Christian Orthodoxy and Religious Worldview	101
Religious Behavior	103
Changes between Churches	105
Intervening Variables	107
Summary of Significant Findings	107
5. Summary and Conclusions	109
Major Findings	114
Implications of Findings and Practical Applications	115

Weaknesses of the Study	117
Contributions to Research Methodology	118
Further Studies	119
Concluding Reflections	120
 Appendixes	
A. Christian Believer Doctrine	121
B. Christian Believer Study Series Questionnaire	122
C. Religious Behavior Scale	126
D. Christian Orthodoxy Scale	127
E. Religious World View Scale	129
F. Christian Believer Focus Groups Grand Tour Questions	130
G. Focus Group Reminder Card	131
H. Glossary of Statistical Terminology	132
 Works Cited	 134
Works Consulted	137

TABLES

Table

4.1	Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Scales	101
4.2	Grand Mean Multiple Comparisons	106

FIGURES

Figure

2.1	Worldview Development	37
-----	-----------------------	-------	----

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer my deepest appreciation to:

Toddy Holeman. Your guidance, encouragement, and friendship through this project were awesome. I could not have found a more helpful mentor. You helped me achieve one of my biggest dreams!

Bill Arnold. Your friendship, support, and scholarship have made me a better pastor. You have made a tremendous difference in my life. Thank you for all your help as my second reader.

My fellow Beeson Pastors. I could not have asked for a better group of people to share an incredible year. Each one of you made an impact in my life and in my ministry. Thank you for being great role models!

Dale Galloway. Thank you for modeling leadership and sharing your wealth of knowledge. I am a better leader because of you.

Stacy Minger. You are a great friend. Your encouragement, support, and willingness to lend a helping hand kept this project moving forward. You knew when to ask about the progress, when to listen, and how to help. Thank you.

The congregation of Cloverdale United Methodist Church. I love being your pastor. Thank you for welcoming me into your lives and supporting me in this project. I count it a privilege to serve you.

My family. Your love and support gave me the courage and the energy to hang in there. You helped me set high goals and never settle. You taught me to give my all and do it with integrity. Thank you for leading me to Christ.

Dave, Kristyn, and Matt. I love you guys! You cared, listened, and cheered when I needed it. Thanks for being great friends!

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Background

The apostle Paul tells the Christians in Ephesus that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, the shaping, controlling, and strengthening piece that holds the church together (Eph. 2:20ff). I compare that to the role my parents played in raising me to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ. They guided me when I needed guidance. They controlled my behavior when it needed controlling, and they released me gradually to experience life at age-appropriate times. They gave me strength and assurance by their love, support, and sacrifice. Growing up in a Christian home gave me a firm foundation to grow into adulthood.

As a family we regularly attended worship. I sang in the youth choir, attended Sunday school, went on mission trips, and actively participated in U.M.Y.F. (United Methodist Youth Fellowship). I attended confirmation class in the sixth grade, and I was confirmed 8 September 1974. Throughout my childhood my parents laid a strong foundation in the Christian faith until the time I would profess my desire to have a personal relationship with the Lord.

In the years that followed, my mother attended and graduated from nursing school, and my father moved up the corporate ladder. Each promotion necessitated a move: Ft. Wayne, Indiana, to Sylvania, Ohio, then to Indianapolis, Indiana. We arrived in Indianapolis at the beginning of my junior year in high school. Though we continued to worship as a family, my involvement in extra-church activities began to wane. Church became exclusively a Sunday morning activity.

The ensuing years were focused on professional and financial gain. Following graduation from Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis, even church attendance and worship began to diminish, though never completely dropped off. I guess you could say that I made time when I had time. I worked in retail and that required working on most Sundays. Though I am sure I could have found a church with alternative worship times, I was not very motivated. Church simply did not seem to have much relevance to my life.

I reentered the church shortly after my twenty-fifth birthday. I had reached a great deal of financial and professional success (as the world defines), though my personal relationships were shallow and, for the most part, insignificant. Desiring to have close and deeper friendships as well as experiencing a general emptiness drew me back to the church.

Shortly after my return to the church, I felt God calling me into the ordained ministry. I met with Allen Rumble, one of the associate pastors at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. He gave me puzzling advice. He said, "If you can do anything else, do it." Though I had no idea what he meant by this statement, I came to appreciate his candidness and advice. His advice gave me the permission I needed to stay in my chosen vocation. I did, however, begin to reorder and reprioritize my time. I became more active in the church, I helped start a young singles program, and I began working with the junior high youth.

In November 1991, the president of the company for which I worked, L. S. Ayres, announced a merger effective in ninety days. The merger meant that those of us who were relocatable and willing to move might have jobs. Due to my job performance and history

with the company, I was confident they would take care of me.

I began my new position at Foley's in Houston, Texas on 8 December 1991.

Shortly after relocating to Houston, I became active at The Woodlands United Methodist Church in The Woodlands, Texas. I believe moving to Texas was providential. The church was over an hour from my new job. Buying a home close to the church would require a long commute—something I said I would never do! In God's surprising and mysterious grace, I was drawn to and bought a home in The Woodlands.

Shortly after I moved to The Woodlands, Ken Werlein was appointed as one of the associate pastors. Ken and I developed a strong friendship, and he began to disciple and mentor me in my relationship with the Lord. We met weekly for Bible Study, discipleship, mentoring, prayer, and fellowship. In less than five months, my walk with Christ and my knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith was transformed. I was transformed. I became a fully-committed follower of Jesus Christ. As I began to understand better what a relationship with Jesus Christ involved, I became a prolific reader. I was hungry for knowledge.

During this time my passion for teaching and discipleship began to take hold. Although I had grown up in the church, I realized two important facts about my faith. First, I realized that I never had language to communicate or explain what I believed. I avoided questions about the Bible, my faith, or how social issues related to being a Christian because I simply did not know how to answer them. Second, and even more importantly, I realize now that I really did not know what I believed. I was great at regurgitating what others had told and taught me, but I did not have the language or the knowledge to articulate clearly what I believed as a Christian.

In October 1992, God's call on my life to the ordained ministry resurfaced. Responding to the challenges of discipleship, growing in my knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, and recognizing my desire to submit completely and be obedient to God, I began studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in February 1993. After 3 ½ years at Asbury, I began my first full-time appointment as an ordained United Methodist minister.

During my first year as an associate pastor at John Wesley United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, I taught Disciple I Bible Study. The first class revealed that most of the women in the class (they were all women) were in the same place I had been almost four years ago. None of them had read or knew much Scripture, and most of them knew very little about the truths of the Bible or the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. What they did know or believe was virtually impossible for them to articulate, but they were all hungry.

The first class was a general introduction to Disciple as well as a get acquainted time. Many of them shared that they had signed up for Disciple because they wanted to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and thought this class would be one of the best places to learn. Thirty-four weeks later their lives had been transformed. At the end of the last class, I invited each participant to share her thoughts and feelings about the class. Without exception each one shared how much she had grown in her love for God, her knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, how she had become more committed to her church, and how her relationship with her family and spouse had improved. Participation in Disciple I had transformed their lives.

Teaching Disciple Bible Study birthed a passion for teaching and discipleship. I

grew to understand and take seriously Jesus' mandate to his disciples to

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matt. 28:19-20, NRSV).

I believe that this Great Commission of Jesus can be broken down into two over-arching mandates. The first mandate is making disciples built upon a firm foundation of the truths of the Bible ("making disciples ... teaching them"). Jesus' imperative supports the principle that we can only teach what we know. The second mandate is to make a difference in the context of community ("baptizing them ... teaching them"). The Christian life is always lived out in community, and therefore we learn and grow in community.

Disciple Bible Study seeks to fulfill the first part of this mandate. Participants in Disciple Bible Study learn the biblical story. The emphasis is on reading passages in context, which generally means that large portions of Scripture are read in sequence. In other words, the context of Disciple Bible Study is the biblical text itself. Disciple Bible Study has four independent studies. Disciple I, "Becoming Disciples through Bible Study," provides an overview of the entire Bible. Disciple II, "Into the Word, Into the World," studies the books of Genesis, Exodus, Luke, and Acts. Disciple III, "Remember Who You Are," studies the prophets and the letters of Paul. Disciple IV, "Under the Tree of Life," studies the Old Testament writings, the Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John, James, Jude, and Revelation.

The history and the activity of the Christian community are not a formal part of Disciple Bible Study. The content of Disciple Bible Study is the biblical text itself.

Knowing the biblical text is where the Christian Believer Study begins (see below). While no formal Bible knowledge or study is required to take the Christian Believer Study, the Christian Believer Study recognizes that doctrine begins with the Bible. Doctrine then reflects the conclusions of the early Church councils as they struggled to understand the Church's legacy in Scripture and its experience of Jesus. The Christian Believer Study emphasizes the language of the faith, which includes biblical language as well as the language of the creeds and doctrines. The goal of the Christian Believer Study and Disciple Bible Study is life transformation. After learning the truths of the biblical text and after studying church doctrine, participants are challenged with the question, "What difference does this belief make in my life?"

In order to be more effective instruments of God's grace and help persons move into a new or deeper relationship with Christ, new methods and tools for discipleship must be developed that are doctrinally pure while contextually flexible and appropriate. Disciple I, II, III, and IV confront the biblical illiteracy that exists in the Church. The Christian Believer Study confronts the doctrinal illiteracy in the church. The purpose of the Christian Believer Study is to help Christians understand the faith they have embraced. Christian Believer is not a study about what "I" believe as an individual but a study of what the Church teaches and believes.

Christian Believer

Christian Believer is a thirty-week, high-commitment study of the central teachings of the Christian faith. No prerequisites are required to take the Christian Believer Study. Through individual work and group participation, men and women gain knowledge of people, events, and documents that contributed to the formulation of the doctrines or

beliefs that the Church confesses as a way of connecting to God and living faithfully. The Christian Believer Study emphasizes the relationship of worship, belief, and daily life, recognizing that informed believing leads to committed discipleship. The writer of the Study, Dr. J. Ellsworth Kalas, in consultation with church leaders, authors, scholars, and teachers, reflects teaching and thoughts about doctrine from leading theologians and church councils that express the historic teachings of the doctrine of the Christian faith. The doctrines covered in this study can be found in Appendix A. While the Christian Believer Study covers many of the doctrines and teachings central to the Christian faith, the list is not complete. Miracles, prayer, and hell are three examples of those topics that are not specifically addressed in the Christian Believer Study.

The Christian Believer Study is a discipleship tool that takes seriously the Great Commandment to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength ... and to love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31, NIV). Dr. Kalas recognizes that grappling with the ideas in the readings will take time, thought, and discipline. The Christian Believer Study is a thirty-week curriculum that combines the study of Scripture and Christian belief. Participants commit to at least forty-five minutes of study and prayer each day, six days a week, in preparation for a two-hour weekly small group meeting. The Christian Believer Study uses the biblical text, a study manual, and a book of readings. All three books are used to complete the daily assignments.

The study manual guides the participants. Daily lessons are formatted to support disciplined daily study, provide instruction, content, and provide necessary space for completing the daily assignments. Each lesson includes a metaphor and a group of words

that express the language of faith. For example the first lesson is titled “Believing.” The metaphor for the first lesson is an old-fashioned oil lamp that symbolizes wisdom, knowledge, and learning to the Christian in the search of understanding. The “key words” for the first lesson are dogma, creeds, knowledge, heart, mind, theology, belief, doctrine, and Christian believer.

Weekly lessons are guided with “life questions” that persons studying the doctrine might ask. For example, the first lesson on “Believing” asks, “So what should I believe, and why? And what difference will my believing make in me, and in my world? Does everything about my believing matter, or is it enough simply to say, ‘I believe; help my unbelief?’” (Kalas 6). The underlying assumption is that doctrine provides the church’s answer to life questions.

Assignments include paragraphs that suggest an approach to the week’s Scripture lesson. Daily assignments include Scripture passages and readings from the book of readings. The book of readings is intended to acquaint participants with a particular doctrine and the key ideas in that doctrine as understood by scholars, theologians, church councils, and others. For example the first week includes writings by Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, John Wesley, Albert Schweitzer, Edward Schillenbeeckx, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Donald Bloesch as well as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles’ Creed (Kalas 7).

The sequence of study is the same for every week. On days one through five, participants read assigned Scripture passages and selections from the book of readings. On day six participants read a commentary section in the study guide, “The Church Teachings and Believing.” At the end of the commentary section is a statement for their

reflection and decision. For example the first lesson's "Because we believe statement" says, "Because we the church believe the Christian faith has truth to be believed, I affirm my place in the company of believers" (Kalas 14).

"Seeking More Understanding" is a section at the end of every lesson for persons who are interested in doing additional study or research. For example the first lesson challenges the participant to research why the Council of Nicaea was called, who the participants were, what the issues were, and what decisions or documents came out of the work of the Council.

Participants gather once a week for a two-hour small group meeting. Group meetings are times for fellowship, reflection, additional teaching by a trained facilitator, and prayer. The small group time affirms that beliefs of the Christian community are taught within the context of Christian community. Those beliefs equip the Christian community to live faithfully and pass on the faith entrusted to it to future generations.

One of the central premises of the Christian Believer Study is that informed believing leads to committed discipleship. According to Abingdon's promotional material, "Christian Believer yokes doctrine with the Bible as a source and vision for renewal of the church." Further, Christian Believer "Motivates members and equips them for outreach and evangelism." While this presupposition may seem apparent at first glance, I am not sure that such a blanket statement can be supported. Participants gain a lot of information about the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, but the question of whether or not that information has any power to transform the lives of the participants is yet to be determined. The truth is that Christians do not always act on what they know. For example, speeding is against the law. Licensed drivers have to pass a test indicating that

they know the speed limits in various locations. Drivers also know the speed limit because it is posted on every street and highway, but the speed limit is not obeyed. This purpose of this study is to take a close look at the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation.

Overview of the Study

The Christian Believer Study presupposes that most church goers have no general base of information to study doctrine. In other words, what the Christian faith teaches and what people believe and think the Christian faith teaches are not always in sync. In their book, How Now Shall We Live, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey support this position as they examine the impact the secular worldview has had on society. They are critical of what they term “nominal Christianity” that pervades society today. They maintain that in general, not a lot of difference exists between how many Christians act and live in the world and how unbelievers live and act. They believe that this is in part due to the fact that many Christians either do not know what they believe or have beliefs undistinguishable from non-Christians. Christians, they say, must first understand and live the life-giving message of the gospel before they can carry it to the world. Christianity is a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence. What the Church should be doing is equipping believers with the tools to present the Christian faith as a total worldview and life system.

I believe that the failures of the Church go much deeper than the Church’s shortsightedness. This dissertation seeks to show that its failures are in some measure a result of the changes in postmodern culture. Leonard Sweet asserts that the postmodern world is a fluid world. People are adrift in a constant state of change. He says that to be

effective in a postmodern world, churches and church leaders must do more than just adapt. They must be transformed (24). I believe that one of the central ways for the church to produce fully-committed followers of Jesus Christ is a well-developed system of discipleship. Discipleship is the key to opening the door for radical transformation. Discipleship in the context of community has a multiplying effect and builds the kingdom of God. Because of these convictions and because I have a passion for reaching the lost, my desire is to find models of discipleship that move unbelievers to become believers and nominal Christians to become fully-committed followers.

The Problem

I believe that many mainline churches do an adequate job of getting visitors in the door, but they fall short in the process of assimilation and discipleship. Growing more and deeper followers of Jesus Christ necessitates teaching what the Church believes (doctrine). A relationship with Christ demands time, intention, receptivity, and growth. Followers of Christ respond to his love by continually and actively seeking to deepen and strengthen that relationship. The Christian faith is not passive. In response to the diversity of a postmodern culture, the Church must find and develop new resources to aid Christian discipleship. This project seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of one particular program, the Christian Believer Study, in bridging the gap between curriculum resources and a transformed worldview.

Rick Warren, of Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California, has a passion for teaching as well as preaching. I agree with him “that most Christians sincerely want to study their Bibles on their own, but they just don’t know how. They just need some instruction on how to study the Word of God” (7). While many churches spend a

great deal of time discussing and looking at social issues, they do a poor job at laying a firm foundation in the relevancy of Scripture. Instead of looking at issues and life through a biblical-theological worldview lens, they look at issues and life through a secular lens. Then they search the Bible to try to find support. Metaphorically, they put the cart before the horse. People need tools that help them learn how to study their Bibles (such as Disciple Bible Study) as well as tools that will help them learn the basic doctrines of the Christian faith (such as the Christian Believer Study). With this kind of foundation, the community of faith will then be able to ask and answer the question, “What difference does this belief make in our lives?”

My passion for discipleship grows out a variety of venues. First, I recognize that we live in a day of biblical and doctrinal illiteracy. Though the Bible has been translated into many easy-to-read translations, the Church has done a poor job of teaching, preaching, and modeling what it means to be a Christian from the Scriptures and from the historic doctrines of the church. The secular world now influences the church more than the church influences the society.

Second, I believe that individual churches as well as entire denominations easily get off track and play the numbers game of “more people equals more disciples.” Many are more concerned with how many members they have or how many people are attending worship rather than what happens at a deeper level. Assimilation, a system of integrating members in the full life of the Church, is at best weak and missing in many churches. The goal of many churches is to grow bigger because for them bigger means better. For other churches, the goal is maintenance—stay where we are. Instead, I propose that if the Church will take seriously the Great Commission—developing fully committed followers of

Jesus Christ—then the numbers will follow.

Third, I believe that the Church has become inwardly focused and has either lost or smothered its passion for the unchurched (including those disenfranchised from the Church). According to George Hunter, of Asbury Theological Seminary, the United States is the largest mission field in the Western Hemisphere and the third or fourth in the world—just behind China and Russia with some 130 million secular people. The field is ripe, and few churches are prepared to reach the unchurched.

Fourth, I believe the church has become an irrelevant institution in many parts of this country. In 20/20 Vision, Dale Galloway identifies two kinds of churches: dead or alive (22). He reports that 90 percent of the churches in the United States are experiencing either little or no growth. Though his insight may seem pessimistic at first glance, opportunity abounds. Looking at the phenomenal growth of churches such as Willow Creek Community Church, Saddleback Valley Community Church, Southeast Christian Church, and Mosaic (to name just a few), evidence exists to support that people will respond, and churches who value doctrinal purity while seeking to be culturally relevant will grow. What seems to set these churches apart is their focus on vision and mission with a clear foundation on biblical and doctrinal literacy. Resources such as the Christian Believer Study provide the Church with discipleship tools to deepen the level of biblical and doctrinal literacy.

Fifth, little, if any, visionary leadership exists in the Church. Galloway quotes Dwight D. Eisenhower: “Leadership is the ability to get a person to do what you want him to do, when you want it done, in a way you want it done, because he wants to do it” (87). Pastors alone cannot accomplish all the work of their churches. Pastors must equip

leaders to do ministry. They need to learn to be rancher-pastors, not shepherd-pastors. Carl George says that ranchers refuse to cultivate dependency upon pastors. Ranchers get people in ministry with each other, create roles for other people, focus on outcomes and the big picture, and pay the price to acquire managerial skills (93). The Christian Believer Study seeks to produce trained and informed ranchers who then are able to aid in the extended care of the flock.

The Church is in a difficult position. For too long denominational judicatories as well as local churches have operated in a mind-set of business as usual. The numbers of unchurched and nominal Christians have risen so high that the world today might be compared to the first century when the Christian faith was in its infancy. In order to move individuals from either a pre-Christian or nominal Christian worldview, the Church must begin to focus its resources on designing curriculum and discipleship tools to help people grow in their knowledge and understanding of God. Discipleship programs must be continually developed to lay a firm foundation of Scripture as well as historical doctrine of the Christian faith.

Statement of the Purpose

The Christian Believer Study is a curriculum published by Abingdon Press; it is designed to address the doctrinal illiteracy that exists in the Church. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation.

Research Questions (RQ)

Two basic questions guided this research project.

RQ 1: Does participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study facilitate

an increase in and an acceptance of the historically defined tenets of the Christian faith?

The answer to this question provides a lens for viewing the extent to which worldviews are shaped by theology and the extent to which participation in the Christian Believer Study affects worldview. If worldviews are profoundly theological, then, as this study suggests, the impact of studying the basic doctrines and beliefs of the Christian church may have life-transforming power. The Christian Believer Study was introduced to congregations in the fall of 1999. Thus, its value and strength as a tool for discipleship is untested. This research sought to evaluate the ability of the Christian Believer Study to produce fully committed followers of Jesus Christ.

RQ 2: Is there a significant change in the participants' behaviors and religious experiences as a result of participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study?

This research study is built on the premise that language is more than simply a device for expression. Intricately connected to culture, language has the power to create, define, and identify culture. This question seeks to identify the correlations and inconsistencies that may exist between what Christians know and how they live. In other words, does theological language have a shaping influence on the Christian faith? Does it make any difference in how Christians live and how they see the world on a daily basis? Does acquiring the language of the Christian faith result simply in gaining information, or does that information actually have the ability to shape the lives of Christians?

Definition of Terms

I operationalized the following terms for purposes of this study. The sources

noted aided me in formulating and refining the terms to make them appropriate for this study.

Worldview is the central set of concepts and presuppositions that provide people with their basic assumptions about reality. Worldview is the “meta-narrative” that people carry in their heads to explain the world in which they live and its events. Worldview is the overarching story that categorizes, organizes, and directs how people live. For the majority of people, worldviews are learned unconsciously early in life and are acquired as people interact with their culture (Colson and Pearcey 14, Whiteman, Wright).

Discipleship is the process of making fully-committed followers of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is an activity that begins with practicing spiritual disciplines (i.e., prayer, study, fellowship, fasting), moves to cultivating the gifts of the Spirit, and ends with reaching out to others in the name of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is evidenced in (though not limited to) person’s lives by a commitment to Christian community and its values, regular prayer and Bible study, service to others in Christ’s name, and godly character (Coleman).

Assimilation is the Church’s process of taking in or incorporating newcomers as its own, providing a sense of belonging, and deepening their faith with discipleship (Coleman).

Doctrines are the central beliefs that express the historical tenets of the Christian faith, what the Church has said and has continuously taught as essential (Kalas 10).

Information transference is the communication of the content of a message from a source to a receiver (Nichols).

Life transformation is a change in worldview that affects how a person

categorizes, organizes, and interacts with the world based on new information or experience (Nichols).

Theological language is the words, phrases, and symbols people use to describe and discuss God in his relation to humanity and the created order (Kalas 10).

Context of the Study

This study took place in three churches with leaders trained to use the Christian Believer Study. Abingdon Press requires churches that want to begin this program to send leaders to a three-day national training event. Training is intended to present the philosophy of the Christian Believer Study program and provide opportunities for leaders to practice with the components. Training is also intended to offer leaders direction and guidance that will enable them to feel comfortable thinking and talking about Christian beliefs as well as helping them understand the relationship between appropriate teaching processes and doctrinal content.

Methodology

This was an evaluative study with both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative part employed a pretest and a posttest design with no comparison group (see Appendix B). The qualitative part used focus group methodology (see Appendix F). The first part of the study consisted of a fifty-nine question pretest and a posttest given to participants enrolled in four Christian Believer Studies at three churches in central Indiana. The pretest was used to evaluate the extent to which the participants' faith made a difference in how they lived as well as the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of orthodox tenets of the Christian faith. The posttest was given at the completion of the study to determine the extent, if any, to which participants changed their

beliefs.

The second part of the study employed a focus group at each church to serve as a representative of the total group. Attendance at the focus group was voluntary; the entire class at each church was invited to participate. The focus group sessions were audio taped and occurred six months after the completion of the Christian Believer Study. A series of grand tour questions were asked of each focus group. These questions were formatted to initiate discussions that provided anecdotal support of the changes that may or may not have occurred as a result of participation in the Christian Believer Study. The statements were then analyzed to determine overarching themes and worldview shifts as a result of the study.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized in this study because of their inherent strengths and weaknesses. A quantitative pretest and posttest questionnaire provided the raw data for the study in three areas. The first part of the questionnaire provided basic demographic data about the participants. This data included age, gender, ethnicity, education, income, marital status, children, occupation, worship attendance, congregational affiliation, church involvement, and prior participation in Bible studies.

The second part of the questionnaire was the researcher-designed Religious Behavior Scale. This scale was a set of ten statements to evaluate the behavior and religious experiences of the participants. Participants were instructed to respond to this researcher-constructed scale by circling the number that best corresponded to their views and experience. The responses ranged from a one (“not true”) to a five (“totally true”) on a Likert-type scale. These first ten statements were behavioral statements. They sought

to determine how the participants' faith was lived out on a daily basis.

The third part of the questionnaire was composed of two published instruments: the Christian Orthodoxy Scale (statements one through twenty-four) and the Religious World View Scale (statements twenty-five through forty-nine). These forty-nine statements reflect the historical doctrinal tenants of the Christian faith. They include statements from the historic creeds as well as statements that reflect the doctrinal teaching of the Christian Believer Study. Participants rated each statement on a Likert-type scale of one ("strongly disagree") to six ("strongly agree").

The focus group format was used to identify any changes that may or may not have occurred as a result of the Christian Believer Study. Focus groups were used to discover what differences taking the Christian Believer Study made in the lives of the participants, if any. The focus group format afforded an opportunity for participants to provide anecdotal reports of affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes.

Sample

The sample for this study was four Christian Believer Study groups from three churches. Each of the four groups began meeting in the fall of 2000. The churches chosen for this study were St. Luke's UMC in Indianapolis, Indiana, Zionsville UMC in a suburb of Indianapolis, and Memorial UMC in Terre Haute, Indiana, because of their differing size, location, demographics, and theological identity among churches in the South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church. All three churches were large churches with over four hundred in average worship attendance.

The number of churches who offer the Christian Believer Study is limited because of two factors. First, the Christian Believer Study is brand new. It has only been available

since 1999. Second, churches offering the Christian Believer Study must incur the cost of having trained leaders (\$750.00 for the first person trained plus \$300.00 for each additional person trained).

St. Luke's United Methodist Church, the largest of the three churches, is located on the north side of Indianapolis, Indiana, and has two campuses. St. Luke's is an upper-middle to upper income, mostly white church. Of the three churches in this study, St. Luke's is the most theologically liberal. According to their promotional brochure, their mission is, "To be an open community of Christians gathering to seek, celebrate, live and share the love of God for all creation." Their vision is, "To transform society into a compassionate, inclusive, Christ-like community in which all persons are treated with compassion as unique persons made in the image of God" ("About St. Luke's"). While St. Luke's is committed to education, worship, and missions, little, if nothing, is mentioned or discussed about reaching the lost. They emphasize God's unconditional love while de-emphasizing the cost of discipleship.

Zionsville United Methodist Church is the next largest church. It is located in an affluent suburb of Indianapolis's far northwest side. The vision and mission of Zionsville as published on their internet site is expressed in the following statement: "Zionsville UMC is a community of Christians who engage, embrace, equip, and encourage persons to grow in faith and mission to all Creation" ("Our Mission"). The former senior pastor of the church described Zionsville as a "moderate" to a "conservative" church (Rumble). Their programming includes opportunities to reach the lost (such as Alpha and missions projects), strengthen the found (Disciple, small groups, etc.), and build up the body (spiritual, personal, and interpersonal programs and offerings).

Memorial United Methodist Church is the smallest of the three churches.

Memorial is also the most traditional of the three churches. It is located on the east side of Terre Haute in a predominately middle-class area. At the time of this writing, they were in the process of redefining their vision and mission. The former associate pastor of the church stated that their mission was simply, "To make disciples of Jesus Christ" (Cartee).

Variables

The independent variable of this research is the Christian Believer Study series. It is a thirty-week study that uses Scripture, a study manual, a book of readings from ancient and modern authors on the great teachings of the Christian faith, and a weekly group meeting to review the lessons and readings. The promotional literature states that it assumes that most churchgoers know little content of the central teachings of the Christian faith and its ties to Scripture. The leader guide stresses the importance of the leader/facilitator closely following the lesson plan.

The dependent variables of this study were the affective, behavioral, and cognitive changes in relation to worldview criteria. Potential intervening variables for both the participants as well as the leaders/facilitators included education, Christian experience, number of years in structured discipleship, as well as culture and world events. The curriculum is designed to be facilitated by the leaders/teachers. Facilitating instead of lecturing assures active engagement on the part of all participants.

Instrument and Data Collection

The pretest was administered at the first meeting of the Christian Believer Study for all four groups. The identical questionnaire was administered again at the conclusion

of the study (see Appendix A). Focus groups were conducted at each church approximately six months following completion of the Christian Believer Study. All the participants of each class were invited to participate in the focus groups on a voluntary basis. Both the pretest and posttest questionnaires and the focus groups were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation.

The first page of “The Christian Believer Study Series Questionnaire” solicited basic demographic information about the participants. The following three pages of the questionnaire contained a series of fifty-nine statements. Participants were to respond to each statement by circling the number that best corresponded to their views and experiences.

The first set of statements composed a researcher-designed instrument. Ten statements were used to determine the degree to which the participants’ religious experiences affected and reflected itself in their lives (see Appendix C). In other words, I wanted to know if the participants’ religious affiliations and/or beliefs made any difference in how decisions were made or in the kind of recreational activities they enjoyed. I also wanted to discover how much the participants took personal responsibility for keeping informed about religious topics and/or issues related to their beliefs.

The Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Religious World View Scale were combined to form the next set of forty-nine statements. The first twenty-four statements compose the Christian Orthodoxy Scale (see Appendix D). The Christian Orthodoxy Scale is a relatively one-dimensional measure of the degree to which participants accept beliefs central to Christianity. The beliefs are those expressed in the Apostles’ Creed and

the Nicene Creed.

The next twenty-five statements compose the Religious World View Scale (Appendix E). The Religious World View Scale examines the extent to which persons agree with a number of historic tenets of the Christian faith. Participants were asked to respond to various statements pertaining to central aspects of Christianity, including the divinity of Christ, the existence of hell, the occurrence of miracles, the validity of the Bible, and the means of salvation. The data from the pretest and the posttest were analyzed as three separate scales. The pretest group scores were compared with the posttest group scores to identify any changes that occurred from the beginning to the end of the study for each scale.

The second part of the study used focus groups at each church. All Christian Believer Study participants were invited from each church to take part in a two-hour focus group session in their representative locations. Focus groups using grand tour questions to guide the discussion were used to gain additional insights and supporting data for the changes that may or may not have occurred as a result of taking the Christian Believer Study (see Appendix F). Responses were analyzed to identify trends, recurrences, and changes in the participants' beliefs and behavior.

Limitations and Generalizability

The motivation for this study emerged as a result of my perceived need for solid, biblical curriculum that focuses on the basic historic doctrines of the Christian faith. The diverse theological identity existing within the United Methodist Church (and in other denominations) as well as the diversity of the churches used in this study suggest that the findings of this research may not be limited to any particular church. Regardless of where

churches fall on the theological spectrum, the Christian Believer Study is a tool for discipleship and life transformation.

The Christian Believer Study may prove to be helpful to churches that are looking for resources and curriculum ideas. While many large churches are beginning to design and write their own curriculum, the Christian Believer Study may provide a resource applicable to a wide variety of church sizes and denominations. Probably the biggest limitation is the cost of the training and materials. Small churches may find the Christian Believer Study cost prohibitive.

Overview

Chapter 2 of this dissertation presents a review of selected literature relevant to this study. The disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, and theology were reviewed to examine how these disciplines affect the way human beings experience, perceive, and interpret the world. The first part of Chapter 2 examines how culture and worldview define human experience. The second part of Chapter 2 examines the role language plays in shaping and communicating culture and worldview. The third part of chapter 2 examines the process of theological communication as it seeks to be culturally relevant and provide the answers to the questions people ask about themselves, others, and life.

The research design is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 reports the research findings. Chapter 5 provides a summary and interpretations of the research findings. It also offers suggestions for further inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

A SELECTIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature Review

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation. Because language, community, and Scripture impact discipleship, the disciplines of linguistics, anthropology, and theology provide the necessary lenses to explore the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Bible Doctrinal Study.

The first part of this chapter reviewed the literature from the field of anthropology. The objective was to examine how worldview is developed in an individual and/or community and to understand how that worldview impacts the world.

The second part of this chapter reviewed the literature from the field of linguistics. The objective was to review the role of language and how it shapes reality. Because worldview is communicated through language and the language of faith gives expression to the core of worldview, this literature is of central concern to this study.

The third part of this chapter reviewed the literature from the field of theology. The object was to provide insight into how theological language shapes one's worldview. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, in God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teachings of Jesus suggests that part of the task of biblical studies is to elucidate the meanings of symbols used in the text. The hermeneutical task, then, is to show what the Bible means today by finding out what it meant in its original context (3).

A subset of the third section provides a specific example of how language shapes one's worldview. For the purposes of this study, I looked at Jesus' almost exclusive use

of “Father” language for God. The Gospel of Luke provided the backdrop for looking at how Luke presented the development of a Christian worldview.

N.T. Wright’s wisdom provided helpful direction in this endeavor. He maintains that neutral or objective observations do not exist. Every new experience or observation is built upon a vast array of prior experiences. Observers understand perception as awareness, using senses of taste, touch, feel, sight, and sound, while the ability to perceive is dependent on the past. Experience shapes the ability to perceive and interpret those experiences. Three of the main influences that shape human experience examined in this chapter are culture, language, and theology. It is my premise that they, in fact, play a determinative position in the perception, interpretation, and application of experience (36).

Anthropology

Cultural anthropology is the social science that looks at how human beings exist in culture. It attempts to understand culture by examining humans’ physical characteristics, origins, environments, social relations, and institutions. Cultural anthropology is important to this research because the Christian Believer Study seeks to explain the nature and function of doctrine in the Christian faith and how those teachings influence daily living. The Christian Believer Study addresses the substance of the Christian faith and the connection between knowing, believing, and living the faith.

The first part of this section provides a general look at the concept of culture. This review shows how culture plays a determinative position in human understanding of the world. According to Charles Kraft, culture gives models of reality that govern perception though individuals are likely to be unaware of the influence of culture upon them (48). Nida recognizes the difficulty for one society to understand thoroughly another because of

the shortsightedness and presuppositions imposed by one society upon another (3).

Effective ministry demands that those involved in ministry understand the processes of culture that govern human behavior.

The second part of this section looks at the concept of worldview. In an attempt to understand how theological language shapes worldview, I will show how worldview affects interpretation of the world. Because of the overriding control feature of worldview, I believe that lasting change occurs when worldviews are transformed. Attitudes and behaviors are relatively easy to alter because they are the visible pieces and they lie above worldview. What determines those attitudes and behaviors lies much deeper; it is worldview.

The third part of this section looks at the Western worldview. According to Colson and Pearcey, the dominant view of Western culture today is radically one-dimensional (20). Many believe that this life is all there is, and nature is all we need to explain everything that exists (20). This portion of the literature review seeks to get at this one-dimensional way of living and understand that this perception lies in direct opposition to the Christian worldview.

The last part of this section examines what may be termed a traditional definition and understanding of a biblical worldview. This concept is important because the Christian Believer Study seeks to explain the nature and function of doctrine in Christianity and how those teachings influence daily living. Scripture shows that the biblical worldview is at odds with any other worldview in that it seeks to explain the true nature of reality and does so with certainty.

Culture

According to Christian anthropologist Darrell Whiteman, understanding the concept of culture is crucial for effective ministry. Knowing culture is especially important in the preparation of denominational and ecumenical materials such as the Christian Believer Study. Whiteman defines culture as “the complex array of ideas in a person’s mind that are expressed in the form of material artifacts and observable behavior.” These ideas include attitudes, behaviors, the sum total of personal and communal experiences, and worldview.

Culture is what separates human beings from any other part of creation—anything animal, natural, organic, or geological. Human beings are the only creatures in all of creation that are made in the image of God. They have individuality, character, emotions, feelings, needs, and desires that are intrinsic to human nature. Without culture humans are not human. Human community is in essence the expression of culture (Whiteman).

Nida says that humans are and must be shaped by their culture. Community and civilization do not exist without culture. He points out that culture is determined by the combination of three interdependent areas. First, culture is determined by the antecedent culture. Culture is a product of history; it builds on itself. For example, in the United States Americans celebrate Thanksgiving because early in the colonial period Americans celebrated, as a country, the harvest and blessings from God. Second, culture is determined by the situation. It is a product of socialization and a product of the era in which humans live. Seeing how society champions an attitude of tolerance (of any sort) captures the heart of this characteristic. This manifests itself among groups advocating special rights such as Native-Americans, African-Americans, special interests, and

women's rights, to name a few. Third, culture is determined by the biological capacities of individuals, which includes characteristics such as height, weight, and physical strength. Nida suggests that some cultures are simply superior to others based on physical stature and strength, and these characteristics impact one culture's position relative to another. In sum, Nida acknowledges that people act the way they do because they follow others who act or have acted in a particular way (37).

Whiteman differentiates three attributes of culture. First, culture is 100 percent learned; it is not genetically or biologically inherited. There are no genes for culture. God has designed human beings to have the longest infancy of all creatures in the animal kingdom. They need that time to learn how to do all the things they do.

Second, culture is shared; it is lived out in community. Culture is an imprint on the mind that helps people live appropriately in their individual societies. For Christians, culture answers life's questions such as, "What is the meaning of life?" "What does it mean to live as Christians?" "How do Christians understand life in the world?" "What difference does a Christian understanding about life make in the way a Christian lives?" According to Whiteman, Christians should not simply learn something about culture and not share it. Christians, for example, must share what they learn and know about the Christian faith so that it has a chance of becoming part of the total culture. Culture, then, helps Christians know the right questions to ask and teaches them how to live in community. The Christian Believer Study seeks to address culture from a Christian point of view by integrating the heart and the mind so that the believer understands that the Christian faith has the answers to questions such as those posed above.

Third, members of society acquire culture. Whiteman defines culture as "the ideas

in people's heads"; he defines society as "the people themselves." No society, no culture. Without culture a human society cannot survive. Culture in fact dictates how members of a society will live. Within any given society, roles and positions such as mother, father, protector, provider, etc., help persons perpetuate the society. Who occupies these roles in any given society is an essential piece of knowledge. Knowing these roles allows individuals to traverse the hurdles and handle the ever-changing nature of society. Knowing these roles helps persons in the society understand concepts such as children's rights, systems of justice and punishment, and moral codes. These social constructs are fluid because culture continually changes and adapts in response to cultural shifts.

An examination of culture brings recognition that human beings have in common basic needs. Malinowski defines these as biological and psychological needs. They include: metabolism—the need for oxygen, liquid, and food; reproduction—sex drive; bodily comforts—maintaining a tolerable level of temperature, humidity, etc; safety—the prevention of bodily injuries by mechanical accident, attack from animals, from other human beings, etc; movement—activity, exercise, sports, etc; growth—maturation and enculturation; health—maintenance and repair of the biological organism (938-64).

Whiteman adds religion, as an eighth need. Though religious needs may be met in a variety of cultural forms, I believe that one's religious need is only fully met through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and participation in a Christian community.

Charles Kraft maintains that individuals are shaped in the nonbiological portion of their being by the culture into which they are born and by the adults in their life (47). Whiteman believes that individuals both influence culture and contribute to its reshaping. This shaping can be categorized into four distinct arenas.

First, human beings are shaped by universals. Universals are the ideas, habits, and conditioned responses that are common to all sane adult members of the society. This would include things such as language, dress, and housing. Universals are unconscious assumptions; their action does not require intentional thought. They are essentially second nature and are thus many times difficult to detect. Understanding these universals help aid in seeing why human beings do what they do and just how easily human beings act and react without conscious thought (Whiteman).

Second, human beings are shaped by specialties. Specialties are those elements of culture that are shared by certain socially recognized categories of individuals but are not shared by the total population. Specialties include things such as differences between men and women, differences between adults and children, differences between professions and craftsmen, and traits of social classes. Knowing and understanding these specialties gives insight into how and why people relate to one another. Specialties have the ability to either build bridges or walls between people and/or cultures (Whiteman).

Third, human beings are shaped by alternatives. Alternatives are traits shared by certain individuals but not by everyone within the society or the recognized group. They include simple things like painting and architecture. Alternatives also include the different reactions communities have to the same situation as well as different techniques for achieving the same end. Alternatives allow persons or cultures to become ethnocentric, believing that their way is the only way and of course the best way. This has direct impact on how information, attitudes, and behaviors are shared from one person to another, from culture to culture (Whiteman).

Fourth, human beings are shaped by individual peculiarities. Peculiarities result

from childhood experiences and include things such as religious faith or fear of fire.

Peculiarities differentiate one person from another. They have the ability to bring people together or keep them apart. One of the goals of the Christian Believer Study is to equip participants with the knowledge and ability to share the universals, specialties, alternatives, and peculiarities of the Christian faith in such a way that brings about life change (Whiteman).

Analyzing the level of participation in each category reveals their relative strength in the culture. Recognizing these peculiarities provides insight into knowing what makes the culture tick. Knowledge of what makes the culture tick illuminates the places to initiate and begin the process of change and transformation. The biblical model for evangelism and outreach works well with this methodology. Meeting non-Christians where they are and seeing where God is already at work allows Christians to use their giftedness and be made available as instruments of God's transforming grace. This knowledge also has wide-reaching implications for many if not all the social sciences. They, too, focus on meeting people where they are in order to take them to a new place.

Worldview

Worldview may be described as the "meta-narrative" that human beings carry in their heads to explain the world and its events. Worldview is the overarching story that categorizes, organizes, and directs human life. Worldview helps make sense of culture and the world of human experience. Charles Kraft provides one of the most exhaustive definitions of worldview:

Cultures pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualizations of what reality can or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible, and impossible. These conceptualizations form what is termed

the “worldview” of the culture. The worldview is the central systemization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assert (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of culture, touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every other aspect of culture. (53)

Because individuals carry these meta-narratives unconsciously, generally members of one culture must actually leave their culture for a period of time before they become conscious of their own worldviews. Kraft maintains that this system of understanding and shaping of behavior is largely unconscious. These conceptual systems are taught to and employed by the members of each culture or subculture (47).

According to Charles Kraft there are essentially five major functions of worldview. First, worldview has an explanatory function. It identifies how and why things got to be as they are and how and why they continue to change. Worldview explains a culture’s most deeply held beliefs and accurately reflects reality. It is generally articulated through narrative or story that unfolds, supports, or explains a part of the world or practice of the people. Worldviews give explanations of things such as science, religion, and politics. Worldviews are communicated through concepts such as fables, proverbs, riddles, songs, and folklore (54).

Second, worldview has an evaluative function. It judges and validates personal and corporate experience. Since worldview is formed and established unconsciously, it tends to be ethnocentric. The basic assumptions, institutions, values, and goals of one’s society are generally held to be superior when compared to foreign ones. For instance, Americans have a worldview perspective called “the American dream.” This worldview validates and supports a North American entitlement worldview. North Americans believe that they are entitled to the best when they want it, how they want it, where they want it,

and why they want it. The American worldview sanctions beliefs and principles such as a democratic government, monogamous marriage, individualism, and free education. The American worldview consciously and unconsciously looks at forms in other cultures and devalues or dismisses them as inauthentic. For example, in countries where water is scarce, baptism may be represented by an actual burial with dirt as opposed to immersion in water. Adult baptism would be a foreign concept to Westerners and collide with their biblical tradition. Western Christianity sometimes makes the form (water) efficacious as opposed to what it symbolizes (function) and points to (regeneration and renewal) (55).

Third, worldview has a psychological function. It serves to provide a particular group with security and support and defines appropriate behavior. During times of anxiety, transition, or crisis, people reflexively turn to their conceptual systems for support. For example, in times such as death, birth, illness, marriage, divorce, job change, or economic crisis, people look to rituals and ceremonies as a part of their psychological reinforcement. These rites and ceremonies provide communities with a sense of responsiveness, support, and love (55).

Fourth, worldview has an integrating function. Worldview systemizes and orders people's perceptions of reality into an overall design. From this integrated and integrating perspective, people in the culture conceptualize what reality should be like. People are then able to understand and interpret the diverse events and experiences to which they are exposed. Since worldviews tend to conserve old ways and resist change, this integrating function works to maintain and validate the basic premises a culture has about the world. Though worldviews are difficult to change, they can and continue to change all the time (56).

Fifth, worldview has an adaptational function. While a great deal of emphasis and energy is spent by a culture on explaining, evaluating, reinforcing, and integrating its worldview, there remains the possibility for change. A group's worldview is not completely determined by the perceptions of all its members at all times. By adjusting their worldviews, people devise means for resolving conflicts and reducing cultural discord. In other words, cultures adapt their worldviews in order to live more peaceably with one another. Worldviews are not set in stone. They can be uprooted, changed, and transplanted (56).

People can and do change their perceptions of reality, their meta-narratives. Change happens if conceptual shifts occur and are communicated by persons of influence or social status. A prime example of a worldview change is when God came in the flesh. Understanding God's self-revelation through the incarnation required a radical worldview change in the first century. The worldview change resulted in the formation of what is known today as the Christian faith (C. Kraft 30).

Worldview changes and shifts occur due to a number of factors. Crisis events and cultural ideological changes affect worldview. In an effort to return to some degree of normalcy of life following a crisis, people adapt and change their worldviews to cope with change. Events such as the Industrial Revolution, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or even the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 are examples of the kinds of social and political forces that initiated a change in worldview. Events such as these forced members of society to look at life through a different set of lenses (C. Kraft 57).

As Whiteman notes, worldview changes generally take place slowly. Sometimes,

however, pressures exist for rapid change either external or internal to the individual or the community. While models, theories, and worldviews in general may be changed, perhaps a better explanation is that they are exchanged for new ones (C. Kraft 29).

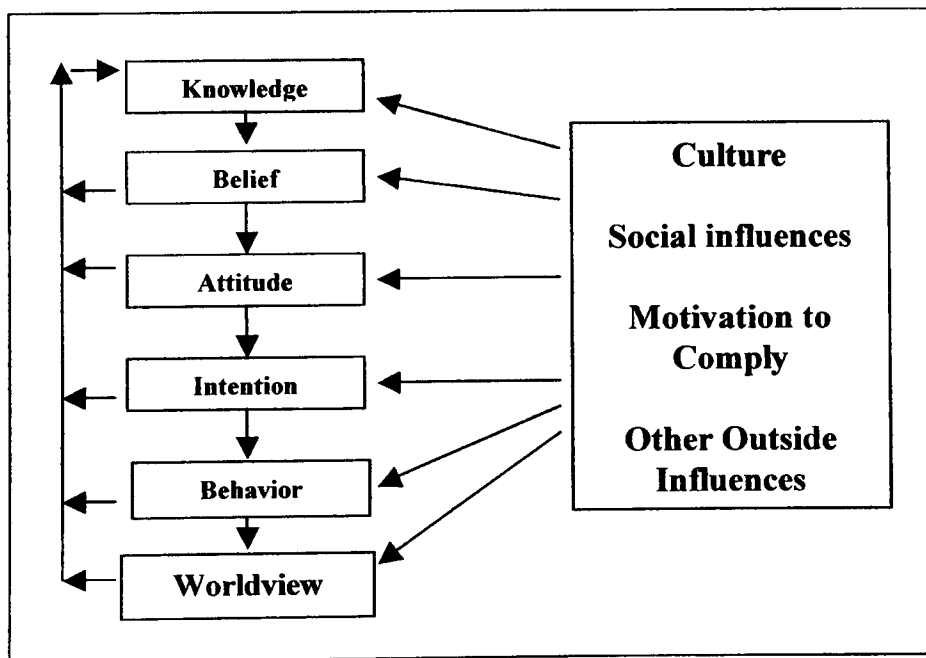
According to Kuhn, “When a group/individual changes models, the world itself changes with them, and they begin to see reality differently” (30). For example, conversion in the Christian faith involves a paradigm shift, worldview change, or even a spiritual revolution.

Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen studied how persons change their perceptions of reality and exchange them for another. Building on the hypothesis of Kraft and Kuhn, Fishbein and Ajzen state that the existence of social pressures and the individual motivation to comply with those pressures must be taken into account when predicting behavior. Pressures and motivation cannot be viewed in isolation. They work in tandem. Fishbein and Ajzen assert that each of the three dimensions of attitude (beliefs, attitudes, and intentions) are variables in themselves and thus impact and explain culture (Engel 181).

In his model of worldview, Paul Hiebert takes a similar perspective. He looks more broadly at and categorizes the basic assumptions about reality in three groups that relate to the three basic dimensions of culture. Affect is the first group and includes the notions of beauty, style, aesthetics, and the way people feel toward one another and life in general. Cognition is the second group and defines what things are “real,” provides concepts of time, space, and other worlds, shapes the mental categories of thinking, and gives order and meaning to reality. Evaluation is the third group and provides the standards for making judgments and also determines the priorities and allegiances of the people. (46)

For Hiebert, these three dimensions of worldview in essence paint a picture of what is and what ought to be. This picture provides the motivation for past, current, and future behavior. It also gives meaning to one's environment. For example, people are taught to love one another. Love is not just a Christian construct. People treat others as they want to be treated because it is the right thing to do. It helps people get along with one another. It provides a model of appropriate relationships, and it makes sense. Culture without concern and love for one another leads to chaos.

Combining the models of Fishbein, Ajzen, and Hiebert provides a model for worldview that synthesizes both their works (see Figure 2.1). This model reveals the interrelatedness of knowledge, belief, attitude, intention, behavior, and culture. It also recognizes the impact of outside forces and motivation that affect worldview.



Worldview Development
Figure 2.1

In this model, culture affects every element. According to Harvard scholar Samuel Huntington, “Our lives are defined by our ultimate beliefs more sharply than by any other factor” (19). They are shaped by our deepest held beliefs.

Knowledge is the first factor. Knowledge is the conscious and unconscious information and shaping that begins at birth. Out of knowledge a person develops beliefs about the self and the world. Those beliefs are then articulated through a set of attitudes. Those attitudes and beliefs at this point are only feelings. According to Engel, “Research has proven that how one feels about something in general does not necessarily lead to consistent actions. Further, behavior is found to be consistent with attitudes only when the research focus is on outcomes in specific situations” (181).

Intention is the likelihood that persons will act upon their attitudes. As can be seen from the model, an intentional step moves individuals to specific action. Culture, social influences, motivation to comply, and other outside influences work positively, and/or negatively to regulate intent.

Knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions give way to behavior while the same cultural factors noted above continually work to conform or change behavior. According to Engel,

All things being equal, a change in belief will lead to changes in both attitude and intention as well as behavior itself. All things may not be equal of course, if social norms oppose such behavior and the individual is motivated to comply with those norms. (182)

The missing factor in Fishbein’s Ajzen’s model is worldview, though he may be using the term “behavior” in the same sense. According to Marguerite Kraft, “Worldview is usually unexamined and therefore largely implicit. In cross-cultural work persons often

view behavior without understanding the worldview that is related to human needs behind the action” (23). Simply observing the attitudes, actions, and behaviors of people is not enough.

The model above goes one step further and adds a loop to Fishbein’s and Ajzen’s model. Once a worldview is established, knowledge is viewed through a new lens. “If we choose to come in contact with, understand, and become comfortable with other worldviews, we can consciously go against our own worldview and eventually expand/change that worldview” (M. Kraft 34). The loop moves back to knowledge because one’s worldview affects perception and interaction with experience.

The above model recognizes that culture, social influences, motivation to comply, and other outside influences all impact and to some degree affect knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, behaviors, and, consequently, worldviews. Each time one of those factors is affected, there is new knowledge and the process begins anew.

In this model, the process of worldview development is not strictly a linear process. The impact of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, behaviors, and social forces working at varying times and in varying degrees will either support, maintain, or change the development of one’s worldview. As cultural influences impact and affect the process, worldviews may be solidified, altered, or completely changed.

In sum, worldview consists of the shared framework of ideas held by a particular society concerning how they perceive the world. While the ideas and values a culture embraces may always seem logical and obvious to the people of that particular culture, they may or may not seem logical to outsiders. Worldview attempts to show order and predictability within everyday experiences. Worldview is primarily learned unconsciously

in early life as a person acquires the culture, and it is either sustained or changed by the culture. Though stable, worldview is changeable and impacted by the social context.

Western Worldview

The Western worldview is made up of a variety of individual and community worldviews. The United States, in particular, is a virtual smorgasbord of worldviews: multiculturalism and pragmatism, utopianism and naturalism, existentialism, modernism and postmodernism, paganism and theism. This section sets out the basic differences between the two broad meta-narratives that describe the Western worldview: postmodern and modern. This is important because contemporary culture makes this claim about truth: your truths are yours, my truths are mine, and none are absolute. The Christian Believer Study aims at addressing the fallacy of this notion and seeks to connect the substance of the Christian faith with how Christian's live.

Leonard Sweet says that the postmodern era is a time of chaos, uncertainty, otherness, openness, multiplicity, and change. He describes the postmodern era as a wavescape instead of landscape, always changing with the surface never the same (24). Colson and Pearcey say that in postmodernism objective truth is absent; only the perspective of the group, whatever the group may be, determines the truth (23). In postmodernism, all viewpoints, all lifestyles, all beliefs, and all behaviors are regarded as equally valid and equally important. Recognizing this fluidity is important because the communication of the Christian faith is vital to the expression and witness of the Christian faith. Persuasion is not simply accomplished by rational arguments. Persuasion is dependent on personal experience.

A study by American Demographics magazine in 1997 found a comprehensive shift

in values, worldviews, and ways of life that has had a profound effect on about one-fourth of American adults. They found that a new class has emerged that has been called “Cultural Creatives.” In essence, this growing segment of the American adult population embraces a “trans-modernist” set of values that includes a blending of worldviews and/or belief systems. They have a background in environmentalism, feminism, global issues, and spiritual searching. “Thoroughly postmodernist, they are skeptical, if not resentful, of moral absolutes” (Ray 28). Nature is viewed as sacred, and their emphasis is self-actualization and spiritual growth. They are described as antihierarchical and embrace a public philosophy that is decentralized, democratic, and egalitarian.

Colson and Pearcey assert that individuals in the fast-growing “Cultural Creatives” group tend to be young, well educated, affluent, and assertive. Thoroughly postmodern, they are on the cutting edge of society and social change, and if they are not already the main influence, they soon will be. They are not anti-religious but, in fact, deeply spiritual. They are looking in what appears to be an infinite number of places for answers, hope, wonder, and a way out of their mazes of aimless living (25).

Modernism is held by approximately 47 percent of adults and represents probably the largest segment of the American adult population (Ray 28). Modernists value technological progress and material success. They tend to be politicians, military leaders, scientists, and businesspeople. They are described as pragmatic, comfortable with the economic establishment, and less concerned with ideology and social issues (28).

The Western American worldview is caught between the tensions of the modern and postmodern worldview. In her work on culture, Marguerite Kraft has a sobering perspective on the Western worldview. She writes,

In Western worldviews today, answers to many human needs are no longer sought from spiritual powers but are seen as attainable through human ability and science. God's power is not perceived as essential for many areas of life, and attention given to the human world far surpasses that given to the spirit world. Faith in human knowledge, looking to science to resolve key problems, and specialization has pushed faith in God and his day-by-day involvement to the fringe. (31)

The Western modernist worldview sees the universe as a machine—something to be conquered. Several Saturday morning cartoons share this mechanistic, conquering theme. The goal of the warriors is to conquer the robotic destroyers. Westerners, too, think they are the masters of their universe. This is not true for the postmodernist. The universe is more than machine. Sweet points out that the quest for the historical Jesus has never been more frenzied (41). Postmoderns want to discover the universe—the spiritual and physical universe of inner and outer space. The postmodern wants to know “What Jesus says” and “What would Jesus do?”

The Western modern worldview sees nature as something over which human beings have ultimate control. Nature can be conquered, overcome, improved upon, torn down, and rebuilt in any shape or form desired. Nature, like the rest of the Western life, is something that exists for the pleasure and use of human beings. The postmodern seeks the preservation of nature. To the postmodern, natural resources are not unlimited, and, therefore, the postmodern seeks to maintain, preserve, and care for the natural resources of the planet.

Marguerite Kraft believes that “the most distinctive aspect of twentieth-century American society is the division of life into a number of separate functional sectors: home and workplace, work and leisure, white collar and blue collar, public and private” (31). Compartmentalizing the world helps segment every part of human existence. That

compartmentalization gives the illusion of control and power. Even religion has become like the game pieces on a Trivial Pursuit board. It is simply that—a separate piece of the pie (our world). Again, this view appears to be a modernist perspective. The growing postmodern wants to integrate life and find meaning in the whole pie (community).

According to Marguerite Kraft, Westerners have difficulty accepting at the worldview level that God is in charge (sovereign), “that others are as important as themselves, that an emotional response to God is as important as a rational response, and that faith in God affects all areas of life” (34). Postmoderns want to learn by doing. While modern Westerners struggle to find meaning in life and have their needs met by trying anything, the postmodern is searching for meaning beyond the everyday experiences of this world. They are on a spiritual quest to find meaning in life.

Colson and Pearcey argue that the Christian culture is in a cosmic struggle between worldviews (17). Christians must learn to speak the languages of science, art, and politics. Christians must understand differing and opposing worldviews as total life systems if they are to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

In his work, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, Bruce J. Malina holds a modernist view of the American culture when he states, “Americans for the most part are achievement-oriented, individualistic, keenly aware of limitless good, competitive and individualistic” (184). He further contends that one of the main obstacles of the Christian faith is making Jesus in human likeness. While true in many circles, the growing postmodern population is beginning to recognize the fallacies of this position. Postmoderns are searching for belonging, community, and answers to life’s deepest question. Malina is right, however, when he contends that if communicating the

truth of the gospel is to be done faithfully and effectively, Christians must be more intentional in addressing issues postmoderns are raising. Christians must learn to use the clearest language and models available in the culture to allow the truths of the Christian faith to be expressed, understood, and lived.

From the perspectives of M. Kraft, Colson and Pearcey, Sweet, and Malina, overcoming the Western worldview, the meta-narrative that currently governs Western culture, is a formidable task. Listening to and being attentive to the questions being asked by modernists and postmodernists as well as being attuned to the cultural shifts in the West may advance the development of a deeply-held, Christian worldview. As Christians are able to hear and address the questions posed by non-Christians, both postmodernists and modernists, they will be better equipped to fulfill the Great Commission. The Christian Believer doctrinal study may provide Christians with a resource that establishes and grounds them with a biblical-theological worldview.

Biblical Worldview

Most people are born into one culture with its worldview and spend their whole lives living within that paradigm. The Christian meta-narrative carries with it a set of preconceived ideas that allow believers to cope successfully in their world. This meta-narrative is the basic model of reality for the Christian. While cultural heritage places limits in understanding and expressing biblical truth, a reasonable analysis of various worldviews shows the incomparable strength of the biblical worldview.

Wright believes that theology, which is a core piece of any worldview, and biblical studies have a symbiotic relationship. They feed off of and are mutually dependent upon one another. He states three reasons for this. First, only with theological tools can

historical exegesis get at what the characters in the history were thinking, planning, and aiming to do. Second, only with the help of a fully theological analysis of contemporary culture can those who read the Bible be aware, as they need to be, of their own questions, presuppositions, aims, and intentions. Third, any theology needs biblical studies since the claim of any theology must sooner or later come into contact, perhaps conflict, with the stories contained in the Bible. And, if a worldview of any sort is to be sustained it must be able to meet the challenges posed by its rivals (137).

Wright maintains that Christian theology is grounded in Scripture or, as he refers to it, the “casebook.” This casebook provides the Christian community with the tools necessary to form and live out of the Christian worldview.

Understanding the biblical worldview is foundational to the Christian Believer Study. Students spend thirty weeks examining thirty of the basic doctrines of the Christian church. Six of the doctrines taught in the Christian Believer Study are briefly presented below to illustrate the connection between the biblical worldview and the Christian Believer Study.

The doctrine of creation is studied during the fourth week of the Christian Believer Study. The Bible teaches about the origin of the cosmos and God’s relationship to it. God created the cosmos out of nothing and separated the cosmos into the material (“seen”) and immaterial (“unseen”). The seen is what human beings can perceive. The unseen is the world of spiritual beings. God is portrayed in the Bible as being beyond human comprehension. Facility in expressing the full nature of God is beyond human language ability. Scripture teaches a clear distinction between God and God’s creation. God is both transcendent and immanent (Kalas 39).

The doctrine of the *Imago Dei* is studied during the eighth week. The Bible teaches as a fundamental proposition that human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Human beings are distinct from the rest of creation and not merely a highly developed animal. Human beings possess personality because God is personal, and they are capable of love because God is love. Human beings are self-conscious, intelligent, and creative, possessing self-determination and moral judgments. Human beings are able to make judgments about what is right or wrong.

The doctrine of sin is studied in the ninth week. The Bible teaches that human beings have the ability to think and reason and thus choose to be for or against God. Capacity for rational thought enables human beings with the ability to discover knowledge about creation and so manipulate it in ways they think best.

The doctrine of the body of Christ is studied in week twenty-one. The Bible teaches that human beings are created to be in community. The need for relationships is psychological, social, physiological, emotional, and intellectual. The need to be in community does not diminish the intrinsic worth of the individual. Though human beings have differing roles (for procreation and companionship) and differing abilities, all human beings have equality of status before God.

The doctrine of eschatology is studied the twenty-sixth week. The Bible teaches a progressive view of time. Time is conceived as stretching backward, not to infinity, but to the time God created, and forward to the fulfillment of God's creation. Time is seen as moving forward with purpose. Because God chose to reveal himself in time and space, God is active in and through creation. For Christians, the most important aspect of the biblical worldview is that God entered into time and space in human form. He did this to

reveal himself more fully and to achieve his purposes for creation.

The doctrine of judgment is studied the twenty-seventh week. The Bible teaches that God is the moral standard by which all moral judgments are measured. Biblical ethics are not based on arbitrary concepts but are based on the absolute nature of the Creator. God is good and this is known by how God has chosen to reveal himself. The Bible teaches that human beings cannot reach God's standard through their own efforts. God's standard can only be achieved through a personal, trusting relationship with Christ.

In his book The New Testament and the People of God, Wright provides a general overview of how the early Christian worldview began, took hold, and developed to where it is today. He suggests that one of the key features of any worldview is that it is a narrative. It is a personal and a communal story. Worldview tells and defines individuals as a people of God living in community. Wright calls the narrative of Christian existence the "big story" that tells Christian history and socialization. Wright contends that stories provide a vital framework for experiencing the world. Stories give a means by which views of the world may be challenged (123).

Narrative is the story where identity and membership are found. Wright suggests that every human community shares and celebrates certain assumptions, traditions, expectations, anxieties, and so forth, which encourage its members to understand reality in particular ways. He says that narrative or story is how people make sense of their world. No person is neutral, objective, or detached. What he is saying is that in essence, what we see, how we act, our circles of friends and family, as well as things such as the jobs we hold, are to a greater or lesser degree a product of the communities to which we belong (123).

The application and interpretation of Scripture is so closely tied to the community and the worldview of the sender, that if Christians are to share the gospel message and allow Christ to be relevant, they must be like Jesus and meet receptors where they are. Ben Witherington illustrates application and interpretation by looking at community from a first century perspective.

First, Jews in the first century perceived the world and events that occurred through culturally bound lenses. These worldviews were embodied, exemplified, and reinforced by everyone in the community. Any alternative or suggested alternative would have been perceived by the group in control as a direct attack or affront against the established norm. Early Christianity confronted these culturally bound norms.

Second, in the first century the organizing principle of life was community belonging. Success, value, meaning, and power were found in making interpersonal connections. Being related to the right people and maintaining ties to other persons within sets of significant groups was central to first century life. Clearly the twenty-first century postmodern culture rejects the views of the modernist and is reverting to a first century worldview. People today are recognizing that significance is found in community and relationships.

The focal institution and concern for the first-century citizen was the family or group identity. They believed that goods and services were in limited supply. The main task of the limited-good first-century, Mediterranean person was the maintenance of his or her inherited position in society. Getting ahead was a foreign concept. Getting ahead meant that someone else had to do without and that would have been dishonorable. In contrast, personal achievement, radical individualism, belief in unlimited goods,

competition and individualism in marriage strategies, and purity rules focused pragmatically upon individual relations and individual success mark the twentieth-century modern worldview. The twenty-first century postmodern culture has begun to rebel against these notions. Leonard Sweet agrees and concludes that postmoderns are seeking out “PALS”: Partners, Affiliations, Liaisons, and Strategic alliances (198). They are beginning to realize that identity is found in community, in significant relationships. While they may have a virtual unlimited supply of information and knowledge, those commodities are simply not enough.

Third, in the first century the Incarnation took place in time and space, within a set of cultural norms and presuppositions. Jesus met people where they were but did not leave them there. From their experiences with Jesus, first-century Mediterraneans who converted to Christianity had to reassess all that was sacred. Their encounter with Jesus affected their entire existence, including their traditions, experiences, and communal life. The rules changed, and they needed to change in order to live out their new worldview. Sweet maintains that postmoderns today are engaging in the same reassessment of the meaning of the incarnation. They do not want to recreate Jesus in their image; they want to find out who the real Jesus is. They want to know Jesus personally.

Fourth, in the first century, two types of stories sought to explain life. The first were stories that communicated a worldview that did not specifically refer to real-life events. Within Christianity the parables would fall into this category; within Judaism, a book like *Joseph and Aseneth*. The second type were stories that communicated events that, more or less, actually happened. Understanding both types of stories are important because a good part of the New Testament as well as Jewish literature consists of actual

stories. These stories provided the guidance that people needed to live in community.

The modernist worldview devalues the importance of story. The postmodernist seems to have revived the power and influence of story. As has been demonstrated thus far, worldviews are inextricably tied to and lived out in the story of human lives. Sweet says, “When the stories of Scripture become ‘our’ stories, when biblical images and metaphors become ‘our’ images and metaphors, when we structure ‘our’ lives around the cornerstone Jesus story, a new architecture for our souls is constructed” (57).

In sum, if faith is to be held responsibly, then theology will have to carry out its work of articulating the culture-bound, original symbols of the primordial Christian movement in terms of the clearest language and models that it can find. Communicating the Christian faith must be done in the cultures in which it is to be expressed, understood, and lived. This is the Christian task and call.

Conclusion

Whatever label is used to describe worldview makes a statement to the world about how information, experience, and reality is organized, evaluated, and filtered. In Clash of the Worlds, David Burnett maintains that only as individuals come to understand the assumptions that make up their worldview can they come to understand better the worldviews of others. Then, a dynamic interaction exists because the more people understand others the more they can fully appreciate their own assumptions. The better they understand one another the better their opportunities will be for communicating the gospel.

Worldviews are profoundly theological. Wright says that they are the meta-narratives that embrace all deep-level, human perceptions of reality (124). The meta-

narrative includes the question of whether or not a god or gods exist, and if so what he, she, it, or they is or are like, and how such a being, or such beings, might relate to the world. Worldviews provide the stories through which human beings view reality. The Christian Believer Study provides a framework for understanding the origin of the Christian worldview by examining the historical tenets of the Christian faith.

Linguistics

Linguistics is the study of human speech including the units, nature, structure, and development of language. Every culture has a distinct language and, therefore, a distinct worldview. The Christian Believer Study makes available to participants the substance of the faith through the language that the Church has confessed and communicated as a way of connecting to God and living faithfully. The Christian Believer Study teaches the language of the Christian faith by identifying and defining the historic doctrine central to Christianity. This section investigates the development of language and illustrates the importance of language in the process of communicating and shaping a worldview.

Language Defined

In his work in linguistics, Edward Sapir wants to make certain that his readers have a clear understanding of what language is and what language is not. He differentiates between human traits that are either non-instinctive or instinctive. Walking is an instinctive trait. Children will learn to walk regardless of their culture. Speech is a non-instinctive, culturally acquired function. While some involuntary expressions of feeling (interjections) may be viewed as instinctive, such as sounds associated with pain or uncontrolled joy, they do not indicate or announce the emotion that one is feeling.

According to Sapir,

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desire by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. These symbols are, in the first instance, auditory and they are produced by the so-called 'organs of speech.' (8)

Further, “physiologically, speech is an overlaid function, or, to be more precise, a group of overlaid functions. It gets what service it can out of organs and functions, nervous and muscular, that have come into being and are maintained for very different ends than its own” (9).

Sapir postulates that language came before the earliest developments of material culture. He further asserts that without language as the tool of significant expression, the development of culture would not have been possible (Language 23). As language is used (spoken, heard, written, and read) culture is defined or changed.

“Language has a setting. It does not exist apart from culture, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives” (Sapir, Language 207). According to Sapir, in a simple definition, culture is defined as “what” a society does and thinks. Language, on the other hand, is the “how” of thought (218). “Languages are more than our systems of thought transference. They are invisible garments that drape themselves about our spirit and give a predetermined form to all its symbolic expression” (221). Language both creates and defines culture. Sapir would say that without language, culture does not exist.

Characteristics of Language

Sapir recognizes language as a gift to every known culture and race. While he knows that some may disagree with this position, he dismisses them and challenges skeptics saying no one has been able to prove otherwise. “The truth of the matter is that

language is an essentially perfect means of expression and communication among every known people” (7).

Sapir believes that language was the first human characteristic to receive a highly developed form and that its essential perfection is a prerequisite to the development of culture as a whole. Therefore, the general characteristics that apply to all languages are identified (Selected Writings 7).

First, language consists of a system of phonetic symbols for the expression of communicable thought and feeling. According to Sapir, language takes precedence over and precedes other forms of communication (i.e., writing and/or gestures). Other forms of communication actually flow out of language. For example, because writing emerged significantly later than oral communication and since the structures of written communication so closely parallel oral structures, one can conclude “language is a purely instrumental and logical device and is not dependent on the use of articulate sound” (Selected Writings 7).

Second, the ability to produce and articulate language is the same for all peoples. Sound is dependent on the larynx, vocal chords, the nose, the tongue, the hard and soft palate, the teeth, and the lips. The ability to produce varying “expressive sounds” into language is dependent on the tongue, whose primary function is to add expression to the sounds people make. These are physiological characteristics of people in all cultures (Selected Writings 7).

Third, all languages are “phonemic.” Between the individual sounds (phonemes) and the words, phrases, and sentences that they form when put together lies a process of phonetic selection and generalization. This unconscious function is crucial for the

development of the specifically symbolic aspect of language and is dependent “upon the unconscious selection of a fixed number of ‘phonetic stations’ or sound units” (Selected Writings 8). While these stations or units are unique to any given culture, they are necessary for putting together aesthetically and functionally coherent sequences.

Sapir also identifies the psychological characteristics of formal language that are important to the study of linguistics. First, language expresses the experiences of an individual or culture. He says that

Language is felt to be a perfect symbolic system, in a perfectly homogeneous medium, for the handling of all references and meanings that a given culture is capable of, whether these be in the form of actual communications or in that of such ideal substitutes of communication as thinking. (Selected Writings 10)

New experiences will at times necessitate new language. That new language, however, follows already established patterns within the culture.

Sapir states that

Language has the power to analyze experience into theoretically dissociable elements and to create that world of the potential integrating with the actual which enables human beings to transcend the immediately given in their individual experiences and to join in a larger common understanding. (Selected Writings 10)

In other words, language creates the ability to separate and categorize experience and understand that experience within a cultural framework. This integration generally takes place through the use of metaphors.

Metaphors exist in language, thought, and action. Lankoff and Johnson define a metaphor as “principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding” (36). How one thinks, acts, and put concepts together generally happens in terms of metaphors. As with the discussion of language above,

metaphorical thinking is an unconscious act. "Our conceptual systems play a central role in defining our everyday realities ... and are not something we are normally aware of" (3). Metaphors are not simply the spoken words or the verbal expressions. They are used to understand and differentiate one experience from another. They are, "as much a part of functioning as our sense of touch, and as precious" (239).

A second psychological characteristic of language is its ability to interpenetrate direct experience. Persons have the ability to gain intimacy with things that have a name. Sapir argues that this intimacy is particularly evident in primitive cultures where a virtual identity exists between a word and the thing to which it corresponds. In more advanced cultures, "it is generally difficult to make a complete divorce between objective reality and our linguistic symbols or reference to it; and things, qualities, and events are on the whole felt to be what they are called" (Selected Writings 11). Language and experience, metaphorically speaking, are married; they are at the same time both together and separate.

Sapir believes that the interpenetration of language and experience is not simply an intimate association. This association is also contextual. He writes:

It is important to realize that language may not only refer to experience or even mold, interpret, and discover experience, but that it also substitutes for it in the sense that in those sequences of interpersonal behavior which form the greater part of our daily lives speech and action supplement each other and do each other's work in a web of unbroken pattern. (Selected Writings 12)

He believes that language holds such an intimate position because it is learned from infancy.

A third psychological characteristic of language is that it carries virtually an

unlimited number of expressions (Sapir, Selected Writings 13). Sapir says that the expressive nature of language is such an obvious characteristic of language that very little has to be said. A word or phrase can have different meanings to different people at different times. For example, at one time the word “bad” used to and still does denote something awful, such as bad breath. In another context, with youth in particular, “bad” may mean awesome, great, or super.

A fourth psychological characteristic of language is its ability, in written form, to communicate with virtually the same level of integrity. Sapir says that the form systems (ways of communication) that are actualized in language behavior do not need speech in its literal sense in order to preserve their substantial integrity. In essence, he recognizes that effective systems of communication such as writing are more or less exact transfers of speech. These transfer systems can also be seen in what he describes as the “unlettered peoples of the world,” those who use systems of communication like drums or horns. Even these have minute phonetic detail (Selected Writings 13).

Functions of Language

Language is deeply ingrained in the fabric of all human behaviors and plays a significant role in conscious behavior. Communication is the exchange or transmitting of information or opinions from sender(s) to receiver(s). In essence human beings define and sustain themselves in conversation with others. In The Lost Art of Listening, Michael Nichols says that good communication means having the intended impact. He stresses that the message is the content of what a speaker says, but the message sent is not always the one intended (40). While linguists agree that the primary function of language is communication, a number of secondary functions that languages possess are important to

this study.

First, language serves a socialization function. Between the language of a given nationality or culture and an individual lies an area not often discussed by the linguist but which is of great interest to social psychology. Sapir calls this the “subform” of a language (Selected Writings 15). It is what lies below the surface. It is the socialization force among various groups within a given culture that holds people together out of common interest. This would include groups such as families, labor unions, and members of a club (15). I believe that Sapir’s list should also include persons held together by religious affiliations.

These groups have peculiarities of speech that identify individuals in them with one another and designate members from non-members. They in essence determine who is in and who is out. For instance, a resident of Larabee-Morris residence hall at Asbury Seminary may refer to himself as a “Larabite.” No one living in another dorm would be able to be identified with this label. This label designates membership and, to a degree, identity; only those from the Asbury Seminary culture would understand the meaning of that term.

Second, language serves to uniform culture and societies. Language holds a culture together by use of its culturally sanctioned forms. Language conveys the history and stories of a culture in such a way that, for example, traditions and family customs are handed down from one generation to another. This builds community and in essence maintains membership. This uniformizing force is communicated through means such as proverbs, medicine formulae, standardized prayers, folk tales, standardized speeches, song texts, and genealogies (to name just a few). According to Sapir, these are “some of the

more overt forms which language takes as a culture-preserving instrument” (17). He refers to these forms as, “language made eternal as document” (17).

Third, language serves an individualizing force. Sapir states that the individualizing force is probably the most crucial function of language because it has been a significant contributor to the growth of individuality. Individualization has the power to unify or divide a culture. For example, individuality can lead to personal achievement or extreme personal excess. Slogans such as, “I did it my way,” “I’m number one,” or even “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” perpetuate individualization. These types of slogans have the ability to marginalize others and divide people groups by inferring that “you” are not and may not be able to be as successful (17).

Sapir says that choice of words, tone, inflection, quality, rate, volume, the length and build of sentences, and breadth of vocabulary are just a few of the factors that contribute to defining individuality. These factors are both intentional and unconscious. According to Sapir,

The language habits of people are by no means irrelevant as unconscious indicators of the more important traits of their personalities. The normal person is never convinced by the mere content of speech but is very sensitive to many of the implications of language behavior. (Selected Writings 17)

In other words, how one speaks is just as important as the content of what is said.

In The Language and Imagery of the Bible, G. B. Caird identifies five functions of language that support the work of Sapir. First, he says that language is informative; it creates order. One of the simplest and fundamental functions of the linguistic acts is naming things. To name something is to give identity and character and, in some sense, even to create life. This informative function of language imposes shape on the chaos of

the world. Similarly a title is a word or phrase that has some connotative value, indicating status (President of the United States), achievement (winner), office (Governor of Indiana), or role (husband) but which may be used mainly for identification (8).

Second, language is cognitive. Caird points out that outside those sciences whose language are mathematics, most thinking, and all rational thinking, is done with words. Languages organize past experience and present perceptions and, to some extent, also determine future behavior. Caird says that the three basic tools of thought that language provides are naming, classification, and comparison (12).

Naming something gives it identity. For example, English distinguishes between revenge, vengeance, and retribution, which are close but not exact synonyms. Hebrew has only one word to cover all three. The reason is that the Hebrew culture had no public prosecution. Even a charge of murder had to be brought to court by the next of kin, the redeemer of blood (13).

Objects are classified and defined by arranging them in groups according to their affinities in such a way that general statements may be made that apply to every member of the class. For example, there are classifications such as species and genus, space, time, cause and effect. In effect these generalizations help make sense of the environment and experience and render life practical (14).

When comparing something, the unknown becomes the known by similarities and dissimilarities. The parables of Jesus are a perfect example. Generally they begin with the phrase, "The kingdom of God is like." While these comparisons do not fully describe what the kingdom of God is like, they provide a frame of reference to illustrate the text (16).

Third, language is performative and causative. According to Caird, performatives

commit speakers to their words. In other words, in daily life words are used almost as often to do things as to talk about things. For example utterances such as “I give my judgement,” or “I commend you,” or “I hereby give you authority over the whole land of Egypt” (Gen. 41:41) are not merely words to inform. They are words to perform (20).

Fourth, language is expressive and evocative and includes the language of poetry and of worship. Caird maintains that one of the curiosities of language is that most words expressive of feeling are bivocal, i.e., they are capable of signifying both stimulus and response, while some words that are their partial synonyms can signify only one or the other. For example words such as love, honor, horror, and delight evoke a stimulus and a response while their synonyms such as affection, esteem, and disgust call for response. In Hebrew “fear” is bivocal while in English it is not (25).

Fifth, language is cohesive. Caird says that most daily exchange consists of what Malinowski called the language of “phatic communion,” any linguistic behavior designed primarily to establish rapport, to set another person at ease, or to create a sense of mutual trust and common ethos (32). In a general sense, all those who share a common language together make up a speech community, and speech communities rarely coincide exactly with groupings based on economic, political, cultural, or religious ties.

In sum, Sapir and Caird rightly point out that language serves a host of functions. I believe that having the knowledge of the language of faith plays a determinative position in living out that faith. Language serves a function and maintains a shaping force. The better the attributes of language are understood, the more effective communication will be.

Language as Communication

Webster's dictionary defines communication as follows: "To convey knowledge of or information about: to make known; to reveal by clear signs; to cause to pass from one to another" (104). Dr. James F. Engel, in his work Contemporary Christian Communications, states, "Most authorities agree that communication takes place when a message has been transmitted and the intended point is grasped by another" (38). The communication process involves both a sender and a receiver. Charles H. Kraft defines communication, including God's revelational communication, as "a matter of stimulus to action rather than as the mere transmission of information" (147).

Charles Kraft identifies ten basic principles of communication. First, the purpose of communication is to bring a receptor to understand a message presented by a communicator in a way that substantially corresponds with the intent of the communicator. Second, what is understood is at least as dependent on how the receiver perceives the message (plus the paramessages) as how the communicator presents it. Third, communicators present messages via cultural forms (symbols) that stimulate within the receptors' heads meaning that each receptor shapes into the message that he or she ultimately bears. Meanings are not transmitted, only messages. Fourth, the communicator, to communicate the message effectively, must be "receptor-oriented." Fifth, if the communicator's message is to influence the receptor(s) it must be presented with an appropriate degree of impact. Sixth, the most impactful communication results from person-to-person interaction. Seventh, communication is most effective when communicator, message, and receiver participate in the same context(s), settings(s), or frame(s) of reference. Eighth, communication is most effective when the communicator

has earned credibility as a respectable human being within the chosen frame of reference.

Ninth, communication is most effective when the message is understood by the receiver to relate specifically to life as the receiver lives it. Tenth, communication is most effective when the receiver discovers (1) an ability to identify at least partially with the communicator and (2) the relevance of the message to his or her own life (147).

According to Kraft, these models or principles of communication have been developed within a number of disciplines, including psychology, speech, anthropology, and the more recently developed discipline called “communications” or “communicology.” They provide insight into making communication more effective across individual and cultural barriers. I believe that knowing these principles is important to this study and the evaluation of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for teaching the basic doctrines (language) of the Christian faith (147).

Every culture has a language and every language has a culture. Every language has a special way of looking at the world and interpreting experience. Every language has a specialized system of communicating that guides its members in observing, reacting, and expressing themselves in community. According to Samovar and Porter, “language and its changes cannot be understood unless linguistic behavior is related to other facts” (113). In other words, simply understanding the meaning of words is insufficient. Knowing something about the communicator’s experience greatly enhances the communication process.

Language does more than simply convey ideas, feelings, and emotions. “Every language is also a means of categorizing experience” (Samovar and Porter 113). Samovar and Porter maintain that language compares and contrasts, evaluates and differentiates.

This process is not simply mechanical. It is person-to-person, selective, viewed through lenses that impact both transmission and reception and is communicated through culture (113).

According to Sapir, language plays a significant role in the totality of culture. “Far from being simply a technique of communication, it is itself a way of directing the perceptions of its speakers and it provides for them habitual modes of analyzing experience into significant categories” (Language 116). Language is in fact a “guide to social reality” (116). This opinion is supported by a variety of scholars including Boas, Greenberg, and Jean Piaget (115).

One of Edward Sapir’s most significant contributions to the field of linguistics and the social sciences and to this study is the development of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It states that, “language functions, not simply as a device for reporting experience, but also, and more significantly, as a way of defining experience for its speakers” (Language 116). In other words, language functions to create meaning and bring life to words. Sapir makes his point in the following:

Language is not merely a more or less systematic inventory of the various items of experience which seem relevant to the individual, as is often so naively assumed, but is also a self-contained, creative symbolic organization, which not only refers to experience largely acquired without its help but actually defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our unconscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience. In this respect language is very much like a mathematical system which, also, records experience in the truest sense of the word, only in its crudest beginnings, but as time goes on, becomes elaborated into a self-contained conceptual system which previsages all possible experience in accordance with certain accepted formal limitations. ... [Meanings are] not so much discovered in experience as imposed upon it, because of the tyrannical hold that linguistic form has upon our orientation in the world. (116)

In other words, Sapir argues that language cannot be separated from meaning. They are intimately bound to one another. Language orients and gives meaning to experience and the world. Put another way, language has a transforming effect on individual and community experiences (116).

Many experiences and perceptions occur at a subconscious level. Individuals simply are not consciously aware of all the stimuli that they encounter. Yet, all these experiences do affect the communication process. They cannot simply be dismissed. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, “the phenomena of a language are to its own speakers largely of a background character and so are outside the critical consciousness and control of the speaker” (Language 116).

The Christian Believer Study places a heavy emphasis on learning the language of the faith, which includes biblical language and the language of the creeds and historic church doctrines. If the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is true, and linguists believe that it is, then a discipleship resource that focuses on the language of the Christian faith has the opportunity to transform the lives of the participants. Since the power and transforming possibilities of language and communication are known, understanding the process of communication is crucial.

Process of Communication

The function of communication is “to lead potential receptors to the discovery of both the substance and the value of the message, rather than simply to provide for them ‘prefabricated’ alternatives to their present understandings” (C. Kraft 163). The intent of the Christian Believer Study is to confront the doctrinal illiteracy in the Church and help Christians understand the faith they have embraced. That means that what is

communicated through the readings as well as the group times must consistently lead the participants to discover what Scripture and Church history have to say about doctrine. That purpose, adequately understood, necessitates an understanding of the process of communication.

Communication is both verbal and nonverbal and takes place at a variety of levels. In an attempt to see the intricacies of the communication process and see where communication succeeds and fails, I have chosen to look at an example of interpersonal verbal communication between two people (referred to as X and Y).

X serves as the communicator. She begins with knowledge of both the content and meaning of what she wants to communicate (the message). She also brings with her the sum total of her past experience and her culture that includes her attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, intentions, and worldview. That accumulated knowledge may be referred to as her cultural “lens.”

The message is then communicated to Y via a particular channel. That message is composed of signs, symbols, verbal and non-verbal cues. It includes body movement, paralanguage (voice qualities and non-language sounds), skin sensitivity, the use of cosmetics, and dress. For purposes of this illustration, the channel is face-to-face, verbal communication.

Y’s job is to receive and understand the intended message. Reception and comprehension proves to be one of the greatest obstacles for communication because Y also filters, both consciously and unconsciously, the intended message through his cultural lenses that arrange, categorize, and interpret the message.

While the above situation is a very simple model of communication, we can see

where the process may break down. For example, non-verbal and paramessages may skew the intended message. The cultural lenses of either the communicator or receiver may hinder or prevent the message from being understood. Too much outside noise, interference, or distraction may prevent the message from being accurately heard or understood, or, quite possibly, the message itself was blurry or uncertain. What is known for certain is that intention is only part of the communication task. The real test is reflection. It is answering the question, "Did what was intended to be communicated actually get communicated?"

Conclusion

In sum, this study of linguistics reveals that language and communication play a significant role in defining culture. Language and communication actually create culture, and they have a transforming power over culture. Sapir, Caird, C. Kraft, and others recognize that the cultural lenses through which all communication must pass can serve to either facilitate or hinder communication. Language and communication consciously and unconsciously arrange and categorize everyday experiences; therefore, we must recognize those factors and the power that language has to define and limit cultural understanding of reality.

Theology

Christian theology is more than what Christians believe about the past, the present, or the future. Christian theology provides a way of seeing, speaking, and interacting with the God in whom Christians believe and with the world God has created. Since theology is communicated through language from one person or one culture to another, this study would not be complete without looking at how the language of the Bible shapes what

people see, how they speak, how they interact with its content, and how they live.

Biblical theology seeks to put into language the development of doctrine. It is the historical, critical, and exegetical study of the Bible and the history of the Church, its institutions, its traditions, etc. N. T. Wright suggests that there exists a need to integrate theology and biblical studies to get a clear picture of scripture (138). Sweet supports this proposition when he uses the language of the sea and writes,

God has given spiritual navigators a compass: The Scriptures. The Scriptures point us to Christ. They enable us to locate the North Star. They are not the Christ. They are not what we worship. They are the compass that points to life work—following Christ. (54)

Charles Kraft acknowledges that theologizing is a dynamic, continuous process.

He says,

If we are tempted to absolutize the perceptions of our culture-bound understandings of the revelation of God, we are culturally taking a position equivalent to that of individuals who regard none but their own understandings of truth to be absolutely correct, and we accuse such individuals of egocentrism. (292)

As communicated in a later section, this understanding affects how Scripture is read and understood. Christians must continually remind themselves that everyone receives the gospel within a particular cultural perspective. That gospel is closely tied to a cultural expression of Christianity and a theology that has developed out of a particular cultural perspective.

“Every worldview has to begin somewhere,” (Colson and Pearcey 97). The Christian worldview begins with creation, a deliberate act by a personal Creator. Unlike any other god, Christians believe that their God has existed for all eternity. The Christian’s Creator God made a deliberate choice, a decision. He had an amazing plan for

the created order and carried out that plan perfectly.

The first section below presents the process of communicating theology. This section gives a general overview of Christian theology and examines how theology affects the way the message of the gospel is heard and communicated. The second part of this section looks at one area of language in the general theology of the Gospel of Luke. While innumerable places exist to examine theological language in the Bible, this study is limited to looking at the language Jesus used in the first century to usher in a worldview change concerning the nature of God. Jesus' use of language touches on many of the doctrines addressed in the Christian Believer Study.

Communicating Theology

N. T. Wright asserts that Christians do not simply see, speak, and think about the way the world is but what it ought to be. He writes,

If it [Christian theology] is not a claim about the whole of reality, seen and unseen, it is nothing. It is not a set of private aesthetic judgments upon reality, with a 'take-it-or-leave-it' clause attached. Christian theology only does what all other worldviews and their ancillary belief-systems do: it claims to be talking about reality as a whole. (131)

Theologizing is a process that takes place at the human perceptual level. Human beings examine what they see and hear, how they think and process information, and the conclusions they reach about their experiences by use of their senses and their minds. Theologizing is a dynamic discovery process that helps human beings make sense of and put a handle on a god or creator. In an attempt to help make sense of this dynamic discovery process, Robert McAfee Brown defines ten propositions that explain what he calls "the value of experiential-contextual theologies" (170). He maintains that theologizing is always a dynamic process and not a passive acceptance of a doctrinal

product “once for all delivered” (170).

First, Brown says that all theologies are contextually conditioned. As presented in the section on worldview, thought patterns and context are products of culture. For example in the United States mainline Protestants tend to steer clear of discussions about demons and spiritual battles while in more primitive cultures these conversations are a daily reality. While discussions such as these are changing in the United States, rational and scientific worldviews are still relied upon to explain experiences cognitively (171).

Second, Brown recognizes that nothing is wrong with theology being contextually conditioned. Authentic theologizing starts with where people are, looks for places where God has already been at work, and builds on that experience. Anything otherwise would represent something like a transplant—taking one culture and attempting to reproduce it in another place and time (171).

Third, Brown recognizes that others may be needed to demonstrate how conditioned, parochial, or ideologically captive one’s theology can become. As can be seen in the worldview section of this paper, the Christian worldview is the meta-narrative for ordering and understanding the world. Many times one’s worldview is so ingrained in the DNA of human experience that an individual must either leave his or her culture to recognize it, or, as Brown suggests, have an outside observer point out how much culture conditions beliefs (171).

Fourth, Brown encourages Christians to be excited rather than upset when hearing alternative theological perspectives for they expand understandings. As Christians try to sort out their beliefs and in turn communicate those beliefs to others, they will likely encounter perspectives other than their own. New perspectives present the opportunity to

grow, refine, and further define what is held as belief (172).

Fifth, Brown recognizes that even if Christians once could ignore such alternative voices (perspectives), this is no longer an option. Theology is ever renewed and re-interpreted to new generations and peoples in new thought forms and cultural patterns. A one-size-fits-all gospel does not exist. While the essence of the message is unchanging, the method must continue to change and adapt to reach each new generation (172).

Sixth, Brown recognizes that contemporary alternative theologies are reminiscent of certain theological innovations in Western cultures. He recognizes that the hearers must perceive theology, like every other presentation (transculturation) of the Christian message, as relevant if it is to fulfill its proper function within the Christian movement (173).

Seventh, Brown offers reminders that the point of contact between traditions and these new theologies is Scripture. While remaining receptive to new methods of communicating the timeless truths of the Christian faith, the essential truths of Scripture have always and must remain constant. Scripture is the foundation and without that foundation the structure of Christian faith is surely unstable (173).

Eighth, Brown advocates taking the same kind of critical look at the traditions of the dominant culture as is done for other cultures. This means that consideration, for instance, of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith allows that they can be expressed in a variety of forms, even languages. For example, when approaching baptism as a sacrament, the Christian community must not get caught up in fighting over form versus function. When the sight of the function is lost, the form becomes idolatrous (173).

Ninth, Brown recognizes that only in creative tension with the widest possible

perspective can theologies be developed appropriate to particular situations. The struggle to communicate the essentials of the Christian faith requires a willingness to be stretched and challenged. Brown is saying that these creative tensions help to solidify cultural expressions of the Christian faith (174).

Tenth, Brown recognizes that the ultimate loyalty within the Church is not simply to nation, class, or culture. The Church is uniquely suited to provide the context within which the task of creative theologizing can take place. In other words, the Church should be the healthiest and safest place to dialogue and grow in understanding the Christian faith. It should be a place where people can ask questions and search for answers in a loving and nurturing environment (174).

Brown is saying that one of the most difficult tasks facing theologizing is the constant attempt to put in a culturally relevant and meaningful expression language that speaks the truth about God. The truth is that theology and the language of the Christian faith must be translated into terms and concepts that are meaningful to community-specific groups. As someone once said, "Relevance is as relevance is perceived."

Charles Kraft says that both from within and outside the Western world Christian theology is often either misperceived or perceived as irrelevant. Daniel Von Allmen expresses the same sentiment in "The Birth of Theology":

Any authentic theology must start ever anew from the focal point of the faith, which is the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ who died and was raised for us; and it must be built or re-built (whether in Africa or in Europe) in a way which is both faithful to the inner thrust of the Christian revelation and also in harmony with the mentality of the person who formulates it. There is no short cut to be found by simply adapting an existing theology to contemporary or local taste. (45)

He is saying that the Christian faith has to begin with where God is already at work. No

real shortcuts exist when communicating the truths of the gospel. While the Church has a wealth of tradition and experience from which to draw, each new culture, generation, and individual must be met on their turf. Then the Church taps into the power of God already at work and allows itself to be used in a way that is culturally relevant while not compromising the truth of the gospel (45).

If theologies are not in sync with the culture, the results may be tragic. The “worship wars” that have been springing up over the use of “contemporary” music are just one example. If the Western culture insists on music that is simply outdated and perceived as irrelevant to the contemporary culture, the current generation may be lost. A willingness to meet people where they are provides a bridge to help take them to where they can be.

Charles Kraft advocates three solutions to the potential problem. First, recognize the limitedness of the cultural and disciplinary perspective of what is presently known about theology. In other words, individual believers or Christian communities may not have all the answers. Belief and practice may be more of a Western or American form than an essential of the Christian faith. Second, develop a diversity of cultural, subcultural, and disciplinary approaches to the study and presentation of theological perceptions of God’s truth. This would include possibly using more of the arts in worship or changing the style of sermon delivery to account for a postmodern learning style. Third, the Church and Christians must learn to communicate theological insight in a receptor-oriented way to each culture or group (299). In this postmodern culture, the lecture style of sermon delivery is outdated and irrelevant. Audiences demand to be more engaged and involved in experiencing in a variety of ways the truths of the Christian faith.

One way of looking at theological issues is to look at the concept of form versus function. Once a culture has adopted and become attached to specific form, the meaning is easily lost. Communion is a prime example. Is the grape juice important (form) or what it symbolizes? Many churches fight over this issue. Does worship have to occur on Sunday mornings (form) or is another night an acceptable alternative? These are highly contested issues. Which is the appropriate Bible translation to use? Should churches use the King James or “The Message?” The Church and Christian communities must continually seek to communicate Christian theology in a way that is culturally relevant while not compromising the centrality or truth of the message.

Colson and Pearcey offer, “In today’s post-Christian, postmodern world many people no longer even understand the meaning of crucial biblical terms” (97). Many of the terms identified and taught in the Christian Believer Study (Revelation, Providence, Sin, Grace, Salvation, Atonement, Trinity, Sacrament, Judgement, Eternal Life, etc.) are foreign. Since these are the terms that the Church has historically used, then one of two things must happen. Either new words need to be found to convey the same meaning, or people need assistance to understand the meaning of these terms. An obvious answer is that we may need to do some of both.

Charles Kraft communicates quite simply that theology must be culturally relevant.

He writes,

To relate Christianity to Americans, we need to take the risk of attempting to translate traditional formulations of theological truth out of the language and concepts of traditional theology into those of the behavioral sciences. If we refuse such a risk we should not be surprised if both non-Christians and those who unenthusiastically stay within the churches assume that (a) God is behind the times, (b) he is not concerned with being relevant to contemporary life and thought, or (c) he cannot cope with this latest

change in thought patterns. (19)

Kraft believes that Christians who understand and can relate biblical truth, who have the courage to live as Christians, can help redeem a culture or even create a new one. If this is to happen then Christians must take the risk and find new ways of communicating timeless truth.

Theology of Luke

The purpose of this study was to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation. I believe that theological language shapes and influences Christian belief and behavior. Any number of linguistic examples could be found in the Bible. This study looks closely at the way Jesus used Father language almost exclusively for the name of God. Before undertaking this discussion, a precursory look at the Gospel of Luke is in order.

Joel Green writes in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke that all language is embedded in culture (12). Because the context of Luke's writing is culturally bound within the first century, understanding the culture of the first century citizen is essential. Since first-century Christianity could be a dissertation by itself, I have chosen to mention just a few of the insights significant to this dissertation.

In the opening discourse, Luke identifies his work as a "narrative" or "orderly account" (1:1-4). The audience knows from the beginning that Luke has researched what he is about to tell communities, and he is going to give his findings in the form of a story (though of course not every event). The events he reports on are not gossip or make-believe. They are historical accounts of events that actually transpired.

As a historiographical narrative, Luke relays the event-accounts that, taken in

isolation, paint an incomplete picture. For Luke, the order as well as the totality of the events are important. His methodology is designed purposefully. He wants the reader to draw a specific conclusion. “The Lukan narrative is an invitation to embrace an alternative worldview and to live as if the reign of God had already revolutionized this age” (Green 11).

The Gospel of Luke is not complete in isolation. Unlike the other Gospels, the story of Jesus continues in Luke’s second volume, the book of Acts. In its entirety, Luke-Acts is about God’s plan of salvation for the world. They explain who Jesus was, what he did, why he came, and how he prepared the disciples to do and continue his work. Central to Luke’s writing is a call to response. Based on the event-accounts that transpired, Luke wants his readers to understand the urgency and necessity of a response.

Luke places Jesus at the center of God’s plan. His Christology emphasizes who Jesus was, what he was sent to do, and what he called people to do. Jesus is portrayed as both Son of God and prophet. His birth is announced by angels (1:31), his destiny is pronounced (2:29), and he is blessed by God (3:22). He calls sinners to repent (5:31-32), brings God’s forgiveness (5:12-26; 7:36-50), and challenges his disciples to take up their crosses and follow him (9:23). Jesus came as the fulfillment of God’s promised salvation (24:44). Jesus is the long-awaited Davidic Messiah, the Son of God, “who fulfills in his career the destiny of a regal prophet for whom death, though necessary, is hardly the last word” (Green 23).

A continual emphasis runs throughout the Gospel of Luke on the Holy Spirit. From beginning to end the prominence, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit is seen working in the life of Jesus and his followers (Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26, 27; 3:16,

22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13, 12:10,12).

Luke also emphasizes the importance of discipleship. As Green states, “The call to discipleship is fundamentally an invitation for persons to align themselves with Jesus, and thus with God” (23). This alignment calls for a radical worldview reformation. Seeing the world as a disciple of Jesus Christ gives new lenses to perceive the world, experience the world, and develop meaningful relationships. Allegiance to God means that inherited status is no longer important. Discipleship is a mandate to love one’s enemies, give without expectation of return, and extend hospitality to people who cannot reciprocate. Writing to the wealthy, Luke emphasizes a life that reaches out to the down and out, not the up and in.

Green notes that the overriding theme of Luke is salvation.

Salvation is neither ethereal nor merely future, but embraces life in the present, restoring the integrity of human life, revitalizing human communities, setting the cosmos in order, and commissioning the community of God’s people to put God’s grace into practice among themselves and toward ever-widening circles of others. (24-25)

For Luke there exists no compartmentalization or separation between social, spiritual, individual, and communal. Salvation is holistic: social, economic, and political.

Wright offers the reminder that choosing to become a Christian is not an easy or natural thing for the average pagan (360). It was also not easy for the first-century Jew. A converted Jew would probably be cut off from the power, privilege, safety, security, and support of the family unit. At a political level, a convert might be viewed as a national traitor and thus subject to being treated accordingly. So the question begs to be asked: Why? Why did some convert? Why did early Christianity grow and spread so quickly (123)?

Wright addresses these questions with a simple answer. He says that Christianity burst on the scene with the answers to all the questions people were asking. It was available to all, regardless of social status, ethnicity, or gender. Choosing to be a Christian forced a convert to adopt a whole new worldview. It transformed people and those transformed people transformed cultures (359-70).

Father Language

As stated in an earlier section, every worldview has to begin somewhere. The Christian worldview is no different. Many theological words and biblical concepts associated with the Christian worldview, while grounded in Scripture and considered orthodox, elicit a variety of feelings, emotions, attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs. One of those biblical concepts that continues to be at the forefront of biblical theology is the Fatherhood of God.

My personal experience in a variety of church settings reveals that while the biblical text is clear, God is Father, the ability for Christians to use father language may be difficult, if not impossible, if the biblical understanding of fatherhood is unclear. God as Father brings with it a host of experiences and worldviews. Some of those are good while others not.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to address the issues of gender inclusiveness or sociological constructs of the Fatherhood discussion. While Father language is a social and a gender issue, my desire is to look at the bigger language issue. The purpose of this section is two fold. First, I want to discover and reveal some of the reasons Jesus chose the language he used for God and uncover what Jesus was communicating by calling God Father. Second, I want to examine why Christians should recover and embrace this

terminology.

In his book The Hermeneutical Spiral, Grant R. Osborne names one of the tasks of biblical theology as tracing themes through the Bible then examining how those themes unify the totality of Scripture. He further points out two basic types of inquiry: the process of searching for unifying themes behind the testaments or the Bible and the attempt to trace particular themes through their development in various stages of the biblical period (263). Biblical theology seeks to bridge systematic theology and contextualization.

The exegetical work is the process of discovering particular views of the biblical period under question. This section of the dissertation presents a close look at the concept of Father language for God in an attempt to understand what Jesus was teaching and preaching with his almost exclusive use of the word Father (as recorded in Luke 11) when he referred to God. Father language has been chosen for several reasons.

First, the concept of God as Father denotes a relationship that the Church has historically understood between the Creator God and the creation. The emphasis of the discussion in this section will focus on how God is relational and how Scripture defines that relationship.

Second, an understanding of God as Father communicates more than simply a name. It is a description of the very character of God. That nature includes many doctrines the Church continues to understand as orthodox such as creation, covenant making, providence, revelation, and are specifically addressed in the Christian Believer Study.

Third, I believe that language has the ability to communicate information that is life

transforming. A biblical understanding of the substance and the nature of the Christian faith bridges a way of connecting with God and live faithfully.

As discussed in earlier sections of this paper, human beings relate to one another through language. Language is metaphorical. Human beings understand and experience one thing in terms of another. Human conceptual systems are fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The Bible is also filled with metaphors. It speaks of God in symbols. Students of the Bible have the hermeneutical task of trying to understand what the Bible now means by what it once meant.

The Christian Believer Study attempts to do the same thing by examining some of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith and see how they impact the life of a believer. The goal of the Christian Believer Study is to bridge the theological and doctrinal illiteracy gap that exists in the Church. The nature of God is just one example.

Fatherhood is not an image for God reserved for the New Testament. Several passages in the Old Testament exemplify God as Father (Deut. 32:5; 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Ps. 89:26; Jer. 3:4-5; 31:9; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Mal. 1:6). As W. J. Cameron says, those references are chiefly in connection with Israel, the Davidic king, and with the expected Messiah (408). Specific references to God's divine parenthood is implied in Exodus 4:22-23, Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5, Psalms 2:7, Jeremiah 3:19; 31:20, and Hosea 11:1.

The works of Willem A. VanGemeren support this premise. He maintains that while "the danger of limiting God to human concepts, relations, and analogies was always present, ... Jesus restored the Old Testament teaching of Yahweh's love, forgiveness, readiness to listen to prayer, and fatherly concern" (397). Further, "Jesus' teaching about

the Father conforms to the OT, is in essence a return to OT piety, and is an intensification in that Jesus himself spoke to God as ‘my Father’” (388).

Both the implied and direct references give a picture, a metaphor you might say, of what God was like to the nation of Israel. These references lay the foundation for what Jesus unveils in the New Testament. Yahweh may be the name for God, but metaphors help us understand his nature.

From the very beginning, Genesis reveals the nature of God. God creatively filled, cared for, and sustained creation. To the smallest detail, God thought of everything. In the midst of that creation, God placed the pinnacle of his creation, human beings. Only men and women were created in the very image of God. When God completed his work, God called it “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

A grand sweep through the Old Testament reveals God’s special relationship with human beings. God created the nation of Israel by delivering them from Egypt. God cared for them and provided for them before, during, and after their settlement in the Promised Land. Very early the concept of adoption and election began to unfold in Scripture. The nation of Israel was God’s special, chosen people. They were to hold a special place in history.

With that adoption came requirements. The main stipulation that God expressed was commitment and obedience (Jer. 3:9, Mal. 1:6). God wanted allegiance to flow out of love, not out of fear or God’s need to control. All too often, however, the people of Israel are seen as a people who wanted God when they wanted God—when it served their needs and purpose. Out of their rebellion, the nation of Israel experienced God’s wrath.

Cameron points out that the concept of God, as the “Father of the God-fearing,” is

also evident in the intertestamental period (408). Examples can be found in Jubilees 1:24, and Psalms of Solomon 13:8, 17:30.

From the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, humankind has the opportunity to be in relationship with their Creator. The Old Testament reveals a God who is the High God, a near God, and a God involved in the lives of his people. God is both transcendent and immanent. Symbolically, Yahweh (God) was in being and presence the Father of the nation of Israel.

The main references to the Fatherhood of God in the New Testament are seen in the teachings of Jesus. The number of times the word "Father" is applied to God in the Gospels (170 times) is more than double the number found in the remaining books of the New Testament (Strong 345-50). Father is the primary metaphor used for God.

Ben Witherington notes that in first-century antiquity the father was the supreme authority in the family. The rest of the household was subordinate including the wife, children, and servant(s). The father was responsible for finding suitable spouses for his daughters, teaching his sons the laws and customs of his religion, and introducing his son(s) to the family trade. At all times the family was obedient to the father. When the parents reached old age, the eldest son took responsibility for and cared for them, and yet, the father still retained the ultimate authority in the household.

Hamerton-Kelly identifies two important points of special interest when considering Jesus' use of this title. First, he never joins his disciples' relationship to himself in the same way he is joined with God. Both Jesus' relationship with God and his relationship with his disciples are distinct and unparalleled. The Gospel of John clearly demonstrates the intimate connectedness and oneness of Jesus, the preexistent Word, with

God (John 1:1) (79).

Second, when Jesus speaks about God as the Father of others, he is generally referring to his disciples. Jesus recognized that all persons are created in the image of God and are thus worthy to be called children of God. However, Jesus also taught that the consequences of sin necessitate rebirth and reconciliation to God (John 3:3; 8:42; 14:6). Keeping both these in tension, Jesus taught that through faith in him, all persons were and are able to receive the Spirit of adoption (John 1:12; Gal. 3:16, 4:5; Rom. 8:15). Being reconciled and restored children of God then leads to likeness and inheritance.

Looking closely at the Gospel of Luke, without exception, Jesus always invokes God as Father in his recorded prayers and directs his disciples to do the same. In the Lord's prayer (chapter eleven), Jesus used father language seven times referring to God (6:31; 9:23; 10:21; 10:22), and in the eleventh chapter Jesus gives his disciples instructions to pray to God as Father.

Hamerton-Kelly observes that when Jesus gave his disciples instructions on how to pray he followed the custom of the day (73). Teachers such as John the Baptist (Luke 11:1) routinely gave their disciples a prayer that contained the essence of their teaching. Jesus pulled from his tradition and his early teaching a benediction from the synagogue liturgy as the foundation for his prayer and transformed it into the one found in Matthew and Luke.

The "Kaddish" usually ended the sermon and was therefore was an Aramaic rather than a Hebrew prayer. It read as follows:

Glorified and sanctified be His great name in the world which he created according to His will. May His kingdom come in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the whole house of Israel, soon and without

delay. And to this say: “Amen.” (Hamerton-Kelly 73)

Jesus would have known this prayer for the kingdom all his life. To it were added the phrases now in use.

The Lord’s Prayer occurs in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. The Lukan version is shorter and thus believed to be closer to the original since tradition would not subtract material from such a sacred text (Hamerton-Kelly 73). However, Matthew’s use of “debts” (Matt. 6:12) more closely reflects the original Aramaic in which the word for sin, *hoba*, is actually the term for a monetary debt (73).

Taken from the New American Standard Bible, the Lord’s Prayer reads as follows (11:2-4):

Father, hallowed be Thy name.
 Thy kingdom come.
 Give us each day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our sins.
 For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
 And lead us not into temptation.

The Lord’s Prayer instructs that God the Father is to be glorified. The Father’s Kingdom will come and bring an understanding of true humanity. The Father provides all that his children need. The Father has displayed holiness and perfection in Jesus as our model. An eschatological horizon in the future will bring God’s ultimate sovereignty into focus.

Probably the single most important word in this prayer is the word “Father.” In giving his disciples this prayer, Jesus gave his followers a priceless gift. He gave them the privilege of divine sonship and daughterhood. He gave them the right to call God, Daddy. As Green states, “God is presented by Luke as the Father who cares for his children and acts redemptively on their behalf” (438).

Hamerton-Kelly identifies three different usages of the word “Father” throughout the Gospels. Jesus used “My Father” when he prayed and when he revealed his identity as the Son to his disciples. Jesus used “your Father” when he taught his disciples how to pray to a God who loved them as his children. Finally, Jesus used “the Father” when he defended his message against attacks and doubters (81).

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ teaching on the Fatherhood of God was central to his theology and thoroughly his worldview. The term Father signified an intimacy of relationship that heralded back to the Old Testament, back to creation itself. It meant adoption and relationship. It is grounded in Israel’s election, in the covenant, and in eschatological promise: “Is not [the Lord] your father, who created you, who made you and established you?” (Deut. 32:6 NRSV); “You, O Lord, are our father; our redeemer from of old is your name” (Isaiah 63:16 NRSV).

Conclusion

In the first century, one’s name symbolized and communicated something essential and substantive about the nature of personhood. It communicated the essence of the person (Green 441). Jesus’ use of “Father” symbolized and actualized the metaphors of love, nurture, mercy, forgiveness, and delight. Jesus attempted to reconstruct what was apparently lost for centuries—understanding Yahweh as not just a name but as Father.

Summary

I have attempted to show how language, culture, and theology shape the Christian world. Cultural anthropology argues that cultures are never static or unchanging, that the worldview of a culture defines its own criteria for evaluating the way the forms and the people of a culture function. The test of any worldview analysis is whether or not it

enables people to make sense of their world (Wright 67). Linguistics argues that language shapes reality. It provides a way of making sense of the world. Christian theology argues that the Christian faith is culturally relevant and provides the answers to the questions people ask about themselves, others, and life.

The form of communication is a major influence in shaping the way people think—even the way they think about God. If Christians are to have the courage to live out biblical truth in such a way that culture may be redeemed or created anew, they must understand what they believe. The Christian Believer Study seeks to impart transforming information that leads to life change. According to the research in this chapter, effective communication is not merely information transference; it is life-transforming information.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Design of the Study

Assimilation is the process of incorporating new believers and newcomers into the fellowship of the Church. While assimilation seeks to provide opportunities for individuals to become fully connected into the life of the Church through a variety of programs, discipleship programs aim at bridging what people know with how people live as Christian disciples. While few church leaders would disagree that assimilation is important for the retention and development of fully-committed followers of Jesus Christ, many times assimilation is left to chance.

Followers of Jesus Christ are called to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love their neighbors as themselves (Mark 12:30, 31). The Christian Believer Doctrinal Study undergirds this charge by helping participants learn the language of the Christian faith—biblical language as well as the language of the early creeds and historic Church doctrine. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation.

Research Questions

The purpose statement of this study naturally separates into two components: the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study as a tool for acquiring knowledge of and an acceptance of historic Church doctrine and the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study as a tool for life transformation. The research questions that guide this study reflect these two components. The first question seeks to identify any changes that occur between what the participants learn and what they accept as the historic tenets of

the Christian faith as a result of the study. The second question focuses on the behavioral changes that may or may not occur in how the participants categorize, organize, and interact with their world based on the content of the study.

Research Question #1

Does participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study facilitate an increase in and an acceptance of the historically defined tenets of the Christian faith?

Research Question #2

Is there a significant change in the participants' behaviors and religious experiences as a result of participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study?

Population and Sample

The Christian Believer study may only be taught in churches that either have a trained facilitator able to teach the Christian Believer program or has a leader who has completed the Christian Believer Study from a trained leader. Teachers are qualified by completing one of the national training courses or by taking the entire study at a church where a leader has been trained. Individual churches are responsible for purchasing the videos as well as the leader's guide. The population of this study consists of the Christian Believer Study classes of churches enrolled in the program. The sample for this study is four classes from three churches in the South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church. The participating churches for this study were selected because they represent a variety of church sizes, locations, socioeconomic makeup, and theological diversity.

Participation was limited to persons who had registered for the Christian Believer Study and agreed the first day of class to participate in the study. At the last session, participants from each church's Christian Believer class were invited to a focus group.

Focus groups were used to provide anecdotal support for the changes that may or may not have resulted from completing the Christian Believer Study. The following churches were selected for this study:

- St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Zionsville United Methodist Church, Zionsville, Indiana
- Memorial United Methodist Church, Terre Haute, Indiana

St. Luke's United Methodist Church

St. Luke's UMC is located on the far north side of Indianapolis and is the largest church in the South Indiana Conference. The statistics show that St. Luke's is a growing church. From 2000 to 2001 they experienced a net gain in church membership (4,477 to 4,699), worship attendance (2,791 to 3,144), and Sunday school (414 to 432). This middle to upper-middle class congregation is the most theologically diverse of the three churches used in this study. They have a wide range of programs including special offerings for children, seniors, singles, and the hearing impaired. The church also promotes a gay and lesbian fellowship that "gathers and celebrates the love of God through worship, fellowship and service" ("Reach"). They have recently completed a major renovation, which includes a new sanctuary, additional classrooms, and spiritual life center.

Zionsville United Methodist Church

Zionsville UMC is a fast-growing church in a predominantly Caucasian, affluent suburb of Indianapolis. The statistics show that Zionsville is a growing church. From 2000 to 2001 they experienced a net gain in church membership (1,062 to 1,127), worship attendance (701 to 754), and Sunday school (227 to 276). In the summer of 2001, the

senior pastor of seven years resigned in the midst of the church construction and relocation to a new campus. In September 2001 the church moved to a new facility triple the size of their former facility.

Zionsville UMC is a church in transition. In addition to welcoming a new senior pastor and a new youth director, the church is experiencing significant increases in worship and membership. They have redesigned their membership class, have begun offering the Alpha discipleship program, and are looking for new opportunities to expand their small group ministries. Through fellowship and discipleship groups, the church is looking for ways to get smaller as they get bigger.

Memorial United Methodist Church

Memorial UMC is located on east side of Terre Haute, Indiana. It is the smallest of the three churches in this study. While St. Luke's and Zionsville are experiencing growth, Memorial has been maintaining or losing ground numerically. From 2000 to 2001 their church membership dropped from 922 to 896, average worship attendance fell from 431 to 424, and Sunday school attendance declined from 254 to 180.

Memorial is also the most traditional church of the three churches in this study. They have a variety of denominational programs including United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, and United Methodist Youth Fellowship. They also have a preschool and a kindergarten populated by children from the church and the community. The associate pastor who taught the Christian Believer stated that Memorial was a conservative, middle-class, Caucasian church.

Memorial's informational brochure indicates that the curriculum resources used by the various children's programs and most of the adult Sunday school classes come from

Abingdon Press, the official United Methodist publishing house. In the midst of responding to their numerical losses, Memorial is in the midst of redefining their mission and purpose statements.

Methodology

This was an evaluative study with both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative part employed a pre/posttest design with no comparison group (see Appendix B). I met on the first and final day with each class. Identical instructions were given to each class for completing both the pre and posttests. At the pretest administration, I explained the purpose of the study, invited participation, and explained participant consent would be registered by completing the instrument. Participants were also assured that no attempt would be made to match responses with individuals, thus insuring anonymity.

At the administration of both the pretest and posttest, I instructed the participants to complete the instruments in their entirety, noting that the instrument was comprised of four pages. In order to match the pretests and posttests of respondents, I stressed the importance of coding the instrument with the last four digits of their social security number. I highlighted the differences in the two separate Likert-type scales. At the conclusion of verbal instructions, participants were given time to clarify instructions or ask questions. The participants were given as much time as necessary to complete the instrument.

The qualitative part of the study employed focus group methodology (see Appendix F). Participants were invited on the last day of each class to participate in a follow up focus group. Those willing to be a part of the focus group from their church

registered their name and phone number on a sign-up sheet. I explained that giving their name, address, and phone number was indication of their willingness to participate in the focus group. As with the pretest and the posttest, anonymity was insured in the reporting of responses.

Five months after completing the Christian Believer Study, each church was contacted by phone to schedule a meeting place and a time for the focus group from that church. I mailed postcards to the participants from each church that had expressed a willingness to participate in a focus group (see Appendix G). I then contacted each participant approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled focus group to remind him or her of the scheduled meeting.

Focus group sessions lasted approximately two hours for each class. The focus group sessions were audio taped and transcribed in their entirety. The focus groups were used to gain anecdotal support for any changes that may have occurred as a result of completing Christian Believer.

Variables

The independent variable of this research was the Christian Believer Study series. The validity of the Christian Believer variable is recognized by the contribution of scholars in the field of theology and doctrine. Their expertise and contribution to the Christian Believer Study provides high levels of both face and content validity. This study reflects the historical doctrines of the Christian Church.

The independent variable, the Christian Believer Study, employs a variety of tools that include: the Bible, a study manual, and a book of supplemental readings by ancient and modern authors and theologians to complete the daily assignments. Participants met

weekly under the direction of a leader for a group meeting to review the lessons and readings. The leader used a guide for each lesson. The leader was encouraged at the training to stick closely to the guide to insure consistency of participants' experiences.

The three dependant variables this study measured were the participants' affective, behavioral, and cognitive changes as a result of completing the Christian Believer Study. The changes in affect, cognition, and behavior were measured by the pretest and the posttest responses. Follow up focus groups were conducted to gather qualitative responses on these variables directly from the participants

I have controlled for potential intervening variables by gathering demographic data collected on the instrument. This nominal level data included gender, age, ethnicity, education, income, marital status, children, occupation, worship attendance, congregational affiliation, church membership, church involvement, and participation in other high commitment Bible studies.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to gather data to measure the dependent variables for this study: pre/posttests and focus groups. The pretest and posttest were identical instruments comprised of three scales. The first scale, the Religious Behavior Scale was researcher-designed. The Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Religious World View Scale were two published instruments chosen for this study. These two scales were replicated, adjusting for gender-inclusive language. These changes did not alter the meaning of any of the statements.

The pretest and the posttest contained three parts (see Appendix B). The first part was a series of questions that provided raw demographic data. The second part was the

researcher-designed Religious Behavior Scale. This scale consisted of ten statements designed to measure any behavioral changes as a result of the Christian Believer Study. Participants responded to each statement on a Likert-type scale of one (“not true”) to five (“totally true”).

The third part of the pretest and posttest questionnaire consisted of two published instruments. The Christian Orthodoxy Scale (Fullerton and Hunsberger 15, 16) and the Religious World View Scale (McLean and Jennings 59, 60) were presented in the instrument as one scale of forty-nine statements. Participants were instructed to respond on a Likert-type scale of one (“strongly disagree”) to six (“strongly agree”). Although these scales were presented as a single unit, the data corresponding to each scale was analyzed.

According to Paloutzian (15), the Christian Orthodoxy Scale is a relatively unidimensional measure of the degree to which persons accept or reject beliefs central to the Christian faith. The Christian Orthodoxy Scale recognizes that certain beliefs are common to all who would use the name “Christian.” These are the “bedrock” statements that define the faith and are expressed in the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Christian Orthodoxy Scale taps beliefs that fall into the following categories: the existence of God, the nature of the Trinity, God as Creator, Jesus as divine, the virgin birth of Jesus, Jesus’ mission to save humankind, Jesus’ death and resurrection, Jesus’ imminent return to earth, God’s judgment of people after death, life after death, the inspiration of the Bible, miracles, and the efficacy of prayer. The Christian Orthodoxy scale consisted of twenty-four statements; each item was evaluated on a seven-point Likert-type scale.

The statistical properties of the Christian Orthodoxy Scale were reported by

Paloutzian (15, 16). The mean interitem correlation coefficients range from .57 to .70.

Internal consistency reliability coefficients for the same samples are all .09, except for one that is .97. Factor analysis shows that one factor runs through the set of items and that all of the items load on this factor. These findings suggest that the Christian Orthodoxy Scale items “hang together” well to form a unidimensional measure of orthodox belief.

According to Boivin, the Religious World View Scale was designed to assess the extent to which persons either agreed or disagreed with a number of historical tenets of the Christian faith (59). These included but were not limited to the divinity of Christ, the existence of hell, the occurrence of miracles, the validity of the Bible, and the means of salvation. The Likert-type scale was developed and used to stimulate interest in religious thought and to help participants understand and clarify their religious worldview. The Religious World View Scale consisted of twenty-five items. All the items contributed to a single total score for the instrument. No reported test was found to indicate the reliability of this scale. Construct validity is supported by Jennings (157-64)

The Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Religious Worldview Scale both contained items requiring reverse scoring. Statements opposite of the intent of the scale were presented in numbers equal to the positively worded statements. The statements of opposite intent were reversed scored and added to the positively worded responses for statistical analysis. Of the twenty-four items on the Christian Orthodoxy Scale, twelve were reverse scored. Of the twenty-five items on the Religious Worldview Scale, twelve were reversed scored.

Data Collection

Prior to the study, I personally contacted each church via the telephone and asked

the senior pastor for permission for participants in the Christian Believer Study to take part in this study. After receiving permission from the senior pastor, I called leaders from each church and received their support. I attended the first day of the Christian Believer Study at each church, introduced myself, told them about the project, assured them that their responses would be recorded confidentially, and gave them the option of completing the pretest. I administered the questionnaire personally at each church.

The concluding posttest was administered the last day of the Christian Believer Study. I also administered this questionnaire personally. I conducted the pre and posttests for two reasons. First, as researcher I was able to thank the participants for their help with this study. Second, I was able to invite and secure persons for each focus group. Volunteers for the focus groups provided me with their name, address, phone number, and e-mail (if they had one). I contacted them four weeks and two weeks prior to the focus group sessions. In each focus group session, the participants allowed me to tape record their responses.

The post-study focus groups from each church consisted of those participants who volunteered to attend a follow up session. The focus group sessions took place at each church six months following the completion of the Christian Believer Study and were limited to two hours each. Responses were recorded on an audiocassette. Typed transcripts were then completed for each focus group. The results of the focus groups were used to supplement the statistical data from the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Scores of the pretest and the posttest were analyzed for the total sample as well as for each class as separate cohorts using the SPSS statistical software package. The

qualitative data was reviewed to complement the quantitative part of this study. While this research was primarily designed to identify changes in the sample's response from the pre to the posttest, individual responses were also coded to identify significant changes in any individuals and/or groups based on the demographic data.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Language, culture, and religious faith are all factors that impact the process of discipleship. Therefore, I examined the disciplines of linguistics, anthropology, and theology to provide the necessary lenses for evaluating this study. The purpose of this project was to measure the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation. One participant related a personal story of transformation. She was asked if her perspective on life changed as a result of taking this study. Her response was offered in the context of the events of 11 September 2001:

You know without God I might have been hysterical. So many people were hysterical. With my relationship with God as with was before, I would have pretended not to be afraid. Because everybody knows that a good Christian is not afraid of anything. With the knowledge I gained from Christian Believer, I knew that I was able to say to God, I know this is scary, I don't know whether to fight, flee, freeze, wet my pants ... what? But I know you're in control. And if this is the end as so many people are saying it's the end, I know you're in control of that too.

The response above directly ties to the questions that this study sought to answer.

To guide this study, two research questions were asked. Does participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study facilitate an increase in and an acceptance of the historically defined tenets of the Christian faith? Is there a significant change in the participants' behaviors and religious experiences as a result of participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study?

In the following presentation of findings, each research question was addressed by examining the results of the researcher-designed Religious Behavior Scale, the published Christian Orthodoxy Scale, and the published Religious World View Scale. At the same

time, when possible, anecdotal statements and stories from the focus groups were added to reflect changes in cognition, affect, and behavior as a result of completing the study.

Profile of Subjects

The pre- and posttest questionnaires were administered to the participants of the Christian Believer Study in four classes at three churches of differing size, location, and theological identity. The sample for this study was fifty-nine. Thirty-four subjects (57.6 percent) completed both instruments and were used for the data set; eighteen subjects (30.5 percent) completed only the pretest; and seven, subjects (11.8 percent) completed only the posttest and were not included in the statistical analysis.

Of the thirty-four subjects analyzed, twenty-five were women (74 percent) and nine were men (26 percent). The subjects ranged in age from twenty-eight to seventy-six with a mean of fifty-two. One hundred percent of the subjects identified themselves as Caucasian. The education level of the subjects ranged from high school graduate to Ph.D.: seven completed high school (20 percent), one completed technical school (3 percent), five completed an associate degrees (15 percent), ten completed bachelors degrees (29 percent), nine completed masters degrees (26 percent), and two completed doctoral degrees (5 percent). Congregational affiliation ranged from non-members to a member of thirty-nine years. The mean membership was fourteen years.

The focus groups were conducted six months following the completion of the Christian Believer Study. The focus groups were conducted at St. Luke's UMC, Zionsville UMC, and Memorial UMC. Thirty-three participants indicated at the last Christian Believer class that they would participate in the follow up focus groups. Fifteen out of the thirty-three individuals participated in the focus groups: five from St. Luke's,

five from Zionsville, and five from Memorial. Of the total participants, four were men, and eleven were women.

The focus groups were tape recorded and then transcribed. I analyzed the transcribed notes. Recurring themes, similarities, and differences were identified for each class. The findings of the focus groups were used for anecdotal support of the changes identified through the quantitative instruments.

Reliability

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) used for this study was comprised of three scales: the researcher-designed Religious Behavior Scale, the published Christian Orthodoxy Scale, and the published Religious World View Scale. These scales were chosen because of the theoretical foundation of Chapter 2. This literature review establishes a linkage between language, culture, and theology and affect, cognition, and behavior. The three scales for this study were chosen to evaluate changes in affect, cognition, and behavior as a result of participation in the Christian Believer Study.

The Religious Behavior Scale was based on my interest in measuring the affective and behavioral expressions of the Christian faith. Respondents ($n=32$) rated their agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale (“not true” to “totally true”). The Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Religious World View Scale were chosen because of their ability to measure the knowledge of and the acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. Respondents rated their level of agreement with each statement on a six-point Likert-type scale (“strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”).

Using Crobach’s Coefficient Alpha ($p \geq .70$), each scale was tested for internal reliability ($n=34$). An alpha score was calculated for the pretest and the posttest for each

group. Alpha scores range from 0 to 1.0 and indicate how well the items in each scale measure the same thing. The closer the alpha number approaches 1.0, the greater the internal reliability of the instrument.

As reported in Measures of Religiosity, the Christian Orthodoxy Scale had a mean interitem correlation coefficients range from .57 to .70 (Paloutzian 15, 16). The pretest for this study indicated $\alpha = .88$ and the posttest indicated $\alpha = .90$. Though the Religious World View Scale did not published an interitem correlation coefficient, the pretest for this study indicated $\alpha = .84$ and the posttest indicated $\alpha = .83$. Because the Religious Behavior Scale was researcher-designed, no published interitem correlation coefficient existed. The pretest for this study indicated $\alpha = .83$ and the posttest indicated $\alpha = .84$.

To improve the reliability of the Christian Orthodoxy Scale, one item was dropped, leaving twenty-three items. By dropping this item, the reliability coefficient increased from .69 to .88 on the pretest. No change resulted from dropping this item on the posttest. To improve the reliability of the Religious World View Scale, two items were dropped. By dropping these items, the reliability coefficients went from .81 to .84 on the pretest and from .79 to .83 on the posttest.

Descriptive Data

The descriptive data or summary statistics provided a baseline reading of the subjects' religious behaviors as well as their knowledge and acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. Prior to administering the Christian Believer Study, the subjects' mean score on the Religious Behavior pretest was 4.09. The subjects' mean score on the Christian Orthodoxy Scale pretest was 5.64. The subjects' mean score on the Religious World View pretest was 4.98.

Changes in the Sample

A statistically significant change occurred between the pretest and posttest scores on all scales (see Table 4.1). The mean score on the Religious Behavior Scale changed from 4.09 on the pretest to 4.36 on the posttest ($p=.005$). The mean score on the Christian Orthodoxy Scale changed from 5.64 on the pretest to 5.83 on the posttest ($p=.031$). The mean score on the Religious World View Scale changed from 4.98 on the pretest to 5.16 on the posttest ($p=.033$).

Table 4.1
Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Scales

Scales	N	Measurements		Mean	SD	τ	$P \leq$.05*
		Pretest Mean	Posttest SD				
Religious Behavior	32	4.09	.60	4.36	.41	3.06	.005*
Christian Orthodoxy	28	5.64	.52	5.83	.29	2.28	.031*
Religious World View	25	4.98	.56	5.16	.33	2.26	.033*

**Indicates statistical significance*

Christian Orthodoxy and Religious Worldview

The Christian Orthodoxy and the Religious World View scales were used in this study to measure the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study in teaching the historic tenets of the Christian faith. The following reported statements gathered during the focus groups support the observed changes in the quantitative data that occurred at the macro level of the study.

A general theme that ran through the focus groups regarding the study of and the

knowledge of doctrine was summed up in the following statements:

I have to admit that I knew nothing about the study of doctrine before this class. I didn't know what doctrine was before, and so I found it very meaningful to me that all these old timers took the time to write this stuff down and pour out their guts and their soul to change the world.

The history of how the church came to its values and beliefs. That helped make sense of the long-standing beliefs of the church.

Christian believer didn't change my opinion because I was ignorant of doctrine to begin with! I was surprised.

I didn't know a lot of the doctrine. The main thing was learning and understanding.

I think the thing I enjoyed the most was that it was something in black and white that I could understand.

The focus group participants were asked if any particular doctrine helped them better understand the Church. In all four churches, the participants mentioned the doctrines of the Trinity, the sacraments, the body of Christ, and grace. Representative responses include the following.

The Trinity ... and how much theology makes sense. Take Luke 15 for instance. When we just read it, it doesn't make sense. Why leave 99 to get one? Why we leave 99 gave me a profound sense of what community is and it is modeled on the Trinity. The Godhead tells us about the nature of God and his creation.

I think the one I changed my opinion on was the mystery and message of the Trinity. I guess I really didn't know that much. We don't really talk about the Holy Spirit that much.

I think probably the one on the sacraments. I tend to do things as ritual. I grew up not in the Methodist Church. We did foot washing and things like that, that the Methodists don't do. It was interesting. It helped me look back at the role of ministers differently. I see them more as people, and I always have. But they get put on a pedestal like they should have the answers, but they don't.

Sacraments was another thing. You know I guess now that I'm blah-blah-

blaming about it, that's the big thing that Christian Believer did for me. It took a lot of concepts that I have learned by rote from childhood and gave me a depth of knowledge that made them meaningful. You know ... the sacraments ... I would go take communion and wait for the lightning, wait for the flash, wait for the voice, nothing would happen because I didn't get it. I didn't know what that meant: the body of Christ, blood of Christ. And after studying the chapter on sacraments, then it made sense. And I can't verbalize it exactly. If I were to tell you what does communion mean, I would say in words exactly what I would've said before, but all the words mean something different now.

I mentioned grace earlier. You read the Bible, and you read a lot about grace. But the week we spent talking about the grace of God was more inspiring and yea, more important, ... easier to see.

When we talked about God's grace and forgiveness of sins—our forgiveness. I know we are all a product of our environment, beliefs, and experiences. I'm not sure where, but I had kind of mixed feelings about the death penalty, but I came to be really opposed to it after taking this. You know if God can forgive somebody, then we should strive to forgive. I think I am a more forgiving person—it's just evolved. I can't really put my finger on one thing, but it [Christian Believer] gradually opened your eyes, ... The more we learn and the want to learn, it all helps you become a better person.

I felt that when I walked out of the class that my perspective of God had changed. That God truly is a builder of and fulfills relationships. Even though I learned a lot more about faith and the building blocks of faith, what I really came to realize was that everything kept leading to one thing: God is a God of relationships.

We have this rugged individualism in the U.S. I as an individual am the all-important entity. That goes against the Bible's sense of community. When you begin to think about the edification of the body of believers and how the rugged individual is a part of that, I suspect that in some cultures where Christianity is evident they wouldn't even think to ask a question like that. It's not in their mind-set.

I feel this has been a port of entry for me here at this church.

Religious Behavior

The focus group participants were asked two open-ended questions to discover if the cognitive knowledge they had gained through participating in the Christian Believer

Study led to any affective or behavioral changes. First, they were asked how participation in the Christian Believer Study impacted their relationship with God. Second, they were asked if they could easily talk to others about their faith. In all four churches, participants made responses about the doctrines of community, witnessing, service, the sovereignty of God, and personal growth through discipleship. Representative responses include the following.

It changed my witness. Some of the thinking and the way I describe portions of my faith have new meaning.

It's more of the way I look at what I should be doing or what God may be wanting me to do—not necessarily the way I think or feel about God—but the way it affects what I should be doing or what I should ... I don't know ... appropriate myself in the Church.

For the first couple of weeks I felt like this was more like going to class. I love to learn, and I thought this was just going to be like academia. But by week three, it was really making me think differently. I had to really think about what I believed and why. It was different than I thought as a child. It is a relationship that is developing and evolving. I didn't ever want it to stop.

We are all in this together. We are all ministers in some fashion. Some are more academic; some are more service. We should all increase our responsibility. We shouldn't rely on certain people to do everything.

Christian Believer defined it [discipleship] more and helped me see what a disciple was. I thought it was just an act of kindness; then you carry it outside the Church. You hear that in sermons a lot, but you could play that role anywhere. The lesson on discipleship helped me understand what it really meant to be a disciple. And you can play that role anywhere.

There are a few people doing the work, and after going through all this and seeing that we're supposed to be out spreading the Good News and living a Christian life, I just want to shake people sometimes because they don't feel the way I do. But it made me really want to share what I learned with other people. And like you guys were saying, after finding what you're good at realizing that, that could be your gift to the church or the world or whatever. Everyone has something to offer.

Another part we talked about was wanting to share with other people. I think

a lot of people don't share because they don't know how to put into words; they don't know what to say. But in this we learned about the doctrines and we talked about what we thought about and what the church says. It makes it easier. We can explain it a little better because we understand it a little better. Sometimes people don't believe. People have to have something concrete. You need to support your belief or opinion, and this gave it to us.

The things that happened in the world in the last month in this country. Some of the things I got out of this class made me glad that I have that security. I know that God loves us and loves our country and loves Ben Laden. I can accept all this a lot better. A lot of people are fearful, stressed, and are going for professional help. I don't. I may be naïve, but I feel a comfort that I didn't have. I felt that it's going to be okay. It's God's way of bringing peace into the world. He's not going to just do it. We've got to get into it. This has helped. Things just sit on your mind. Then they come back when something happens.

For me the doctrine of believing that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. Even though I had asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior fourteen years ago, the reality of what it means to believe—really believe—made me kind of renew my relationship with him. Kind of like marriage vows. I know that he is my Lord and Savior. Before when I asked him into my life, it was out of desperation. I'd hit bottom and need to totally surrender. Now it is more a personal relationship—moving from law to grace—like letting go of performance and being accepted. I think most of our human relationships are based on performance or conforming to a standard. I thought I had to earn love. For me it was realizing that I don't have to perform, and then get only eighty or ninety percent. I can start over each day. It's a slow process. Now I know it is more about having a personal relationship.

Changes between Churches

ANOVAs (Analyses of Variance) were performed to determine any significant differences between the four study groups on the Religious Behavior, Christian Orthodoxy, or Religious World View scales. No significance registered on the Religious Behavior Scale or the Christian Orthodoxy Scale. The Religious World View Scale was significant at .030. A Scheffe post hoc test indicated a significant difference between the Zionsville study group and the St. Luke's study group ($p=.037$).

The statements from the three quantitative instruments were assigned a value

based on the responses made by the participants. Those values were then used to calculate a grand mean score for each group. The grand mean score allowed for an overall comparison between the groups at a macro level. A MANOVA (Multivariate Test) was performed for each group to identify significant differences between the grand means (of the three scales) calculated for each group. A multiple comparisons post hoc test was run to help determine the reason for the differences that occurred between the St. Luke's group and the other three groups (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2
Grand Mean Multiple Comparisons

	Church	Mean Difference	Sig.
St. Luke's ($\bar{x} = 3.69$)	Zionsville ($\bar{x} = 4.41$)	-.71*	p = .00
	Memorial AM ($\bar{x} = 4.46$)	-.77*	p = .00
	Memorial PM ($\bar{x} = 4.47$)	-.77*	p = .00

**The mean difference is significant at the .05 level*

While the multiple comparison post hoc test did not account for the differences between St. Luke's and the other three groups, I believe the responses from the focus groups may provide some insight. Unconditional love and tolerance were two themes that emerged during the St. Luke's focus group that did not appear in the other groups. Examples of those themes were reflected in the following statements.

There was an atmosphere of unconditional love and acceptance for people of diverse opinions, perspectives, and personalities. For me, I became more tolerant of other people and perspectives and personalities.

As the class evolved, the relationships evolved. The unconditional love grew.

Unconditional love—a total acceptance of you as a human being. Valuing you as a person regardless of your idiosyncrasies or personality traits. Our leader created an atmosphere where people could be vulnerable.

In Christ we can know everything we need to know for now and all eternity to be saved.

God's unconditional acceptance and commitment to redeem creation. His unconditional acceptance of me as a creation of God and a commitment to redeem me. It was Tillich that said, "In Christ you are accepted, accepted, accepted, accepted ... and to this sentence there is no period." In my relationship there are things about me that God knew all along, and God accepted them about me, and that didn't stop God from loving me.

Intervening Variables

Findings were examined to determine if the intervening variables of age, gender, ethnicity, education, income, marital status, children, occupation, worship attendance, congregational affiliation, church involvement, or prior high-commitment Bible studies impacted the outcomes or accounted for the differences between the groups. Tests of between-subject effects were run, and no significant differences were observed based upon these intervening variables.

Summary of Significant Findings

The results of the quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that the Christian Believer Study is an effective tool for discipleship and life transformation. According to the Christian Orthodoxy Scale, the Religious World View Scale, and the anecdotal responses from the participants in the focus groups, positive changes occurred in both the participants' knowledge of and their acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. The Religious Behavior Scale and the supporting responses from the focus groups illustrated that a positive change also occurred at the affective and behavioral levels. This

study confirmed the literature review from Chapter 2 and demonstrated that the study of theological language had a shaping influence in Christian life.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The genesis for this study grew out of my deeply held conviction that informed believing leads to committed living. The Christian Believer Study was written with the same premise. The literature reviewed for this study indicated that informed believing is dependent upon the community of faith, the language of the faith, and the theology of the faith. Therefore, the disciplines of cultural anthropology, linguistics, and theology were examined to determine their contribution to the process of discipleship.

The research from the discipline of cultural anthropology explained that the meta-narrative that human beings carry in their heads to explain the world in which they live is their worldview. In a broad sense, their worldview is their overall belief system. Worldview is the “big” story that categorizes, organizes, and directs human life.

Persons develop their worldviews to a great extent unconsciously. Worldview functions at the cognitive, affective, and behavioral level to (1) identify how and why things got to be as they are; (2) judge and validate personal and corporate experience; (3) provide security and support and define appropriate behavior; (4) systemize and order perception into an overall design; and, (5) elicit change when it is necessary. Therefore, worldview is a product of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

The Christian worldview is the personal and communal story that defines individuals as a people of God living in community. What people see, how they act, their circles of friends and family, the jobs they hold, and the faith they embrace are to a greater or lesser degree a product of the communities to which people belong. If faith is to be held responsibly, then theology will have to carry out its work of articulating the culture-

bound symbols and meanings of the Christian faith in terms of the clearest language and models that it can find.

The findings of this research showed that while many of the participants who took the Christian Believer Study entered the study with a very limited knowledge of the historic tenets of the Christian faith, they left the study with new knowledge. The Christian Believer Study provided a framework within a Christian community to help them better understand how the historic tenets of the Christian faith were developed and how they have been maintained over the centuries. The participants' change in cognition led to a change in affect and behavior.

As discussed in Chapter 2 and revealed in this study, the participants' knowledge and acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith grew as a result of study (knowledge) in the context of community. The Christian Believer Study also produced changes in affect and behavior as indicated by the Religious Behavior Scale and supported by the focus groups. In sum, their worldviews changed. While the participants' change in worldview is in part a result of new knowledge, this study suggests that those changes were not exclusively the result of a linear process as shown in Figure 2.1.

The development of a postmodern worldview as indicated in Figure 2.1 recognizes that the development of one's worldview is also the result of the impact of culture, social influences, motivation to comply, as well as other outside influences. Those influences may impact knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, behaviors, and worldview at any time in the process. This fully postmodern perspective recognizes that any of the factors indicated above may begin the process anew until ultimately one's worldview is changed or created anew.

The research from the discipline of linguistics revealed that every culture has a distinct language and, therefore, a distinct worldview. Since the purpose of the Christian Believer Study is to make available to participants the substance of the faith through the language that the Church has confessed and communicated as a way connecting to God and living faithfully, understanding the development, process, and use of language as it shapes the Christian worldview is crucial.

The primary function of language is communication. Language informs, classifies, names, compares, identifies, performs, expresses, and holds people together. The research for this study showed that language was not only a device for reporting experience but also, and more significantly, a way of defining experience. In other words, language has a great deal of power; it creates and transforms.

Language, therefore, plays a significant role in defining culture. The cultural lenses through which communication must pass can serve to either facilitate or hinder the communication process. Linguistics draws attention to the fact that language has the power to define and limit cultural understanding of reality. Knowing this power is important to Christian discipleship because the Christian faith was, is, and always will be expressed in both the language of word and symbol.

The findings of this research revealed that while many of the participants knew the form of the words at the beginning of the study (doctrine), they did not clearly understand their meaning (function). Through the Christian Believer Study, their understanding of the language was transformed. As was captured by many of the focus group statements, the participants grew to know what the words (doctrine) were and what they meant.

The research from the discipline of biblical theology revealed that Christian

theology is more than what persons believe about the past, the present, and the future. Christian theology provides a means of seeing, speaking, and interacting with the God in whom Christians believe and with the world that God created. Biblical theology takes place within and is communicated in culture. Therefore, biblical theology is fluid to the extent that the theology and the language of the Christian faith must be translated into forms that are meaningful to a given culture.

The function of biblical theology is to point others to Christ. Unlike any other god, Christians believe that their God has existed for all eternity and has, therefore, been active in the past, is active in the present, and will be active in the future. Christian theology also makes claims about the whole of reality, seen and unseen. Christian theology is not a set of private, aesthetic judgments about reality. Christian theology is not a host of emotions, feelings, and beliefs about reality. Christian theology claims to be talking about reality as a whole.

Biblical theology is the historical, critical, and exegetical study of the Bible, the history of the church, its institutions, and its traditions. Therefore, theologizing is a dynamic, continuous process where the ultimate meaning of the message is unchanging while the context continually changes. One of the most difficult tasks facing theologizing is to continually find new ways to put in a culturally relevant and meaningful expression the truths about God. The Christian Believer Study accomplishes this task by examining the historic tenets of the Christian faith in a contemporary setting.

The findings of this research showed that the participants grew in their understanding of theology. While they would not have been able to use the word “theology” at the beginning of the study and fully comprehend its meaning, their theology

became both personal and communal. The participants grew in their knowledge of and their acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. If Christians are to have the courage to live out biblical truth in such a way that culture may be redeemed or created anew, they must understand what they believe. This is the goal of the Christian Believer Study.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the Christian Believer Study as a tool for discipleship and life transformation. The components of the research for this study led me to ask two questions. First, does participation in the Christian Believer Doctrinal Study facilitate an increase in and an acceptance of the historically defined tenets of the Christian faith? Second, is there a significant change in the participants' behaviors and religious experiences as a result of participation in the Christian Believer Study? Simply put, the answer is yes.

The effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study was evaluated using three quantitative measures and one qualitative measure. The first quantitative measure was the Religious Behavior Scale. The RBS was comprised of ten statements that measured the participants' level of Christian practice and religious experience. Participants were asked to rate the truthfulness of the statements on a Likert-type scale. The results of the study indicated a statistically significant change in participants' religious behaviors as result of taking the Christian Believer Study. Follow up focus groups provided further data to support these findings.

The second quantitative measure was the Christian Orthodoxy Scale. The COS was comprised of twenty-four statements. This scale measured the participants' knowledge and acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. Participants were

asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements on a Likert-type scale. The results indicated a statistically significant change in what the participants knew and in that on which they agreed as a result of taking the Christian Believer Study. Follow up focus groups also provided further data that supported these findings.

The third quantitative measure was the Religious World View Scale. The RWV was comprised of twenty-five statements. This scale also measured the participants' knowledge and acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. As with the Christian Orthodoxy Scale, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements on a Likert-type scale, and like the Christian Orthodoxy Scale, a statistically significant change occurred. Follow up focus groups also provided further data to support these findings.

The overall results of this study that answered the research questions were statistically significant. The study demonstrated that the participants of the Christian Believer Study learned more about their faith, as revealed in the historic tenets of the Christian faith, and they accepted the doctrine presented in this study as "more true." Thus, my theoretical assumption that informed believing leads to committed living and the theoretical assumption behind the Christian Believer Study that informed believing leads to committed discipleship were both supported.

Major Findings

The results of the quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that the Christian Believer Study is an effective tool for discipleship and life transformation. Cognition was measured using the Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Religious World View Scale. These two scales evaluated the participants' agreement with forty-nine statements

reflecting the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

Both the Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Religious World View Scale indicated a statistically significant change in the participants' knowledge and acceptance of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. The internal reliability for the Christian Orthodoxy Scale in this study was significantly higher than reported in Measures of Religiosity (Hill and Hood 15). They reported mean interitem correlation coefficients of .57 to .70. The pretest and posttest for this study had mean interitem correlation coefficients of .88 for the pretest and .90 for the posttest. No published results were available for the Religious World View Scale to compare with this study.

The Religious Behavior Scale measured the affective and the behavioral changes in the lives of the participants who completed the Christian Believer Study. The mean score for the entire sample on this five-point scale changed from 4.09 on the pretest to 4.36 on the posttest. The pretest and posttest results indicated that a statistically significant change occurred in the behavior of the participants. In practical terms, participants live differently today as a result of taking the Christian Believer Study. Their faith has grown deeper, and it has grown stronger. Not only has their knowledge increased and language been given to their life of faith, the focus groups revealed a real change in their day-to-day lives as Christian believers and disciples. They, therefore, are better equipped to fulfill their part of the Great Commission.

Implications of Findings and Practical Applications

The results of this study point to the Christian Believer Study as a powerful tool for discipleship and life transformation. The Christian Believer Study gives participants both the language and the meaning of the historic tenets of the Christian faith. That

knowledge, gained in the context of Christian community, had a transforming effect.

Participants who completed the study grew in their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and that knowledge led to life change.

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Christian Believer Study series in three churches for the purpose of generalizing the findings to the broader community of faith. Given the results of this study, similar results can be expected from churches of comparable demographics.

The generalizability of this study is not limited to churches of diverse theological identities. According to the background material in Chapter 3, Zionsville UMC, St. Luke's UMC, and Memorial UMC were chosen because of their theological diversity from one another. This theological diversity suggests that regardless of where a church falls on the theological spectrum, the Christian Believer Study is an effective curriculum in growing deeper and stronger disciples of Jesus Christ.

While all three churches had a significant increase in the results from the pretest to the posttest, the results of St. Luke's and Zionsville on the Religious World View Scale differed significantly from each other. The analysis of the demographic data did not account for any intervening variables being responsible for the observed differences. These results may coincide with the self-identified differences in the theological identities of each church as discussed in Chapter 3. Given that the participants in this study are a product of the culture, language, and theology of their respective churches, these differences in worldview would appear to be naturally occurring.

Enabling further consideration of the relationship between the scores of each church, a grand mean was computed to create a composite score of all three scales for

each group. The grand mean allowed for an overall comparison between the groups at a macro level. When the composite scores were compared, St. Luke's differed significantly from the other two churches (see Table 4.2). I believe this difference is consistent with the differences between St. Luke's and Zionsville on the Religious World View Scale. The same dynamics were observed between the composite scores of St. Luke's, Zionsville, and Memorial. It is my assumption that the reason for the differences in the grand mean composite scores is the same as the reason postulated for the difference between St. Luke's and Zionsville in the Religious World View Scale.

This work suggests that the Christian Believer Study achieves its desired results. Since the Christian Believer Study is a new curriculum resource for Abingdon Press, the results achieved by this research may benefit in the design and implementation of future curriculum resources.

Weaknesses of the Study

This study examined three churches with average worship attendance of over four hundred. The participating churches were all predominantly Caucasian; all of the participants of this project were also Caucasian. The three churches were all located in or near large cities. Including ethnic-minority, small, and rural churches may have strengthened the study. A wider representation and a large sample size would have provided greater generalizability to a larger, more diverse population. I do not overlook the possibility that the sample size ($n=34$) is a weakness of this study with regard to making definitive statistical inferences to the broader population.

Examining the long-term cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes over time could also have strengthened this study. Administering the posttest questionnaire both at

the six-month and one-year intervals after completing the Christian Believer Study would show if the results remained constant over time.

Contributions to Research Methodology

The three instruments used in this study evaluated the effectiveness of the high-commitment Christian Believer Study. Many other intensive, long-term studies such as Disciple Bible Study, Bethel Bible Study, Percept Bible Study, and Bible Study Fellowship could be tested for their effectiveness in impacting cognition, affect, and behavioral changes using the research methodology established for this study. While this study specifically looked at the language of the Christian faith as revealed in its creeds, historical writings, and Scripture, the same type of results may or may not have occurred if the only text was the Scripture.

The greatest contribution of this study to research methodology is the researcher-designed Religious Behavior Scale (see Appendix B). At the outset of this study, no measure of religious behavior was identified in the existing literature as satisfactory to answer the purposed research questions. Therefore, the Religious Behavior Scale was developed to measure the affective and behavior changes that occurred as a result of completing the Christian Believer Study. Scales are recognized as statistically significant at $p \geq .70$. The Religious Behavior Scale was significant for this study at the pretest ($\alpha = .83$) and the post test ($\alpha = .84$). To further increase the reliability of this instrument, and make the Religious Behavior Scale a stronger instrument, several of the statements could be reverse scored and the sample size ($n=34$) increased. Given the scale's statistically significant reliability, the use of this scale holds promise for evaluating future research studies.

Further Studies

Given the strong results of this study, the opportunity exists to expand and utilize the components of this research methodology in a variety of settings. The following are opportunities for further study.

Refine the researcher-designed Religious Behavior Scale for use in other settings. The reliability of this scale at the pretest was .83; the posttest was .84. With this level of significance, this scale shows promise for future use in a breadth of settings. Utilizing the Religious Behavior Scale with a larger sample size and reverse scoring some of the statements may strengthen the Religious Behavior Scale to be used in wider settings.

The high commitment studies in which this research methodology might be repeated as an evaluative tool for discipleship and life transformation include: Disciple Bible Study (I–IV), Precept, the Bethel Series, and Bible Study Fellowship. Perhaps the findings of this study could serve to stimulate the publishers of Christian curriculum to evaluate their resources for affective, cognitive, and behavioral change.

Using a comparison model, examine the effectiveness of other high commitment Bible studies to the Christian Believer Study for affective, cognitive, and behavioral change. Such an evaluation would be a tool for prioritizing curriculum resources for developing a discipleship plan in the local church.

Perhaps this study could be repeated in churches different from the sample. Settings may include churches with worship attendance under four hundred, rural churches, churches of more diverse theological identities, churches of diverse ethnic populations, or churches of other denominations.

A follow up study is recommended with a larger sample size. A larger study

would provide for a greater degree of generalizability.

Replicate this as a longitudinal study at three and five-year intervals to measure lasting affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes. The results of such a study would further aid in curriculum design and implementation.

Concluding Reflections

In the final analysis, beyond the quantitative and qualitative statistics, real lives were changed as a result of participating in the Christian Believer Study. While the data analysis showed great results, it does not tell the whole story. The world was impacted by the events of 11 September 2001. Although they occurred several months after the completion of the Christian Believer Study, several of the participants made reference to it during the focus groups. I believe the testimony of the participants speaks volumes about the benefits of the Christian Believer Study. In the midst of a national and international tragedy, the lives of those who had completed the Christian Believer Study was different. The Christian Believer Study is a life-transforming study and a powerful tool for developing more and stronger disciples of Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

Christian Believer Doctrine

- **Believing:** Believing and Understanding
- **Revelation:** The Self-revealing God
- **Scripture:** God's Book for God's People
- **Creator:** The God of Beginnings
- **God:** Giving a Name to God
- **Providence:** The God Who Is Involved
- **Covenant-Maker:** God Makes Covenant with Us
- **Humankind:** Created in God's Image
- **Sin:** The Trouble We're In
- **Grace:** The Amazing Story of Grace
- **Salvation:** God So Loved the World
- **Jesus Christ:** Fully Human, Fully Divine
- **Savior:** The One Who Came to Save
- **Atonement:** Restored to Union with God
- **Lord:** Jesus Christ Is Lord
- **Faith:** The Reach toward God
- **Holy Spirit:** God with Us
- **Empowering:** Power to Live and to Serve
- **Trinity:** The Mystery and Message of the Trinity
- **Belonging:** God's Called-Out People
- **Body of Christ:** The Body of Christ in the World
- **Sacraments:** Signs of Sacred Things
- **Worship:** In Spirit and Truth
- **Discipleship:** Living the Christian Life
- **Sanctification:** A Life Pleasing to God
- **Christian Hope:** Ending with a Beginning
- **Judgment:** A Time of Reckoning
- **Resurrection:** Resurrection of the Body
- **Eternal Life:** World and Life Without End
- **Living:** The Difference Believing Makes

APPENDIX B

Christian Believer Study Series Questionnaire

Please check the appropriate box or answer the question in the line provided.

1. Please record the last four numbers of your social security number here: _____
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Age: _____
4. Ethnicity: Caucasian African American Hispanic
 American Indian Asian Other
5. Highest Degree Completed:
 High School Technical School Associates
 Bachelors Masters Doctorate
6. Gross Household Income:
 \$.00 – 25,000 \$25,001 – 45,000 \$45,001 – 65,000 \$65,000 +
7. Marital Status: Married Never Married Widowed Divorced
8. Number of Children: _____
9. Your Occupation: _____
10. Number of Sundays you are in worship in a typical month^[th]:
 1 2 3 4 5
11. Number of years you have attended this congregation: _____
12. Are you a member of this church: Yes No
13. Your Church Involvement (check all that apply):
 Serve on a committee(s) Usher Music Lay Speaker
 Teach Sunday School (___ Adult, ___ Youth, ___ Children) Other

14. Bible Studies you have participated in (check all that apply):
 Disciple 1 Disciple 2 Disciple 3
 Precept The Bethel Series Bible Study Fellowship Other

Please respond to the following statements by circling the number that best corresponds to your views and experiences.

		Not True	Somewhat True	Moderately True	Mostly True	Totally True
1	I often read books and magazines about my faith.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.	1	2	3	4	5
6	It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I make financial contributions to my religious organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I keep well informed about my local religious group and have some influence in its decisions.	1	2	3	4	5

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Human beings are not special creatures made in the image of God; they are simply a recent development in the process of animal evolution.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	The Bible is the word of God given to guide human beings to grace and salvation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Those who feel that God answers prayers are just deceiving themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	It is ridiculous to believe that Jesus Christ could be both human and divine.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Jesus was born of a virgin.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	The Bible may be an important book of moral teachings, but it was no more inspired by God than were many other such books in the history of humankind.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	The concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in the modern era.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
10	Christ will return to earth someday.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	Most of the religions of the world have miracle stories in their traditions, but there is no such reason to believe any of them are true, including those found in the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	God hears all our prayers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Jesus Christ may have been a great ethical teacher, as other men have been in history. But he was not the Son of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	God made humankind in His own image and breathed life into it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of humankind's sins.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	Despite what many people believe, there is no such thing as a God who is aware of humankind's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried but on the third day He rose from the dead.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	In all likelihood there is no such thing as a God-given immortal soul in human beings that lives on after death.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	If there ever was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, he is now dead and will never walk the earth again.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	Jesus miraculously changed real water into real wine.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	There is a God who is concerned with everyone's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	Jesus' death of the cross, if it actually occurred, did nothing in and of itself to save humankind.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	There is really no reason to hold to the idea that Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus' life showed better than anything else that he was exceptional, so why rely on old myths that don't make sense.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	The resurrection proves beyond a doubt that Jesus was the Christ or the Messiah of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	The work of the church could be just as effectively done by schools and social agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
27	I believe that humankind working and thinking together can build a just society without supernatural help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	The writings of Plato, Aristotle, Dante, and Shakespeare are as much inspired as are the writings of Moses and Paul.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	All miracles of the Bible are true.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	In general, I consider church attendance a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	Belief that in the end God's purposes will be achieved tends to destroy humanity's sense of social responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	God is the great companion who shares with us the travail and tragedy of the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	Jesus was born of the Virgin in a manner different from human beings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	The revelation of God's word in the holy Scriptures is humankind's ultimate authority.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	The attempt to believe in a supernatural being is a sign of a person's failure to accept responsibility for his/her own life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	I believe in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy God forever.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	I believe hell is a form of existence in a future life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, contain some legendary materials.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	We live in a universe indifferent to human values.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	We were made for fellowship with God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	Humankind is saved by the free gift of God's grace.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	The biblical writers were endowed with a divine wisdom, that enabled them to foretell specific events in the distant future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	The fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden is myth symbolizing the problem of good and evil in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45	Humankind is ultimately responsible to God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46	God is only a symbol of humanity's ideal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47	Jesus walked on water and raised the dead.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48	The biblical story of creation is probably based on one of the early Babylonian myths.	1	2	3	4	5	6
49	If I believed that any part of the Bible were unreliable, I would no longer have confidence in its moral and spiritual teachings.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thank you for your participation!

Rev. George M. Wasson

APPENDIX C

Religious Behavior Scale

		Not True	Somewhat True	Moderately True	Mostly True	Totally True
1	I often read books and magazines about my faith.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.	1	2	3	4	5
6	It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I make financial contributions to my religious organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I keep well informed about my local religious group and have some influence in its decisions.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX D

Christian Orthodoxy Scale

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Human beings are not special creatures made in the image of God; they are simply a recent development in the process of animal evolution.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	The Bible is the word of God given to guide human beings to grace and salvation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Those who feel that God answers prayers are just deceiving themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	It is ridiculous to believe that Jesus Christ could be both human and divine.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Jesus was born of a virgin.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	The Bible may be an important book of moral teachings, but it was no more inspired by God than were many other such books in the history of humankind.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	The concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in the modern era.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Christ will return to earth someday.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	Most of the religions of the world have miracle stories in their traditions, but there is no such reason to believe any of them are true, including those found in the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	God hears all our prayers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Jesus Christ may have been a great ethical teacher, as other men have been in history. But he was not the Son of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	God made humankind in His own image and breathed life into it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of humankind's sins.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	Despite what many people believe, there is no such thing as a God who is aware of humankind's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried but on the third day He rose from the dead.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	In all likelihood there is no such thing as a God-given immortal soul in human beings that lives on after death.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	If there ever was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, he is now dead and will never walk the earth again.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	Jesus miraculously changed real water into real wine.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	There is a God who is concerned with everyone's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	Jesus' death of the cross, if it actually occurred, did nothing in and of itself to save humankind.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
23	There is really no reason to hold to the idea that Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus' life showed better than anything else that he was exceptional, so why rely on old myths that don't make sense.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	The resurrection proves beyond a doubt that Jesus was the Christ or the Messiah of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX E

Religious World View Scale

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
25	The work of the church could be just as effectively done by schools and social agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I believe that humankind working and thinking together can build a just society without supernatural help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	The writings of Plato, Aristotle, Dante, and Shakespeare are as much inspired as are the writings of Moses and Paul.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	All miracles of the Bible are true.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	In general, I consider church attendance a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	Belief that in the end God's purposes will be achieved tends to destroy humanity's sense of social responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	God is the great companion who shares with us the travail and tragedy of the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	Jesus was born of the Virgin in a manner different from human beings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	The revelation of God's word in the holy Scriptures is humankind's ultimate authority.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	The attempt to believe in a supernatural being is a sign of a person's failure to accept responsibility for his/her own life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	I believe in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy God forever.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	I believe hell is a form of existence in a future life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, contain some legendary materials.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	We live in a universe indifferent to human values.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	We were made for fellowship with God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	Humankind is saved by the free gift of God's grace.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	The biblical writers were endowed with a divine wisdom that enabled them to foretell specific events in the distant future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	The fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden is myth symbolizing the problem of good and evil in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45	Humankind is ultimately responsible to God.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46	God is only a symbol of humanity's ideal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47	Jesus walked on water and raised the dead.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48	The biblical story of creation is probably based on one of the early Babylonian myths.	1	2	3	4	5	6
49	If I believed that any part of the Bible were unreliable, I would no longer have confidence in its moral and spiritual teachings.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX F

Christian Believer Focus Groups Grand Tour Questions

1. What part of your Christian Believer Study experience was most meaningful to you? Why?
2. What part of your Christian Believer Study experience was the most challenging? Why?
 - a. Intellectually?
 - b. Personally?
3. What new insights did you gain from taking the Christian Believer Study?
4. How has participating in the Christian Believer Study changed how you live your Christian life?
5. How has the Christian Believer Study impacted or changed your idea(s) about God?
6. How has the Christian Believer Study impacted your relationship with God?
7. How easy is it for you to talk to others about your faith?
8. What did you like most about the Christian Believer Study? Least?

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Reminder Card

Dear Friends,

This is to remind you of the follow up meeting to the
Christian Believer study. We will be meeting at

_____ on _____

at your church. I look forward to meeting with you.

Pastor George Wasson

APPENDIX H

Glossary of Statistical Terminology

The definitions presented in this glossary are from The Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences, by Paul Vogt.

Alpha (α) “It is a measure of internal reliability of the items in an index. This (Cronbach's) alpha ranges from 0 to 1.0 and indicates how much the items in an index are measuring the same thing” (4).

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) “A test of statistical significance of the differences among the mean scores of two or more groups on one or more variables or factors. It is an extension of the *t* test, which can only handle two groups, to a larger number of groups. More specifically, it is used for assessing the statistical significance of the relationship between categorical independent variables and a continuous dependent variable. The procedure in ANOVA involves computing a ratio (*F* ratio) of the variance within the groups (error variance) to the variance between the groups (explained variance)” (7).

Correlation “The extent to which two or more things are related (‘co-related’) to one another. This is usually expressed as a correlation coefficient” (48).

Internal Consistency “The extent to which items in a scale are correlated with one another, which is to say the extent to which they measure the same thing” (114).

Mean “The average. To get the mean, you add up the values for each case and divide the total number by the number of cases” (137).

N “Number. Number of subjects” (149).

P “Probability value, or *p* value. Usually found in an expression such as $p \leq .05$. This expression means: ‘The probability (*p*) that this result could have been produced by chance (or random error) is less than (<) five percent (.05).’ Thus the smaller the number, the greater the likelihood that the result expressed was not merely due to chance. For example, $p < .001$ means that the odds are a thousand to one (one tenth of 1%) against the result being a fluke. What is being reported (.05, .001, and so on) is an alpha level or a significance level. The *p* value is the actual probability associated with an obtained statistical result; this is then compared with the alpha level to see whether that value is (statistically) significant” (163).

Reliability “The consistency or stability of a measure or test from one use to the next. When repeated measurements of the same thing give identical or very similar results, the measurement instrument is said to be reliable” (195).

SD, Standard Deviation “A statistic that shows the spread or dispersion of scores in a

distribution of scores; In other words, a measure of dispersion. The more widely the scores are spread out, the larger the standard deviation” (217-18).

Statistical Significance. “Said of a value or measure of a variable when it is significantly larger or smaller than would be expected by chance alone” (221).

WORKS CITED

- “About St. Luke’s.” Indianapolis: IN, 2001.
- Boivin, Michael J. “Religious World View Scale.” *Hill and Hood* 59-61.
- Brown, Robert McAfee. “The Rootedness of All Theology.” *Christianity and Crisis*, 18 July 1977: 170-74.
- Burnett, David. *Clash of the Worlds*. Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990.
- Caird, G. B. *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Cameron, W. J. “Father.” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* Ed. Walter A. Elwell, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Cartee, Janice Sue. Personal interview. 13 August 2000.
- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1987.
- Colson, Charles, and Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999.
- “Communication.” *The Merriam-Webster Concise School and Office Dictionary*. 1980 ed.
- Engel, James F. *Contemporary Christian Communications: Its Theory and Practice*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979.
- Fishbein, Martin, and Icek Ajzen. *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975.
- Galloway, Dale E. *20/20 Vision: How to Create a Successful Church with Lay Pastors and Cell Groups*. West Linn, OR: Scott Publishing, 1986.
- George, Carl. *How to Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Hamerton-Kelly, Robert. *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teachings of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Hiebert, Paul. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985.

- Hill, P. C., and R. W. Hood, Jr. eds. Measures of Religiosity. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education, 1999.
- The Holy Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.
- The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1990.
- Hunter, George G. Lecture. Beeson Pastor Program. Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY. 23 Aug. 1999.
- Huntington, Samuel. "The Clash of Civilizations." Journal of Foreign Affairs (summer) 1993: 22.
- Jennings, F. L. "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion." 11:157-164.
- Kalas, J. Ellsworth. Christian Believer: Knowing God with Heart and Mind—Study Manual. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Kraft, Charles H. Christianity in Culture. New York: Orbis Books, 1979.
- Kraft, Marguerite G. Understanding Spiritual Power. New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. "The Structure of Scientific Revolution." International Encyclopedia of Unified Science 2,2, Chicago: U of Chicago, 1970.
- Lankoff, George, and Mark Johnson. Metaphors We Live By. Chicago: The U of Chicago, 1980.
- Malina, Bruce J. The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. "The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis." American Journal of Sociology 44 (1939): 938-64.
- The New American Standard Bible. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1977.
- Nichols, Michael P. The Lost Art of Listening. New York: Guilford, 1995.
- Nida, Eugene A. Customs and Cultures. New York: Harper & Row, 1954.
- Osborne, Grant R. The Hermeneutical Spiral. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991.
- "Our Mission." Zionsville United Methodist Church. Home page. <http://www.zumc.org>.
- Paloutzian, Raymond F. "The Christian Orthodoxy Scale." Hill and Hood, 15-16.

- Ray, Paul H. "The Emerging Culture." American Demographics Feb. 1997: 28.
- "Reach: Reaching for Common Ground." St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 2001.
- Rumble, Allen R. Personal interview. 1 August 2000.
- Samovar, Larry A., and Richard E. Porter. Intercultural Communication: A Reader. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1972.
- Sapir, Edward. Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech. New York: Harvest-Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949.
- . Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality. Ed. David G. Mandelbaum. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California, 1951.
- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Computer software. Ver. 11.0. CD-ROM. Chicago, IL: SPSS, 2002. Windows, 2.5MB.
- Strong, James. Ed. The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990.
- Sweet, Leonard. Aqua Church: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1999.
- VanGemeren, Willem A. "Abba in the Old Testament." The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 31,4 (Dec. 1988): 385-98.
- Vogt, Paul W. Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences. Newbury Park, CA:SAGE, 1993.
- Von Allmen, Daniel. "The Birth of Theology." International Review of Mission 44 (1975): 37-55.
- Warren, Rick. Personal Bible Study Methods: 12 Ways to Study the Bible on Your Own. Lake Forest, CA: The Encouraging Word, 1981.
- Whiteman, Darrell. Lecture DM837. Beeson Pastor Program. Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY. 18-20 Aug. 1999.
- Witherington, Ben. Lecture DM802. Beeson Pastor Program. Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY. Fall 1999.
- Wright, N. T. The New Testament and the People of God. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

Works Consulted

- Christian Believer: Knowing God with Heart and Mind—Leader Guide. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Christian Believer: Knowing God with Heart and Mind—Readings. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Cope, Landa. Clearly Communicating Christ: Breaking Down Barriers to Effective Communication. Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 1995.
- Cotterell, Peter, and Max Turner. Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989.
- Green, Joel B., and Max Turner. Between Two Horizons. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Green, Michael. New Testament Evangelism. Philippines: OMF Literature, 1982.
- Horton, Michael S. Where in the World is the Church? Chicago: Moody, 1995.
- Hunter, George G. Leading and Managing a Growing Church. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.
- Kraft, Charles H. Communication Theory for Christian Witness. Nashville: Abingdon, 1983.
- Kraft, Marguerite G. Worldview and the Communication of the Gospel. South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978.
- Posner, George J., and Alan N. Rudnitsky. Course Design: A Guide to Curriculum Development for Teachers. New York: Longman, 1986.
- Sapir, Edward. Culture, Language and Personality. Ed. David G. Mandelbaum. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California, 1949.
- Sire, James W. The Universe Next Door. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976
- Stark, Joan S., and Lisa R. Lattuca. Shaping the College Curriculum. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 1997.

