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ABSTRACT

COMPARING THE BEHAVIORAL AND AFFECTIVE GROWTH IN PRAYER DUE TO EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICES OF PRAYER

by

Michael J. Beale

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the affective and behavioral changes in forty members of WellSpring Community Church and Aldersgate United Methodist Church as a result of a twelve-session, three-month high accountability small group experience. The goal of the study was to encourage participants to process a variety of approaches to prayer in order to discover and utilize new practices that fit with their God-designed personality temperament. This research was an evaluative study in the experimental mode that utilized a pre- and posttest design with a control group. The findings of this study show that guiding people to find their personality temperament, expanding their awareness of multiple approaches to prayer, and thus encouraging them to personalize their approach to prayer strengthens their enjoyment and consistency in prayer.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
COMPARING THE BEHAVIORAL AND AFFECTIVE GROWTH IN PRAYER
DUE TO EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICES OF PRAYER

presented by


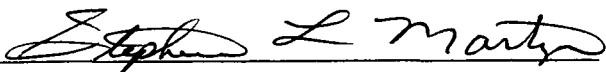
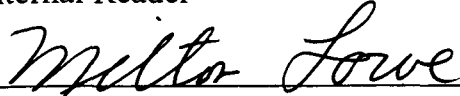
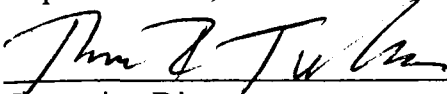
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COMPARING THE BEHAVIORAL AND AFFECTIVE GROWTH IN PRAYER
DUE TO EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICES OF PRAYER

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Michael J. Beale

May 2009

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Michael Joseph Beale

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

After sixteen years of senior pastoral ministry serving in four unique congregations in the United Methodist Church, as well as five faith-testing years pastoring an independent church, I have realized that most of my parishioners do not appear to practice a lifestyle of prayer. Even though they understand the basic rationale that holy communication is essential in their relationship with God, most do not make the effort in their lives to enjoy the fruit of a consistent and growing prayer life. Most do not seem to be aware that their relationship with God requires their intentional effort in order to develop and maintain a deep and abiding intimacy with God. Even more unfortunate is the fact that many have reported feeling guilty about their prayer life but avoid talking about it at all.

During my year at the Beeson program at Asbury Theological Seminary, God began to reveal that I was incapable of taking others where I had not been myself regarding a personal prayer life. I realized that I limited my relationship with God through a shallow prayer life. While I was satisfied with my personal relationship with him, I began to sense that so much more was available. This budding awareness illuminated by the guidance of the Holy Spirit led me to seek to deepen my relationship with the Lord through personal experiences and study in earnest prevailing prayer.

During this year, I also became acquainted with certain patterns of kingdom growth and vitality through visiting churches and with church leaders throughout the country. Many of them pointed to the correlation between prayer and growth in the

kingdom of God. Beginning this search for a deeper prayer life at Beeson in 2003 in my personal journey was a Gilgal moment. I look forward to following Christ's call to build his kingdom by helping those I serve join me in intentionally seeking a new level of intimacy through personal experiences in prayer.

The Overview

People have always been plagued by the need to understand what cannot be explained in human terms. The national tragedy on 11 September 2001 is a perfect example. Humans are divinely wired to search for a larger purpose in this world beyond themselves. George Barna and Mark Hatch report high participation in prayer through extensive polling on the spiritual vitality of America for the last twenty years. Recent statistics according to Barna and Hatch would indicate that the spiritual health of the country is quite good. The statistics on prayer indicate that 82 percent of all Americans pray each week, and these percentages have only slightly decreased from 88 percent in 1991 (213). However, when considering data accumulated from other reports, Barna and William P. McKay find that "born again" people pray as often and for very similar things as "secular" people (111). These statistics raise serious questions about what Americans understand regarding prayer. The confusing statistics may indicate that even defining prayer becomes a challenge in a world of multiple religions, faiths, and traditions.

Those who do pray often lack the motivation to grow deeper in their experience. Too many are satisfied with a casual approach to God that hinges on their need for help and security rather than on their longing to draw closer to God in love. Some are not sure that God even hears their prayers and responds. Nickolas Ayo writes about the darkness of soul through which a person who is seeking God often goes:

We should not ask God for a specific answer to our prayer, much less expect a miracle; we should ask only that God's will be done, even if we suspect that God's will cannot coincide with our desires. In effect, we ask for a kind of stoic resignation that allows us to accept calmly the hard blows of misfortune. (1494)

This lack of assurance that God hears and cares does not motivate a person either to pray to or long for a deeper relationship with him. The word "resignation," as some believe, is just another word for "lack of control," which is an unpopular circumstance for an independent, self-sufficient culture of the modern world.

From the dynamics of the problem facing the quest to learn to pray, three scenarios commonly appear. First, some are confused with all the different traditions and forms of prayer. They appear to be lacking the resources to learn how to make prayer meaningful. They have tried many forms of meditation and liturgy, only to find that these have left them wanting more.

Second, some see no real purpose in prayer, have no goal in mind and, therefore, no use for the activity of prayer. In modern culture, people like to have a sense of doing something with their time. Anita Mathias points out a common view of the world today:

Prayer is archaic, anachronistic, against the grain of modern life, solitary and often heartbreaking, embarked upon without the certainty of fruit. It demands an expenditure of time that sometimes seems like a waste of time, a waste of self. Bill Gates recently pronounced, "In terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing on Sunday morning." Prayer does not promise fame, money, and the love of beautiful people. It is working with blind faith, stubborn hope, and dumb love. (342)

Often in ministry I hear people commiserate, "I wish I could do more for you than pray. People do not seem to realize that fervent prayer is both the wisest use of time as well as the genuine conduit for the miraculous.

Finally, others feel guilty that they do not possess the same passions and

persistence as the great religious mothers and fathers of history. They understand prayer as a foreign activity carried out only by the super saint. The disparity between the lives of common people and the perceived lives of the saints results in a huge chasm of guilt and frustration.

All three of these scenarios leave people feeling as if they must fit into a specific prayer mold, which often leads to frustration and discouragement. On the contrary, if people had the opportunity to work through a process, based on their God-given personality nurtured in a setting of support and accountability, I believe that they would venture into the uncharted waters of growth in prayer. Moving the understanding of prayer from prayer as a methodology to prayer as a relationship, individuals could find freedom to live as God designed them to, capable of experiencing invigorated spiritual growth. Not enough experienced prayer teachers are guiding the masses to understand the purpose and power of a life of prayer. To deal with this imposing problem, this study, based on the instrumentation and the data collection previously stated, set out to use a twelve-week small group methodology to present concepts in a general nature about prayer from the biblical, theological, historical, and sociological foundations. Specific prayer experiences that come from a variety of historical traditions and modern practices challenged participants to explore their own personalized spiritual approaches to God in prayer. The twelve-week study covered a variety of general topics that laid the biblical, historical, and sociological foundations for the specific prayer experiences that were practiced as part of the experiences in prayer study.

The Purpose Stated

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the affective and behavioral changes that occur in the practices of prayer of forty participants, according to their temperament, from WellSpring Community Church (CC) and Aldersgate United Methodist Church (UMC) as a result of a twelve-session small group process in various practices of prayer over a period of twelve weeks.

Given the average congregation's lack of personal experience with varieties of practices in prayer, the goals of this project were to promote growth in prayer by (1) encouraging people to designate more time for prayer each day, thereby increasing their consistency, (2) facilitating more practices of prayer, thereby increasing their variety, (3) engendering more enjoyment expressed in their life of prayer, and (4) observing correlations between personality and specific prayer experiences in the participants. Consequently, the measurements established for the project were used to evaluate the behavioral (consistency and variety) and affective (enjoyment) changes that occurred in the participants of this study after a period of one month following a small group process and evaluation of specific practices of prayer.

Research Questions

This research was guided by three specific research questions which focus the study on specific and measurable quantities.

Research Question #1

What behavioral (consistency and variety) and affective (enjoyment) patterns characterize the participants two weeks prior to the Experiments in Prayer: Pathways to Intimacy with God study as compared to these measures one month following the study?

Research Question #2

What is the correlation, if any, between the participants' Keirsey temperament and their self-evaluation of each of the experiences in this study based on three specific measures, including effectiveness, likeability, and likelihood to continue?

Research Question #3

What other variables might correlate with changes in the behavioral and affective growth in the participants?

Definitions of Terms

Several definitions are necessary to focus the scope of this study because growth in prayer is such a large and diverse topic.

Prayer

The definitions for prayer can vary as much as people do. Because God made everyone different, people relate to God in different ways, communicating in their own particular manner. For the sake of this study, the definition of prayer that will undergird it is as follows: "Prayer is communication... We talk with God, not just to Him. God talks with us too, causing a circle to be whole and closed between us" (Wangerin 29).

Personalization

In this study, the concept of personalization is the process of determining the particular aspect of each person that is unique to that person and places him or her within a small subgroup. The process of analysis can be based on personality, gender, age, or any of a multitude of distinguishing characteristics that sets people apart.

Affective

The resultant emotional response based on a stimulation or experience is called

the affective response. This study sought to quantify the affective response through self-reported measures.

Behavioral

The resultant physical response based on a stimulation or experience is called the behavioral response. This study sought to quantify the behavioral response through the actual changes in chosen behavior from pre- to posttest for the participants. Their self-reported behavior lends evidence to a measure of response to an experience.

The Experiential Personalization Principle

The foundational concept of this study is that if facilitators can determine specific areas in which people differ from one other, then they can seek to develop an approach to prayer that will intersect with the unique characteristics of each person. The experiential personalization principle attempts to connect a variety of experiences to a specific person in order to find the one that intersects with his or her particular nature.

Keirsey Temperament System

The Keirsey Temperament System was adapted by David Keirsey from the Myers-Briggs Personality Types Indicator (MBTI) and detailed in his book *Please Understand Me* (1978) along with Marilyn Bates. Several tests provide ways to designate one's temperament in a quantifiable manner. Over the past twenty years, I have found the Keirsey Temperament system as the easiest to understand and explain to people who are not educated in psychology. This system uses a simple questionnaire with seventy questions to evaluate how a person reacts to social situations and personal choices. From the results of this simple test, the Keirsey Temperament system places all individuals into sixteen groups of personality types each with four letters. These groups have

characteristics that help people understand themselves and others.

David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates take the original sixteen personality types and further subdivide them into four broader categories called temperaments: NF (intuitive feelers), SJ (sensing judges), NT (intuitive thinkers), and SP (sensing perceivers). These four temperaments were used in this study to categorize the participants. These temperaments have specific characteristics that allow a leader or mentor to guide participants through the experiential personalization principle using their specific differences as a factor in personalizing their prayer life. Keirsey and Bates writes concerning the NF temperament, “As the NF seeks self-actualization in identity and unity, he is aware that this is a life-long process, an ideal toward being and becoming a final finished self” (66). In regards to the SJ, they write, “The SJ is truly the stabilizer of the social and economic world” (47). The NT, “must be competent in whatever domain of enterprise or inquiry he chooses; he will not settle for nothing less” (49). The final temperament is the SP who is characterized by those who “want to be impulsive. To be impulsive is to be really alive,” (31), according to Keirsey and Bates. More of the MBTI will be discussed in chapter 2.

Denominational Context

Within the United Methodist denomination, congregations develop through a tradition that began with the life and ministry of John Wesley. This Wesleyan tradition contains a rich and passionate belief in and practice of prayer. With Wesley as a founder, training disciples in prayer with the passion and commitment of Wesley is a priority in the denomination, conference, and local church. Nevertheless, in my experience in the United Methodist Church, I failed to develop this priority of training disciples in prayer

choosing instead the priorities of preaching, teaching, administration, and evangelism. These are all important in the scope of reaching a world for Christ, but the missing ingredient in my priority system was how to prevail in prayer. If church leaders do not know the deeper life of prayer, they will not be able to lead others in this same pursuit.

Now that I am ministering outside the purview of the United Methodist Church, I have found that the people in the nondenominational communities where I serve not only lack the priority in prevailing prayer but also the consistent theological framework usually found in a denominational structure. They are confused or misguided in their understanding of what prayer is and how it can be a part of their lives. The need for consistent biblical positive instruction on prayer is more evident today than I have ever seen in my life. Throughout history, prevailing prayer was the catalyst to every major revival. By prevailing I am referring to the practice of praying until receiving a sense of a spiritual release so that the process of prayer is highlighted by communion with God through the Spirit. If pastors and leaders expect to witness such life-changing demonstrations of repentance and God's power again, they must become prayer warriors and multiply themselves for his kingdom's sake.

Specific Context of the Study

This study was conducted at two sites: WellSpring Community Church in Prattville, Alabama, and Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. The participants volunteered based on the open invitation to be a part of the study at both campuses. The WellSpring Community Church is a new church start that is moving into its third year of existence where the population is made up of predominantly new Christians and leaders from other churches who have agreed to help start a new church in

the Millbrook/Prattville area. The Aldersgate UMC is an older mainline church in a large city that is within ten miles of WellSpring CC. This church congregation is composed of well-established Christian leaders and a good number of new Christians who were glad to be a part of this study project. Both churches share a progressive style with contemporary worship and a strong vision to reach the modern generations with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Due to the developing nature of the WellSpring CC as a church plant, Aldersgate UMC was willing to assist in gathering data for this study by providing participants. As I had served Aldersgate as an associate pastor for over three years in the past, I had a positive relationship with both the congregation and its current pastors.

Overview of the Study

This study constituted an evaluation of a process entitled *Experiences in Prayer: Pathways to Intimacy with God*. All participants filled out paperwork to determine their Keirseley temperament and their current level of practice in prayer. The population participated in a twelve-week study that met for ninety minutes each week. During the week, the participants practiced a particular experience of prayer to the best of their ability. Following the initial meeting, participants built trust and communication through a weekly icebreaker. Next, they evaluated their experiences during the previous week both on an evaluation form and in verbal discussion with the class. Following this evaluation process, the participants discussed general prayer topics. Next, the group discussed the subsequent practice of prayer that each participant attempted during the next week and materials reviewed with a clear expectation of the number of times to attempt the experience during that week. Finally, each meeting ended with prayer concerns with a growing participation from the group members throughout the study's

duration. This meeting schedule continued until the last meeting where the group discussed and evaluated the entire process. One month later, all participants filled out the same pretest document as a posttest measure to assess the affective and behavioral changes that had resulted from the *Experiences in Prayer* study.

Chapter 2 details the foundational literature that became the basis for the development of the researcher-designed small group study while Chapter 3 explains the specific methodology used to gather and analyze the data. Finally, Chapter 4 reveals the major findings that resulted from this analysis, and Chapter 5 discusses implications and recommendations for future research from the findings.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the affective and behavioral changes according to their temperament that occur in the practices of prayer of forty participants, from WellSpring CC and Aldersgate UMC as a result of a twelve-session small group process in various practices of prayer over a period of twelve weeks.

Population and Subjects

The population of this study included forty people who were members in good standing of either WellSpring CC or Aldersgate UMC. They were invited to attend a twelve-week researcher-designed study entitled, *Experiences in Prayer: Pathways to Intimacy with God*. These participants included adults (18 years and older) who agreed to these course requirements: both pre- and posttesting and Keirsev temperament testing. The experimental group agreed to evaluate each experience of prayer following a week of practicing the discipline. Out of the total population of forty, twenty subjects agreed to take the twelve-week study while another twenty agreed to participate in the control

group. As an essential part of the data analysis of this study, I purposely chose the same number of control group participants from each congregation as a balance to the study group participants. This pairing helped ensure that the comparisons between control group and study group are equally balanced between the two congregations. Although the congregations are very different in their size and years of existence, they share enough similarity in style and vision that they can be adequately compared.

Instrumentation

A researcher-designed questionnaire (see Appendix A) along with the Keirsey temperament sorter inventory (Keirsey and Bates) provided the behavioral and affective measurements of each participant in the study. The pretest questionnaire formed the baseline for each participant in the study. The same pretest instrument established the final measures to the participants one month after the study to measure their posttest responses. The control group participated in the same questionnaire that was given to the control group both prior to the twelve-week small group and one month following the small group.

The purpose of the thirty-question researcher-designed questionnaire was to evaluate three things in the spiritual lives of the participants. First, section one of the questionnaire provided background information about the history of the participants and their overall spiritual background in terms of their relationships with Christ and their church involvement. Second, section two of the questionnaire dealt with the overall spiritual habits of the participants in general terms. Finally, section three of the questionnaire dealt with specific practices in their personal prayer lives.

In addition to the questionnaire, a researcher-designed evaluation form detailed

each participants self-evaluation of each experience that was attempted by the participants (see Appendix D). The purpose of the evaluation form was to address three specific questions relating to each experience of prayer: first, the likeability of each experience attempted; second, the effectiveness of that particular experience in helping the participant feel closer to God; third, the likelihood that the participants would add this experience to their future regimen in prayer.

Variables

The independent variable of this research project was the twelve-week small group experience. Several individuals discussed and focused the content of these sessions with me prior and during the presentations of the sessions. These individuals served on an advisory board during the entire process to help evaluate and advise the content.

The four dependent variables this study measured were (1) consistency of spiritual practices, (2) variety of approaches to prayer used, (3) enjoyment in overall prayer life and (4) likeability of specific experiences in prayer. The goal of the study was to measure the changes in these four dependent variables based on the effect of the independent variable for the experimental group compared with the control group who did not experience the twelve-week small group study.

Data Collection

Each participant in the experimental group and the control group provided results through the researcher-designed questionnaire as a pre- and posttest to measure his or her responses on these questions at two-weeks prior to the start of the small group study and at a point one month following the completion of the study. In this way, comparisons between the responses of these two groups can be made at similar time intervals for both

groups.

The experimental group filled out the Keirsey temperament sorter test prior to the study to determine their temperament score based on the results of this personality test. In addition, the experimental group filled out a researcher-designed evaluation form at each small group meeting to evaluate each experience of prayer in terms of likeability, effectiveness, and likelihood.

By the end of the study, each participant in the experimental group had thirteen pieces of data collected (two questionnaires, the Keirsey temperament sorter results, and ten evaluation forms). The control group participants had two pieces of data collected per person (two questionnaires).

Data Analysis

The primary statistical procedures employed in analyzing the data gathered in this study were t-test analysis, ANOVA analysis, and correlation analysis. The study included (1) pre- and posttest analysis of answers to the questionnaires from the control group and the experimental group, (2) pre- and posttest analysis within the experimental group to measure the effects of the study on behavior and affective measures, and (3) specific analysis of the evaluation forms in relationship to persons' personality temperament, age, and gender.

Delimitations and Generalizability

This study focused on adults; the results will be applicable to adult populations only. This study focused on nondenominational and United Methodist Christians. The findings, therefore, should be generalized to other Christians but not necessarily to other religions, faiths, or traditions.

Biblical/Theological Foundations

In Chapter 2 the precedence in literature covers a broad expanse of knowledge and history in an attempt to develop a cogent foundation for the idea of prayer and leading people toward a lifestyle of prayer. From the beginning of the Old Testament, the foundation of covenant relationship between God and humanity leads humanity to an immense dependence upon God. The story progresses from the development of community and social responsibility through shared examples of prayer. The New Testament and historical precedence builds on the example of Christ and his model prayers through the development of prayer with the saints of the faith.

The covenant-making God began history with an intimate and conversational relationship with humanity during creation. Through the Fall of humanity, this relationship became distant and mysterious. God then took the initiative to establish a covenant of obedience in order to restore the intimacy lost at the Fall of humanity. God calls to his children and humans call to God in this orchestra of faith called prayer. The ultimate purpose of God is the redeeming of humans' hearts and reuniting of their souls in intimate communion and communication with him. The prayers of the Old Testament are beautiful tableaux of children reaching out to find a Father who hears and cares for them. The great prayers of the Old Testament and the worship of Psalms provide a model for those seeking to grow in prayer.

In the New Testament, God continues to refine the meaning of prayer as he sends Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the old covenant and as a model of a new covenant relationship with humanity. The guidelines of obedience are refined and focused outward to the needs of the entire world. Jesus and the Apostles recognize through prayer the heart

of God, which desires that the entire world return to the intimate and conversational relationship that Adam and Eve had with God in the beginning.

Historical Foundations

The evolution of growth in prayer, which began in the creation of humanity, continued through the historic traditions of the Church. Each tradition developed means of understanding and guiding a person's life of prayer. Three main themes come forth from the literature dealing with growth in prayer.

The first theme deals with the *motivation of people to pray*. E. M. Bounds is the master motivator as he writes, "Praying is no light and trifling exercise. While children should be taught early to pray, praying is no child's task. Prayer draws upon the whole nature of man. Prayer engages all the powers of man's moral and spiritual nature" (*Essentials of Prayer* 15).

The second theme that runs through the historical precedents is the *mechanism of prayer*. The various methodologies that guide people in knowing how prayer works include historic traditions, historical rules of prayer, and the classic spiritual disciplines.

The third theme is the *nature and measurement of progress in the spiritual life*. The various traditions provide a wide expanse of models of growth.

Psychological/Sociological Foundations

In addition to biblical/theological and historical precedents, psychological/sociological precedents are considered in this study due to the importance of personalizing the process of growth and learning for discipleship. They include an awareness of a person's personality preferences, learning styles, and small group needs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Biblical/Theological Precedents

The Bible is a book about relationships. The relationship develops between Creator and creation from the beginning in the Garden of Eden through to the end at the throne of heaven. The relationships between individuals and groups develop as characters interact with each other through a historical and theological narrative unfolding in the pages of Scripture. Communication in human-to-human relations is the foundation of the relationship. Humans transmit all manner of information through language, nonverbal expression, and innuendo. In the arena of human-to-God relationships, the means of communication establishes the level of intimacy achieved. To understand how intimacy develops and grows over time in these relationships is to understand prayer. Prayer is the means that humanity has used to communicate with God and create the spiritual intimacy necessary to develop a personal relationship.

Throughout this study, the precedents in literature, focusing especially on the biblical precedents, comprise the foundation of the teaching material discussed during the weekly meetings in the small group environment. The precedents focused on the issues of (1) why one should pray, (2) how to pray, and (3) how to grow in prayer over time.

Old Testament Precedents

In the Old Testament, three main concepts flow from the pages of Scripture to provide the foundations of biblical/theological precedents of prayer. First is the Old Testament theology of prayer, second are the Old Testament examples of prayer, and third is the written prayer book of Psalms.

Old Testament Theology of Prayer

An overview of the Old Testament theology of prayer helps to answer the first question: why people should pray. Five subtopics emerge that describe the relationship and communication parameters between God and humanity. The first subtopic is an overview of the covenant relationship established by God. Second, the development of an understanding of a personal God emerges. Third, the development of dependence between the prayer and God occurs in the process of communication. Fourth, the focus on the community orientation of prayer comes into focus. Last, knowing that God hears the prayers of his people becomes an attitude of faith for those involved in prayer.

Covenant. The first reason for praying begins in Genesis, when God's "smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces" (15:17b, NIV). God established a covenant with Abram, which was developed throughout the rest of the Old Testament as a picture of the relationship between God and his people. The cutting of the animal into parts established the covenant while laying out the terms of the agreement. The covenants that God made with his people point out a number of issues that inform a study of the theology of prayer.

God takes the initiative in the relationship. John H. Wright explains that God is searching and disclosing himself:

God has come in search of them, disclosed Himself and His purposes to them; it is not they who have somehow sought Him out as the creator of the universe, and discovered Him by their efforts of thought and reflection. (11)

Prayer is not humanity reaching out to God; rather, prayer is seeking to connect with a God who is seeking to communicate to his people.

In a covenant, the greater party makes an agreement to fulfill a stated contract

based on the capitulation of the lesser party. Trust is the foundation of covenants between the two parties. The greater party obligates itself to give certain advantages to the lesser party, who then agrees to be under the control of the greater party. In the case of the covenant with Abram, God tested the trust of Abram by directing him to sacrifice his promised only son Isaac (Gen. 22). Abram trusted the covenant relationship as he stated prior to the event: “God himself will provide the lamb” (Gen. 22:8). After God proved his trustworthiness, Abram named the place “The Lord Will Provide” (Gen. 22:14). A person’s trust in God directly influences his assurance of God hearing and acting on his concerns. Therefore, trust is the foundational component of covenant relationships and is a foundation component of effective prayer.

The covenant requires that the lesser party act in obedience according to the requirements of the covenant. In Genesis, God declares relationship between obedience and action:

I will surely bless you and make your descendents as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendents will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, *because you have obeyed Me* [emphasis mine]. (22:17-18)

The lordship God expresses in this passage spells out God’s ultimate control over all creation, his ultimate authority with all creation, and his presence within all creation. Obedience to God places a person’s prayer life in proper perspective. Humanity as the lesser party appreciates the advantages of relationship with the greater party as it participates in the abeyance of the contract.

Personal God. Another factor explaining why people should pray is in 1 Chronicles 17:20. King David makes a startling statement compared with the historical

understandings of humanity's relationship with varied gods: "There is no one like You, O Lord, and there is no God but You, as we have heard with our own ears." David is expressing a new idea in the development of relations between gods and humanity. No longer are there multiple gods who refuse to communicate with the people. David's God is an exclusive God that communicates directly and personally with his people.

The ongoing struggle between the transcendence and immanence of God is a theological tension that will forever shroud God in mystery. Nevertheless, a profound shift occurred from the previous philosophies of religion leading up to the Hebrew religion. God becomes actively involved and acutely benevolent in the lives of his people as opposed to the gods of ancient religions who were distinctly absent and particularly selfish. The personal nature of God is especially important in a theology of prayer because those who pray are seeking to communicate on a personal level with a personal God Who cares.

Dependence upon God. A third topic in this study of the biblical/theological precedents of prayer in the Old Testament is the people's dependence upon God. "The Lord who has led them out of Egypt and made them his people through covenant, is the Source of all benefits, their rock of refuge, and the sure hope for the future" (Wright 12).

Many symbols of the presence of God with Israel illustrate the dependence upon God that Israel maintained. The idea of bread as the basic sustenance of life is a good example. In Numbers 4:7, God commands that the shewbread on the altar in the temple is "the bread that is continually there [and] is to remain on it." The dependence that is pictured by the shewbread is further demonstrated as God provided manna daily for the nourishment of the nation of Israel and again by Christ in the New Testament when he

becomes the broken bread of the Passover meal (Matt. 26:26). Then in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus reminds the people of their dependence upon God by stating, "Give us today our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). With this dependence in mind, a person's understanding of prayer enlarges to include the need for constant and complete renewal of his relationship with God. If people will see God the One upon whom they are dependent for all their needs, they will also find their lives submersed in seeking awareness of his presence and purpose daily.

Community prayer. Another important reason why people should pray is the concept of community. The identity of the nation of Israel depended upon a community "publicly assembled for the praise and worship and supplication of God" (Wright 12-13). The temple was the place of public worship and the sacred space of the presence of God. Even the land, promised by God to the Israelites, became sacred to them as a community.

Prayer is not to be a selfish pursuit. When seen in the light of the community at large, it functions as a unifying and identifying mark. The community connection is vital to a person's understanding of prayer because it challenges him or her to remember that personal responsibility does not exclude corporate sensitivity. The New Testament echoes this community concept as Paul expresses this understanding in his description of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 14) and in the book of Revelation where Scripture speaks of the body praising together once again in the heavenly realm (Rev. 19:6).

Assurance of hearing. The last reason regarding why one should pray emerges through the Old Testament as faith in a hearing God. The faithfulness of the greater party of the covenant relationship resulted in the extraordinary assurance of God hearing his people. Some specific instances point to the depth of intimacy in the Old Testament. God

uses familial words when speaking of his people. When he talked with Moses about what to say to Pharaoh, God said, “This is what the Lord says: Israel is My firstborn son:… Let my son go, so he may worship Me” (Exod. 4:22-23). The prophet Isaiah makes another familial reference in the book of Isaiah: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?” (49:15). Then in the book of Hosea, the beautiful and sorrowful picture of a God who is trying to win back a wayward wife appears. The prophet Hosea says, “In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master’“ (Hos. 2:16). The assurance of hearing is in direct proportion to the level of intimacy that a person shares with another. God has made extreme efforts to express through the Old Testament his desire to be in intimate communion with his people and to hear their prayers.

The five theological concepts expressed in the Old Testament point to the initiative of a transcendent God who reaches out to his people to provide a formal covenant relationship that establishes personal assurance and dependence. He assures all who believe repeatedly that they can trust in him.

The Old Testament Examples of Prayer

Another question that the Old Testament helps to answer is how to pray. Looking to the Old Testament for examples helps shape the understanding of this important issue. A survey of growth in prayer and prayer practices would be incomplete without a concise study of the various examples of prayer as expressed by some characters in the Old Testament. By considering the following eight examples of prayer, a person can capture a glimpse of the importance prayer carried in the lives and hearts of the Old Testament personalities. One can also find a prayer for every human need and purpose.

Job: prayers of despair. In a story where his family, wealth, and health were attacked and destroyed by natural forces empowered by satanic impetus, Job prayed two prayers to God (Job 1:21 and Job 6:8-13). Job's prayers were pleadings with honest expression of his feelings to God while respecting the nature and power of God. Ultimately, he expressed his trust in God by saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him.... Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance" (Job 13:15-16).

Moses: prayer of supplication. In Psalm 90, Moses provides a model of supplicating prayer for all who read the Scripture. He explained humanity's weakness (vss. 3-6) and God's anger (vss. 7-11). Next he called on God to "teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (vs. 12) so that those who believe can recognize their daily dependence upon God for all things. Moses called for repentance in verse 13 and concluded this Psalm with a praise of the mercy and love of God (vss. 14-17).

Hannah: prayer of triumph. In the book of first Samuel the story of Hannah, the barren second wife of her husband, Elkanah, unfolds. Hannah prayed a desperate prayer to God (1 Sam. 1:11) for her specific desire for a son, vowing to give her son to the service of God. This prayer was graciously answered by God, and in chapter two, Hannah offered a model prayer of praise and victory for who God is rather than for what God had done.

David: prayers of repentance. In Psalm 51 David prayed a prayer of repentance for the sins that he had committed in his life. He wailed due to a broken heart when he says, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you and only you have I sinned and done what is evil you your sight" (Psa. 51:3-4) Other

examples of repentance psalms include Psalms 6, 32, 38, 102, 130, and 142.

Solomon: prayers for God's dwelling. Solomon prayed two prayers of dedication of the Temple in 2 Chronicles 6. In this model prayer, Solomon prayed a longer prayer recalling the faithfulness of God in his covenant relationship with his people. He claimed the power of God to bring blessing and cursing according to the obedience of the people. Finally, Solomon sanctified the place by stating, "Now, my God, may Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place" (vs. 40).

Elijah: prayers for reformation. In 1 Kings 18, the prophet Elijah stands in confrontation with the prophets of Baal. The prophets of Baal prayed to their god (vss. 26-29), to no avail. Then, Elijah prayed to God and saw the miraculous (vss. 36-37). The prayer of Elijah was not for his own aggrandizement but for the eyes of the people to see who is truly the God of all people.

Hezekiah: prayers for desperation. In a great time of trouble and distress, Hezekiah did not turn to human answers. Rather, he turned to God who brought miraculous victory to his people (Isa. 37:16-20). In times of desperation, people will often turn to their own solutions rather than seeking the help and power of God.

Daniel: prayers for intercession. One of the greatest of the prayer-empassioned saints in the Old Testament is Daniel. Through great tribulation and slavery, he continued to turn to God for strength and guidance. Daniel pled before the Lord for God's people with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. Daniel interceded for the people by saying, "O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people bear Your name" (9:19b).

Psalms: The Old Testament Prayer Book

Another significant part of understanding how to pray found in the Old Testament is recognizing the importance of the book of Psalms as the hymnbook and prayer book of the people of God for centuries. To outline in detail the Psalms and the lessons learned from them is outside the scope of this study; however, a brief overview represents the diversity of the prayer usage included in the Psalms.

Psalms of praise and worship. Many of the Psalms focus on praising God. Psalms 19, 33, 103, and 109 illustrate how adoration and worship are expemplified.

Psalms of confession. A second set of Psalms contrasts the holiness of God with the sinfulness of humanity as the psalmist cries out to God for his mercy and forgiveness. Examples include Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, and 143.

Psalms of anguish and lament. Many Psalms were written by an individual or group as a cry to the Lord for help in a crisis. Some of these Psalms address God boldly, sometimes harshly, because the writer perceives that God is abandoning him. However, these Psalms usually end with a confidence that God will intervene to deliver and save. Examples include Psalms 13 (individual) and 44 and 74 (communal).

Psalms of history. Another set of Psalms focuses on God's presence in incidents and events from Israelite history. Examples include 14, 44, 46, 47, 48, and 105.

Psalms of anger. An *imprecatory Psalm* is one that deals with the defeat or destruction of an enemy. Examples include Psalms 35, 37, 69, 109, and 137.

Messianic psalms. Christians believe that several Psalms make prophetic references to the coming of Jesus Christ, hundreds of years before he was born. These Psalms focus on a future ideal ruler who will defeat the enemies of Israel and stand up for

righteousness and justice. Some examples are Psalms 16, 22, 45, 69, and 110.

Conclusions to the Old Testament Precedents

Seeking answers to why people should pray and how people should pray from an Old Testament point of view reveals that the covenant between humanity and God called for constant communication. As a personal God, the Father desires both for his people to express dependence upon him and for his communities to express corporate faith that he hears and cares about their needs. Through the examples of prayer and with a special focus on the Psalms as the worship book of prayer, people can see how prayer can be lifted up to God as they learn to develop the intimacy that they both need and enjoy.

The New Testament Precedents

Continuing to seek answers to the questions of how and why should people should pray along with how people can grow in prayer, the New Testament precedents provide an abundant resource. From the Old Testament concept of old covenant to the New Testament idea of the new covenant, the evolution of the relationship of prayer as the expression of God reaching out to his people and the response of the people toward God continues. An overview of the New Testament reveals four sections to consider in this study: the theological basis for prayer, the theological basis for small groups, Jesus' model of a life of prayer, and the Apostle Paul's teaching regarding prayer in the early Church.

Section One—New Testament Theological Basis for Prayer

In the New Testament theological basis for prayer, these frameworks emerge: continuity with the Old Testament, the social aspect of prayer, and the eight new covenant requirements for effective prayer.

Continuity with the Old Testament. The concepts expressed in the Old Testament do not end with the arrival of the New Testament era. Jesus fulfills the covenant in the experience of his incarnation on earth as the lamb sacrificed as a sign of the new covenant. Just as the old covenant required the lesser party to obey, the new covenant requires belief that Christ has fulfilled the requirement of the old covenant. Just as in the Old Testament precedents, God becomes even more personal in the form of Christ. The people become even more dependent in the new covenant due to the eternal nature of Christ's blood and forgiveness of sins. The new covenant calls them to be a community charged to go out into the entire world; the new covenant gives them the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as two assurances of the caring presence of God in believers hearts and lives.

Jesus affirms the continuity of the Old Testament Law by saying in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus clarified his purpose as one sent by God to bring the old covenant into clearer view by example and to make the continuity of the two testaments profoundly real to his hearers. Prayer continues to be the development of a covenant relationship between individuals and God, with Christ as the ultimate fulfillment and example of perfect obedience.

Deep social aspect. As with the community aspect of the Old Testament, the New Testament begins to see prayer as a social activity. The emphasis on prayers for others, for enemies, for governments, for healings, and for the salvation of the lost directs the people of God toward a grand social movement in the world to bring people into fellowship with God through Christ and into fellowship with each other. In the Old

Testament, prayer was more about an identity as a people. In the New Testament, Jesus introduces people to his Father's desire for everyone to become followers of God. Paul and the apostles grappled with the new evolution of religion that was taking place throughout the story of Acts. They finally understood that God was sending his people out in order to establish his kingdom in the hearts of all people, everywhere on the earth.

Eight New Testament facilitating conditions for effective prayer. The New Testament expresses a myriad of facilitating conditions that lead to a more effective prayer life for believers. Some of these conditions stand out as some of the essential attributes of effective prayer experiences.

The first facilitating condition that runs through the New Testament is *prayer with abiding*. In John 15, Jesus says, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you" (vs. 7). A person's willingness to submit to God's purposes for his or her life is characteristic of this abiding relationship. Christ speaks of this kind of relationship when he said, "Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me" (John 15:4b). The equivalent statement is in Philippians 4:13 where Paul states, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

2. The second facilitating condition is to *pray with fervency*. Theologians have agreed that James, the brother of Jesus, became the leader of the Jerusalem church and that he had a wonderful reputation that speaks volumes about his character and life of prayer.

In the book of James, chapter 5, he writes, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (vs. 16b). According to Albert Barnes, the word "fervent" can also be translated as "energetic," meaning that powerful and effective prayer is a process

of intense longing and an active seeking. Later in James chapter five, the Apostle reminds his readers of an event in the life of Elijah when he “prayed earnestly that it would not rain” (vs. 17b). Elijah portrayed both the efficacy of prayer and the fervency of the one praying. James uses a Hebraism to point out the fervency of Elijah in this instance by using the word for “earnestly,” which, in the Greek, is translated from the Hebrew as “he prayed with prayer” (Barnes).

3. The third condition concerning effective prayer is that it must be *offered in righteousness*. The heart of the individual determines his or her righteousness. In Matthew 5:20, Jesus placed individuals’ hearts at the forefront of their lives of piety. He stated, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of Heaven.” Even though these groups of people were legalistically dogmatic about the moral law in verbiage, Jesus knew that their hearts were not righteous. Effective prayers must have the vital balance of pure hearts of holiness and righteous lives of pure piety. In 1 Peter 1:15-16 the Scripture says, “But just as he who calls you is holy, so be holy in all that you do; for it is written, ‘be holy, because I am holy’”. Peter reminds his readers that Gods ultimate command as directed from Leviticus 11:44 is for them to strive for holiness.

4. Fourth, effective prayer must be *prayed according to the will of God*. First John 5:4-5 states, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” The words “according to his will” place requests within godly boundaries. In Philippians 4:13 Paul writes, “I can do all things” and then he adds the godly boundary by stating, “through Christ.” Jesus repeated a similar idea in Matthew 6:33b where he added, “All these things will be given to you as well” to a

previous command to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” When speaking to these cases, the godly boundary was plainly set to be within the scope of God’s will and purpose for the individual.

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul writes, “Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” He then states three things that make the will of God evident to his readers. First, he says earlier in chapter 5, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (vs. 8). The illumination that has so transformed believers’ lives from darkness to light is the truth of Christ in their hearts. In other words, people can know the will of God if they fill their hearts and lives with the truth of God through Scripture and revelation. Second, back in chapter six, Paul states in the next sentence “be filled with the Spirit” (vs. 18). The Spirit is the believers’ guide into all truth and into the revelation of God in their lives. Through the discernment of the Spirit, God delivers his will to his children. Third, Paul adds, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (vs. 21). God has placed the body of Christ as a guide and source of accountability to the will of God. All things are possible with God, but only according to the truth of God’s revealed word, as confirmed by the Holy Spirit and shared in the body of Christ.

5. The fifth facilitating condition that runs through the New Testament is that prayer *offered in faith* is most effective. “Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours,” are the words of Jesus in Mark 11:24. The word used here for “believe” is to profess faith, which has to do with those making professions of faith in Christ and joining the Church. In other words, deep assurance and sure hope in Christ are characteristics of this type of faith.

In James 1:6, the writer states plainly, “But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” Two Greek words μηδὲν διακρινόμενος make up the word for *doubt* used here. The two words mean *to separate thoroughly* (διακρινόμενος) and *not even slightly* (μηδὲν). Therefore, to doubt means to back away from assurance of the truth even a slight amount. Absolute assurance must characterize this prayer of faith; otherwise, the prayer is only mocking God and wavering in the wind.

To have faith is to depend on another for life. Therefore, humility is a necessary characteristic of faith in prayer. The two people in the Gospels that Jesus affirmed for their faith were also people characterized by their humility. The first was the centurion in Matthew 7:8-10 who recognized the authority of Jesus to speak the word with the result of healing. The second person commended by Christ was the Canaanite woman who had a demon-possessed daughter. Although Jesus was not forthcoming in his help to this woman, she knelt down in front of him and said, “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table” (Matt. 15:27). Jesus was testing her faith, and she passed the test. He said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted” (Matt. 15:28). This woman also illustrated the combination of faith and humility as a guide to prayer. When approaching the throne of God, a person must maintain an attitude of humility while at the same time possessing an inner assurance of boldness.

6. The sixth condition is that effective prayer depends upon *praying in the name of Jesus Christ*. John 14 records, Jesus’ statement of a profound truth of prayer:

Believe in me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I

will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.
(vss. 11–14)

Several points flow out of this Scripture regarding the name of Christ. Jesus confronted his disciples with the fact that he and his Father are one and, therefore, all the power of God in the universe is available to him. The great commission includes such a statement “All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:28). In Colossians, Paul makes this theological connection when he says, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus]” (1:19). Therefore, Jesus is powerful due to his Father’s power that reigns in him.

Jesus stated that those who have faith in him will do the things that he has done and even greater things. Jesus made a clear connection between faith in something and the power that works through that faith. God in Jesus, made him powerful. Jesus in believers, through faith, makes believers powerful.

Jesus also pointed out that he was “going to the Father” (John 14:28). After his time on earth, Jesus Christ ascended to sit at the right hand of God and to act as high priest for his people in the presence of God. He is interceding on behalf of everyone who believes (Heb. 8:1). All who believe can know that the same power that filled Christ is available to them through Christ.

Jesus stated that anything that a believer asks in his name in order to give glory to his Father, he would do. Once again, Jesus placed a godly boundary on the purpose and goal of prayer by stating, “That the Son may bring glory to the Father” (vs. 13). Faith in prayer requires that the person acknowledge the source of the power and the provision by making sure that the glory goes to the One who accomplishes the prayer.

7. The seventh facilitating condition in the New Testament is that prayer must be *offered in the Spirit*. Scripture tells believers to “pray in the Holy Spirit” in Jude, verse 20. Once again in Ephesians 6:18, Scripture reads, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

Three aspects to the Holy Spirit emerge concerning prayer. The first aspect is the *anointing* of the Spirit as an empowering. First John 2:20 states, “You have an anointing from the Holy one, and all of you know the truth.” At the inauguration of a king or the ordaining of a priest, the same word *anointing* shows that the king or priest has been empowered to accomplish the tasks that they are setting out to do. Therefore, in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, believers are empowered by the Spirit to carry out the tasks that the Holy Spirit seeks to accomplish. Second, the Spirit is revealing truth through prayer. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, the Holy Spirit is spoken to have revealed what was formerly hidden. In Ephesians 3:2-13, God revealed the mystery through the work of the Spirit. The Spirit guides individuals as they pray to align themselves with the will of God, revealing the heart of God to them. Third, the Spirit energizes them in the process of praying. No one can stand under the weight of the burden of prayer alone. The presence and work of the Holy Spirit is the source of persistence in prayer.

8. The final condition is that effective prayer speaks *in unity with the body*. Leaders have heard this familiar Scripture mentioned each time a church has a small turnout at gathering: “Where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:20). Nevertheless, most believers really do not understand what this Scripture means. It clearly illustrates the principle of teamwork. When Jesus sent the disciples out, he sent them in pairs. When Paul went on his missionary journeys, he often

took a partner. Strength comes in having support through the difficult times. Another point about Matt. 18:20 involves what these two or three are doing when they come together. It speaks of them *agreeing* about things. The word *agree*, συμφωνέω, comes from the same root word as does *symphony* in the English language. The word means to join in purpose, cooperating in the process. In addition, this Scripture highlights the importance of unity within the body of Christ. This unity is so important that in Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus points out that if one is in the act of praying and he or she suddenly realizes that unity is broken with someone else, then prayer should be abandoned in order to restore the relationship. The principle is clear: Disunity within the body of Christ limits effective sincere prayer.

These eight facilitating conditions help establish a structure for the teaching of effective prayer from the New Testament. Through developing a practice of these eight characteristics in greater measure over time, one begins to grow in the effective use of prayer as a means not only to commune with God but also reach out purposefully to the needs of the world on behalf of his kingdom. They also provide a guide for the evaluation of a person's heart and life in preparation for effective prayer.

Section Two—New Testament Theological Foundations of Small Groups

As part of the development of how to grow in prayer, the means of disciple making through relationships is examined. The primary means of this discipleship in this study is the use of the small group methodology. The New Testament contains several references to the methodology of discipleship between Christ and his disciples. These are the call to *koinonia*, the call to function as the body of Christ, and the call to encourage each other in growth and development.

The call to *koinonia*. In the New Testament, a primary word for fellowship and community is the Greek word *koinonia*. *Koinonia* has a couple of components included within its meaning. The first component is sharing things together as a people. The heart of community is where things are cooperatively provided for the sake of the entire group. The second component of *koinonia* is the idea of working together with each other as a group with a common purpose and a common goal. In Acts chapter 2 and beyond, the early Church shared in this sense of collective property and union around a shared goal.

The call to function as the body of Christ. Several key passages in the New Testament point to the importance of unity within the fellowship of all believers. God has given each person spiritual gifts according to Ephesians 4:4-16, Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians 12. These gifts are meant to be activated within the fellowship of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts for the sake of the body as a whole and not for personal gain. The small group allows a person to be encouraged through the honest evaluation of ones perceived or apparent gifts, as well as the exhortation to use those gifts to the highest level possible.

The call to encourage others in growth and development. Throughout the New Testament, Christians receive the mandate to care for, encourage, and support each other. In 1 Corinthians 12:25, the Scripture calls Christians to “care for one another.” In Galatians 6:2, the believer is to “bear one another’s burdens.” Then in Ephesians 4:32, the Scripture challenges Christians to “forgive each other.” All of these come under the larger heading of “love one another” (1 John 4:11). The small group context is ideal for the participation and practice of this calling.

Section Three—Jesus as Model and Foundation

This study has already looked at many of the teachings of Jesus regarding prayer in the New Testament. This section focuses on three characteristics of Jesus' prayer life, with the consideration of his model prayers and the development of the prayer lives of others. Building upon the foundation already laid regarding the purpose for prayer, people pray in order to follow the example of the Savior who lived a lifestyle of prayer.

Three Characteristics of Jesus' Prayer Life

To study the greatest example of prayer is to analyze the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Three characteristics, habitual communion, intimate communication, and constant dependence on God, describe the relationship of obedience Christ had to his Father. These characteristics serve as a complete prayer model for Christ's followers.

Habitual communion. In the life and ministry of Jesus, believers are often amazed at the miracles he performed and inspired by the truths he prescribed. Nevertheless, some of the greatest moments in Jesus' ministry are the less spectacular events of prayer. The Scriptures do not provide a complete record of all the prayer experiences in which Christ participated during his 3 ½ years of ministry, but they do show him to have had a regular habit of prayer.

Soon after his baptism, Jesus spent forty days in prayer as a time of preparation for his ministry on earth as was his pattern throughout his ministry. At every significant point, he "withdrew to the wilderness to pray" (Luke 5:15). Even in times of great expectation from the crowds and his disciples, Jesus made time to commune with his father.

Intimate communication. Another particular part of the prayer life of Jesus was his intimate form of communication with his Father. Jesus addressed his Father as “Abba” twelve times in Scripture. This word *Abba* is an Aramaic word commonly used by small children to address their fathers. Christ’s intimacy encourages people to draw God closer as they endeavor to become the children of God that he created them to be. The Apostle Paul states in Romans 8:15, “We have received a spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father,...’”, thus encouraging all who believe in Christ to exhibit the same intimate relationship as Christ.

Obedience and dependency. Not only did Jesus practice a habitual and intimate communication with his Father, but he also modeled obedience through dependence in his prayers. In the book of John, the writer directs attention to three points where Jesus identified his own role in cooperation with his Father. He accepted and fulfilled this role as an obedient Son of God. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) and, “the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees his Father doing,” (John 5:19), establishing his absolute obedience and complete dependence upon his Father in everything. In the same way, believers must reflect this willingness to be obedient and dependent upon God as their Father.

These three characteristics can guide believers in developing a discipline of prayer where they develop a habit of communion, communicate intimately with God, and express their absolute dependence upon him. To allow God to be the Lord of their lives, believers have to be willing, as Christ was willing, to offer prayers after the example of Christ.

Jesus' Model Prayers

The New Testament contains several prayers of Jesus recorded for the study and modeling of his followers. Two particular prayers provide an example of the goal and purpose of prayer as well as a guideline for how we should pray. First is the Lord's Prayer where Jesus responds to the request by his disciples to teach them how to pray and Second is the high priestly prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane that shows the form of intercession.

The Lord's prayer. All around the world, churches are reciting the Lord's Prayer as a model prayer to bring them into the presence of God. When asked by the disciples to "teach us to pray," Jesus responds by saying in Matthew chapter 6, "This, then, is how you should pray" (v. 9a). Barnes, in his commentary on this passage, asserts that the text of the Lord's Prayer is not meant to be repeated but is an outline is to be used as a guide as to how to offer petitions to God.

This prayer has two distinct sections both with three petitions in each section. The first section contains believers' expressions of their love for God and the second is God's demonstration of love for his children. These two sections can be an excellent model for a practice of personal prayer.

The first set of three petitions is the expression of the believer's love for God the Father. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matt. 6:9b). This simple phrase draws individuals into the reality of their own personal relationships with God as the adoptive Father of all who believe in him. The word *hallowed* means to exalt the holiness of another. These words demonstrate the balance of boldness and humility required in covenant relationship with the greater party also being the loving Father.

The second petition, “Your kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10a), is a statement of yielding of a person’s purposes to the reign of God upon this earth. It parallels Jesus’ statement later in the Sermon on the Mount: “But, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these other things will be added” (Matt. 6:33). No true prayer exists except that which calls Christ to come and control a person’s present situation, placing all things within the grand rule of God’s kingdom Lordship.

In the final petition, Jesus suggests, “[Y]our will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10b). The word for *will* is the active choice that one makes or the determination of one’s heart toward something. In this suggested prayer guide, Jesus is expecting the person to make a profession of will in the direction of God’s purposes. In other words, no true prayer exists outside the will and purpose of God.

The first set of three petitions calls upon a person to acknowledge who God is, as well as one’s ultimate dependence upon him. This section places the initiative totally in the will of God, expressing the individual’s yieldedness to that will.

The second section of three petitions speaks of God’s love for his children, beginning with this heartfelt plea: “Give us today our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11). For centuries, theologians have debated the meaning of this simple statement. Many have concluded that this statement means much more than just food for life nourishment. The focus seems to be on everything that is necessary for life, including physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, and spiritual needs. This statement is a statement of trust and faith so that believers know that God will provide them with all they need today and every day.

The next petition is, “And forgives us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matt.

6:12a). Not only does God the Father show his love by providing for believers' needs, he also provides the salvation of their souls through forgiveness of their sins. The word *debts* used in this Scripture is not a literal financial responsibility; rather, it represents the legal costs of breaking the law of God. Only the price paid by Jesus Christ on the cross can pay off a sinner's legal obligations in the heart and mind of God.

The final petition in this second set is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:12b). God demonstrates his love toward humanity by giving them victory over the power of the evil one. The victory is only in the power of God displayed for his glory over all enemies.

The Lord's Prayer is an excellent guide for personal practices of prayer. It contains all the essential biblical guidelines for effective prayer while reminding the believer that God is the initiator and sustainer of all things. The words themselves are very simple but honest. Pleading the heart before God as a child, the praying individual submits to the will and purpose of God in all things.

High priestly prayer. Another significant prayer that Jesus prayed that can become a model for those who desire to intercede for others is the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17. Jesus took time to commune with his Father on behalf of the disciples and the world before he took his final steps toward Golgotha.

The high priestly prayer has three parts to highlight. In the first part, Jesus prays for himself that he would glorify the Father by completing the task that God had given him to do. The disciples are the focus of the second part of the prayer where Jesus prays that they would be one with the Father and in unity with each other. The last part is a petition on behalf of the believers that are yet to come.

The patterns of two of Jesus' prayers considered here allude to the profound importance of doing God's will and depending upon him for all things. Without a proper heart toward God and others, people cannot expect to maintain a right relationship with God or to please Him.

Jesus' Development of Others' Prayer Lives

Jesus not only modeled his own personal prayer life, but he also was a teacher of prayer in small groups as well as in large crowds. Two primary issues in the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ are considered in this study. Jesus chose to use a small group development model to train his disciples. Jesus also used forms of communication that enabled people to connect with his truths uniquely. These lessons can assist those teaching others to pray by following the example of Christ in encouraging others to grow in their prayer lives.

Small group development model. One of the most persuasive reasons to consider small groups in the local church is that the model of spiritual development that Jesus chose was a small group development model. Even though Jesus continued to teach the masses throughout his ministry, he spent a majority of his time in the formative spiritual direction of a few disciples. Within the larger number of disciples, Jesus maintained an "inner circle" of three disciples that received even more intimate training. Several times Jesus makes a conscious effort to separate himself from the masses to spend intimate time with his disciples. In Mark 3:7, the Scripture reads, "Jesus withdrew with his disciples" as he was seeking to have time to disciple them personally. Again in Matthew 13:36, Jesus retreated to a house to explain to his disciples a parable that he had shared with the crowds. These times apart with Jesus were not just for information and

training; Jesus spent time in recreation and rest with his disciples as well (Mark 6:31-34). Finally, Jesus spent some of his most important modeling at the close of his life in the upper room with his small group of disciples (Matt. 26). Jesus spent all of these instances and a large proportion of his ministry discipling a small group of individuals to enable them to become leaders of leaders in the early Church.

Broad-based connection with ordinary people. As a communicator, Jesus was supremely capable of reaching a large variety of people. Jesus recognized the value of speaking to the cultural and intellectual level of his audience. In his ministry, Jesus took seriously the need to develop leaders who could pass on the message of Christ and could follow the example of Christ into the entire world.

Jesus knew that people must be reached where they are before they could be led where he intended to take them. Therefore, his choice of a small group methodology combined with his focus on the importance of communication to all people were strong strategic decisions in the life of Christ.

The Apostle Paul's Teaching on Prayer to the Early Church

The Apostle Paul takes the ministry of Christ to the entire world through starting churches throughout his missionary journeys around the region. Paul made special efforts to teach the whys of prayer and the hows of prayer to these new churches and converts. This section focuses on Paul's personal teaching to Timothy and his teaching on prayer in the letters written to the Colossians and Ephesians.

Teaching Timothy. Paul had a powerful effect on so many that he mentored in the churches he established; however, his relationship with Timothy seemed to be the most intimate and personal. In first Timothy chapter 2, Paul lays down for Timothy a rule

of prayer that outlines his theology of prayer. Paul writes, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (vss. 1-2). Then Paul adds to this idea by stating, “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing” (v. 8). Many ideas emerge from this passage.

Paul expresses the high priority of prayer by using the words “first of all.” Prayer is not a second value but a first priority for Paul. As a developer of new churches, Paul has many theological and practical concerns to pass on to his church leaders, but he insists that the first and foremost responsibility is to be a person of prayer.

Paul then speaks of prayer flowing out of the inner life of believers. His concern about praying without “anger or disputing” refers to the control of one’s emotional state during the act of prayer. The attitude of a person’s heart determines the effectiveness of his praying. Paul warned Timothy to beware of praying in spite or in judgment.

Paul finally points out the importance of praying for everyone. The universality of prayer is as essential in believers’ lives today as it was in the life of Timothy. To mention the *king* in the list of people for whom to pray stretched the limits of Timothy’s grace. Historically, the kings and those in authority were the source of much persecution and suffering for the early Church. Prayer, according to Paul, will work to influence those in authority to allow the Christian community to live in peace. Therefore, Timothy’s attitude toward the people in authority would change while the work of God’s Spirit worked upon them to make the environment peaceable and quiet.

Paul’s teaching in Colossians 4:2-4 and Ephesians 1 and 3:14-20. Many of Paul’s letters speak about the topic of prayer, but the Colossian and Ephesian letters give

a clear picture of Paul's teaching approach to these two churches. Modern Christian educators can apply many of these same techniques in teaching prayer today.

In Colossians 4:2-4, Paul writes his final instructions to the believers at Colossae:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Paul gives several characteristics of prayer in this passage. He insists that people persist in prayer as he states, "Devote yourselves to prayer." He next reminds them of vigilance in prayer by stating, "being watchful." He then exhorts the Colossians to be "thankful" in prayer. He also establishes the purpose of prayer: to provide strength and encouragement to those who are doing the work of Christ in the world. He requests their diligence in prayer for his preaching and its effect for God's kingdom.

In Ephesians 1 and 3:14-20, Paul continues to particularize his views of the importance of prayer in the lives of the believer. Paul pleads for the Ephesians to recognize who God is and who they are because they are children of God. A mood of praise and thanksgiving covers these prayers and provides encouragement to the people of God who are facing trials and tribulations.

So much could be said about the teaching of Paul, but from these few examples, we see that Paul took prayer as a primary task of spiritual leaders. Paul also instructed his key leaders to teach others to pray and to recognize who they are as children of God.

Conclusions to Biblical/Theological Precedents

The Bible is a story of the evolution of a relationship between a covenant-making God and a frail humanity. Prayer is the heart of that relationship. God has expressed his

desire to have a personal relationship with humankind through acts of obedience done in love. Men and women have struggled to respond to God with love and obedience; therefore, God sent Jesus Christ as the fulfilling moment in all of history. The prayer life of Christ is a model of perfect communion with God through dependence. The relationship of obedient service illustrates the profound change that results when a person lives an others-centered life of love. The Apostle Paul takes this message throughout the world and gives a missionary perspective on the power and purpose of prayer in the Holy Spirit.

Historical Precedents

Throughout historical literature, many veins of spiritual understanding have appeared. Each of these veins has developed both patterns of relating to God and specific rules that guide their adherents into a life of communication through prayer.

Nevertheless, some common traditions run through the writings of great men and women of history that can become a framework for the Christian's understanding of how people grow in their practice of prayer. Three overarching themes are common with many of these traditions: (1) reasons to pray—the motivation for growth, (2) manner of prayer—the mechanism of growth, and (3) stages of prayer—the measurement of growth. These three themes form the foundation of the process of growth in prayer.

Reasons to Pray—Motivations for Growth

The first theme that comes through the literature of history regarding prayer is the motivational question of reasons to pray. “Prayer is a natural act;... nevertheless, it is more complex than many adults have the patience to recognize” (Wangerin 28). Unless a person comes to the point of personal crisis and realizes his or her need to pray, he or she

will not be motivated to practice consistent and meaningful prayer. Paul Y. Cho and Whitney R. Manzano state simply, “Motivation works on the basis of desire” (25). When asked how a person can develop a great desire to pray, Cho and Manzano answer, “You must see the eternal and temporal benefits of prayer” (25). The greatest men and women of history have understood their need for prayer. Bounds writes, “The men [and women] who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for Him, have been men [and women] who spent so much time with God as to make prayer a notable feature of their lives” (*Power Through Prayer* 38).

In the area of motivation to pray, the literature centers on three motivational tools that encourage people to grow in their life of communion with God. First are the testimonies regarding the power and purpose of prayer. Second is the call to obedience in prayer to God and the negative effects of prayerlessness. Third the writers emphasize the importance of a continual communion with God on a daily basis.

Testimonies of prayer. One of the greatest motivational tools is the sharing of testimonies. People can see themselves vicariously through the lives of others. Bounds speaks about the connection between great people and prayer:

Eminent Christians have been eminent in prayer. The deep things of God are learned nowhere else. Great things for God are done by great prayers. He who prays much, studies much, loves much, works much, does much for God and humanity. The execution of the Gospel, the vigor of faith, the maturity and excellence of spiritual graces wait on prayer. (*Purpose in Prayer* 121)

Undoubtedly Bounds believes from his experience that what makes great people great in faith is the depth of their prayers.

Doug Oman and Carl E. Thoreson conclude that spiritual modeling is an often-neglected component of spiritual training and that “spiritual modeling expresses the idea

that people may grow spiritually by imitating the life or conduct of one or more spiritual exemplars” (150). This “historical awareness” gives people hope from the past that they can propel to the future in their own lives (Westerhoff 614-15).

History records a diverse and exciting list of people of prayer. Their lives are the proof and motivation for the power of prayer. Dwight L. Moody writes, “Those who have left the deepest impression on this sin cursed earth have been men and women of prayer. You will find that, PRAYER [emphasis mine] has been the mighty power that has moved not only God, but man” (6). A common misunderstanding in the minds of those who seek to grow in prayer is the idea that the historical exemplars were somehow extraordinary people that do not relate with the common person. History points out that God used even the simplest person in powerful ways. A good example comes from Beverly Carradine’s descriptions of the diversity of people used of God in his ministry:

It would be impossible to give a faithful description of the operation of this talent, as it was exercised by different men. Education or its lack; originality; eloquence; simplicity of speech; voices trumpet-like or flute-like; naturally produced an external dissimilarity, but all these Jacob-like wrestlers in prayer had power with God and man and prevailed. There they were alike. (109-10)

The similarities among the warriors of faith was not their ability but their willingness to use the gift of prayer as their power source in their work. Even diverse people who place prayer at the heart of their lives can share in the unity that comes through prayer.

Another excellent testimony in the transformational power of prayer comes from the ministry of John Hyde, a missionary to India. Francis McGaw writes in a biography about Hyde that he was not much of a praying missionary at all until he spent a long month in a discipline of prayer for the revival of the people of India (19-24). “*Praying Hyde*” was well-known for a life of deep, heartfelt intercession before God. Richard J.

Foster lists seventy other people from his six traditions that could qualify as models to inspire persons to pray (Streams 303-78). Jürgen Moltmann reminds readers of the mothers and fathers of the desert and their testimonies of spiritual growth:

And if we want to share their experiences, the best thing is to accompany them on their pilgrimage—whether it is with Bernard of Clairvaux on “the ladder of love”, or with Bonaventure on “the pilgrimage of the soul”, or with Thomas a Kempis on the way he called “the imitation of Christ”, or with Theresa of Avila and her “interior castle,” or with Thomas Merton on “the seven-story mountain.” (56)

Moltmann understood that the spiritual pursuit of prayer led the great men and women of faith to their place of historical experience. Prayer will make individuals great as they long to glorify and exemplify God.

A call to obedience and an avoidance of prayerlessness. The second tool used in the literature toward motivating people to prayer and spiritual growth is the call to obedience and the fear of prayerlessness. William Law focuses the attention of the reader on the central point of Christianity:

Christianity supposes, intends, desires, and aims at nothing else but the raising (of) fallen man to a divine life, to such habits of holiness, such degrees of devotion as may fit him to enter amongst the holy inhabitants of the Kingdom of Heaven. (208)

What an amazing privilege and humble responsibility the spiritual leader has to lead others in a development of habits of holiness before God.

Henri J. M. Nouwen calls prayer “our first obligation as well as our highest calling” (87). Bounds reiterates the priority of prayer:

First in point of time in all excellence of all duties is prayer. It must be first in all occupations. So exacting and imperative in its import and power is prayer that it stands first among spiritual value. Not simply among the first things does prayer stand on a level with other things, but first of the first, to the very forefront, does Paul put prayer with all his heart, “I exhort that first of all. (*Prayer and Praying Men* 547)

Bounds and Nouwen remind leaders of their high priority to lead others in the pursuit of God through prayer. This call to duty in prayer life is accentuated by the plethora of condemnations of prayerlessness. Bounds says, “He that prays not, is not at all. He is naught, less than naught. He is below zero, so far as Christ and God and heaven are concerned” (*Prayer and Praying Men* 547). Gordon D. Fee writes, “A prayerless life is one of practical atheism” (149). This negative motivation is questionable in terms of the postmodern mind-set, yet even modern Christians need to understand the consequences of prayerlessness.

The importance of continual communion with God. The highest motivation in prayer is the desire to maintain and extend one’s relationship with God. To hold people to the greater goal of union with God is most beneficial in developing disciples who are self-motivated by love for God rather than externally motivated by fear or duty. Teresa of Avila speaks of the value of continual communion with God in seeing clearly:

As I see it, we shall never succeed in knowing ourselves unless we seek to know God: let us think of His greatness and then come back to our own baseness; by looking at His purity we shall see our foulness; by meditating upon His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble. (25)

When seeing the person of God in prayer the believer is constantly reminded of who they are in him. Teresa of Avila reminds readers to keep their lives in humble submission to God’s holiness.

The relationship that one has with God becomes the dominant issue when prayer is seen as a way of life rather than just an event. George A. Maloney writes about the communion with God that results from an intimate prayer of the heart relationship:

Christian growth into the life in God is the movement of one’s whole being into the Being of God, so that the one, whose spiritual life is

described as praying in the heart, can legitimately think that he is “breathing” with God, or sharing God’s breath. Pure prayer is spirit-to-spirit communication. It is the ability to converse with God in his language of silence, to share with him in his Being. (70)

Maloney’s “breathing with God” reference speaks to the intimacy of a relationship that is available with God through prayer. Nothing else in life can bring men and God together in continual, holy communion as prayer (Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* 17). The goal of all those who desire to direct persons into a deeper relationship with God is to motivate them to long for the “happy communion” (Bounds 17) that comes through prayer.

Conclusion—Reasons to Pray

The first tool discussed was an explanation of the purpose and power of prayer. People will be more motivated to pray as they encounter the lives of those in history who have seen the power of prayer active in their lives. Second, those motivated by the duty of obedience to God or fear of disobedience progress some on the journey to maturity in prayer. Lastly, the noblest motivator is the pure love for God and a heartfelt desire to commune with the Creator. This desire for communication satisfies the deep divinely woven longing of God’s creation for unity with its creator.

Manner of Prayer—Mechanism of Growth

The next theme in this research study of how people grow in prayer is an examination of how to pray. The assumption that everyone already knows how to pray is false (Paulsell, 5). Nouwen explains, “All the great saints in history and all the spiritual directors worth their salt say that we have to learn to pray” (87). Three components are considered in examining the literature on how to pray. These include an overview of historical traditions, historic rules of prayer, and classic spiritual disciplines.

Historical traditions. As people get involved in practicing the various approaches of prayer from diverse traditions, the confusion about what constitutes true prayer arises. This confusion happens when one investigates how the forms and functions intertwine. Therefore, a large part of a teacher's or mentor's responsibility in facilitating prayer growth is to guide learners through experiencing some of the approaches that lead to growth. This process I call the experiential personalization principle where a person is guided through several different experiences in order to find a series of experiences that relate to the learner, thus personalizing the process for the learner.

Before a mentor can discuss specific approaches to prayer, one must understand the different historical traditions and some of the key practices that go with them. A vast array of historical traditions has existed since the initial establishment of the Church in the days of Acts. Richard Foster in his book *Streams of Living Water* lists the six major traditions in Christian history and the life focus that accompanies these traditions. The contemplative tradition has a life focus of prayer-filled life. The holiness tradition has a life focus of virtuous life. The charismatic tradition focuses on spirit-empowered life and the social justice tradition has compassion as the life focus. The evangelical tradition has a life focus of word-centered life and the Incarnational tradition focuses on sacramental life. Table 2.1 details Foster's breakdown of the six traditions and their life focus.

Table 2.1 Foster's Six Traditions in History with Life Focus for Each

Tradition	Life Focus
Contemplative tradition	Prayer-filled life
Holiness tradition	Virtuous life
Charismatic tradition	Spirit-empowered life

Social justice tradition	Compassionate life
Evangelical tradition	Word-centered life
Incarnational tradition	Sacramental life

Source: Foster, *Streams of Living Water* 16.

Foster reveals a danger in his introduction to *Streams of Living Water*: “Various streams of life, good streams, important streams, have been cut off from the rest of the Christian community, depriving us all of a balanced vision of life and faith” (15). To understand prayer, individuals must appreciate the various traditions and learn how each of these traditional practices can enhance the understanding of prayer. From these six traditions, believers can apply the insights that strengthen their prayer lives and encourage spiritual development holistically.

From the contemplative tradition, Foster encourages people to “experiment with varied venues for solitude. Take a predawn walk, listening to the awakening sounds of your world. Sit in an airport or bus station and observe people, reflecting on what you see” (*Streams of Living Water* 56-57). Prayer interacting with real life demonstrates how to make a serious lifestyle transformation through experience.

From the holiness tradition, Foster suggests that people “plan a regimen of spiritual disciplines that will stimulate [their] growth in grace ... [and] invite others to travel the journey with [them]” (*Streams of Living Water* 95). Learning the importance of intentionality, consistency, accountability, and cooperation for each person is an important part of life in this tradition.

As people attempt to understand the charismatic tradition, Foster suggests to “draw near to those who have some history and experience in this area of life and learn

from them. Allow their spiritual discernment to encourage, correct, and refine you” (*Streams of Living Water* 131-32). The charismatic tradition celebrates the functions of the Holy Spirit in life and ministry: guidance in leadership, empowerment in service, oneness in community.

The social justice tradition as defined by Foster leads people toward action as “advocates for the powerless and exploited” (*Streams of Living Water* 181). Taking the work of prayer to the social arena reminds learners that the goal of prayer is the arrival of the kingdom of God upon the earth and that each person can be an integral part of that purpose if he or she will act according to the will of God.

Foster continues by defining the “word-centered life” of the “evangelical tradition” as encouraging people to “get to know [their] Bible” and to “get to know those people around [them]” (*Streams of Living Water* 232). The Great Commission calls them to take the Word of God to all people and share the good news with them.

The incarnational tradition is expressed in the celebration of the sacraments and the means of grace. Foster believes people understand God through “the invocation of God’s manifest presence into this material world” by recognizing him in the midst of everyday events and things (*Streams of Living Water* 269). The value of work, family, and marriage are other benefits of this tradition.

Recognizing the different traditions in Western theology that have historically influenced the spiritual growth of people helps focus the multitude of prayer practices into categories that reflect the theological tradition from which they came. By encouraging Christians to experiment with a variety of practices from these traditions,

Christians can begin to grasp the depth and breadth that is available in approaches to prayer.

Historic rules of prayer. In addition to understanding the many theological traditions that exist, an analysis of a few of the specific rules of prayer that have existed for some time within these traditions is beneficial. One of the first prayer books is the *Didache*, which contains a number of quotations from the Bible. It instructed the early Church on how to live a lifestyle of prayer, fasting, and virtue (Paulsell 34). Over time, various practices were added to the basic design in the *Didache*. The Rule of St. Benedict was the compilation of practices that guided the monastic communities in ordering their prayer lives (Paulsell 36).

William O. Paulsell has organized many of the historical rules of prayer that have developed over time into groups to help believers understand how people have prayed and to see what prayer experiences are possible in their own lives. “Imitating them is not our goal;... learn from them ... about how to pray and what place that should have in our normal patterns of living” (2-3).

The purpose of the rule is not to confine people into a rigid construct of spiritual development but to deepen their awareness of the presence of God through heart, soul, and mind preparation. Repeatedly in the historical literature, writers clearly relate that the only way to grow spiritually is to be intentional about that growth. When one desires to be intentional about growth in prayer, the rules of prayer can become functional tools that guide people toward God.

Examples of rules of prayer. Many excellent examples in history and tradition are worthy of investigation. This study looks at two collections of rules in an attempt to

recognize the different practices employed in history. One, by Evelyn Underhill, is very detailed and structured while the second, from Dorothy Day, is less structured.

Underhill was an Anglican in the early twentieth century. She has written many books about the mystical tradition and how people can reach union with God. William O. Paulsell summarizes Underhill's rules of prayer:

1. Basic to a complete attitude:
 - a. Self-simplification.
 - b. Recollection—controlling attention with the will.
 - c. Loving, rather than analyzing, God.
2. Forms of contemplation:
 - a. Finding God in the natural world
 - b. Looking beyond the natural world to an imageless God.
 - c. Letting the force of the spiritual world work on us by letting go of self-interest.
3. Daily prayer:
 - a. Do some spiritual reading and meditation every day.
 - b. Have a sense of wonder about the greatness, splendor, and gentleness of God.
 - c. Pray regularly and participate in corporate worship. (73)

Underhill's rules give a pastor or Christian educator excellent guidelines for how to lead others in the pursuit of contemplative prayer. These rules are thorough but not overly prescriptive.

Dorothy Day lived in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many in the Catholic tradition believe she is saint-like because of her lifetime of service to the hospitalized and the homeless (Paulsell 75). Paulsell summarizes Day's rules of prayer:

1. Practice the presence of God; be aware of God's presence.
2. Attend the Eucharist daily.
3. Read the Bible regularly.
4. Look for Christ's presence in the poor.
5. Pray morning and evening, using the Psalms.
6. Keep a journal.
7. Pray the "Our Father" three times a day.
8. Use the "Jesus Prayer." (84)

Like Underhill previously, Day provides some simple but helpful guidelines for a daily regimen of prayer that incorporates a variety of approaches to prayer.

Nouwen makes a summation of the rules of prayer for many:

A careful look at the lives of people for whom prayer was indeed “the only thing needed” (see Luke 10:42) shows that three “rules” are always observed: a contemplative reading of the word of God, a silent listening to the voice of God, and a trusting obedience to a spiritual guide. Without the Bible, without silent time and without someone to direct us, finding our own way to God is very hard and practically impossible. (96)

All of these lists of rules prove that no set practices of prayer exist in the historical perspective. Variety and diversity are plainly expressed in all of these lists. Personality and traditional preferences make marked distinctions for people in their practice of prayer.

Classic spiritual disciplines. In addition to the various historical traditions and the many rules of people who have demonstrated a mature prayer life, practices do exist that are considered by many to be the classic spiritual disciplines. Maxie Dunnam writes, “[D]iscipline is an absolute necessity for the Christian life” (8). Gary L. Thomas also asserts, “[F]oundational to spiritual training are the spiritual disciplines” (*Seeking the Face of God* 42). Mathias adds her insights to the need to persevere in the disciplines:

When practicing the art of prayer, as in practicing any art, discipline must channel the streams of sweetness, of insight, that may strike and surprise us.... We must persist in the discipline until it becomes instinctive, until we convert every thought, desire and frustration into a prayer, turning to God as naturally as a flower turns its face to the sun and the butterflies. (343)

The discipline of prayer cannot be overstated. Developing the instincts of constant communion is where prayer becomes a part of who a person is rather than what they do.

Throughout the literature, the term “discipline” takes on many meanings.

Dunnam, for example, defines discipline as “the way we train ourselves or allow the Spirit to train us to be ‘like Jesus,’ to appropriate his spirit, and to cultivate the power to live his life in the world” (15). Robert Mulholland defines discipline as “acts of loving obedience that we offer to God steadily and consistently, to be used for whatever work God purposes to do in and through our lives” (103). He lists three specific disciplines that he considers classical, including prayer, spiritual reading, and liturgy, stating, “It is very difficult to maintain genuine personal disciplines without the scaffolding of the classical disciplines of the body of Christ” (105).

Dunnam lists study, prayer, confession, submission, service, solitude, and generosity as the primary disciplines of the Christian life (15-154).

Conclusions—Manner of Prayer

Throughout history, the practices of prayer have some continuity of rules and disciplines from person to person. However, even this continuity is not uniformity by any means. The fact that prayer remains a personally developed art for most people is apparent.

Steps in Prayer—Measurements of Growth

In addition to motivating persons to pray and guiding them through experiences of prayer, teachers must give students a framework to measure their progress in order to encourage them toward deeper levels of spiritual growth and prayer. John Wesley was adamant about persons growing in their faith through spiritual disciplines. Steven Harper writes, “Wesley enabled a person to ‘locate’ himself/herself on the birth-death continuum. And having been thus located, one was able to see how to grow, ‘going on to perfection’“ (*John Wesley’s Message for Today* 94). By using this continuum, Wesley

was advocating a system that allowed people to measure their unique growth processes.

Growth in prayer is not natural, but rather, an intentional process. Nouwen states that spiritual growth must be intentional when he writes, “We cannot plan, organize or manipulate God; but without a careful discipline, we cannot receive Him either” (89). Many may assume that the passage of time constitutes maturity. In fact, spiritually maturity has very little to do with how much time one has lived. Instead, maturity has more to do with how much time one has lived in the presence of the nurture of God.

The temptation is easy for many Christians to settle for being journeymen in their prayer lives. Most people do not feel the call to growth; therefore, they do not proceed. Others who attempt to proceed fail due to the difficulties of growth. With an intentional effort to discovering God’s unique creation and how it pertains to prayer, these obstacles to meaningful prayer lives may be overcome.

Historic steps in growth in prayer. Many of the great writers in history have detailed the steps to grow in their tradition. A multitude of growth trajectories for people in the area of spiritual formation and prayer exists. Guigo II stated that “the ladder of monks” was a progressive growth from one rung to the next through four steps. The first rung was the reading of Scripture and the second is the meditating on the Scripture, the third was prayer about the Scripture and the fourth rung was contemplation where a person listens to God (Paulsell 131). St. Theophan the Recluse, a nineteenth century Russian spiritual writer, distinguishes “three levels of prayer” starting with “oral prayer” and leading toward “prayer of the heart.” Saint Teresa of Avila maps out in her books what she calls the “way of perfection” and “the interior castle,” which is the process of growth in prayer. This process moves from vocal prayer through meditation and personal

expression to a final stage of quiet simplicity where a person just sits in the presence of God with very little words spoken.

Glen Martin and Dian Ginter explain another approach to growth. They discuss a systematic methodology of developing intimacy with God. In their book, the authors detail both the relational dynamics of spiritual growth along with the corresponding prayer focuses that accompany each level of intimacy. The person begins by seeing God as a distant and holy sovereign. At this level, the prayer focus is self-centered. At level six, the most intimate level, the Christian recognizes God as an intimate friend. The corresponding prayer focus at this level is absorbed with God's thoughts and ideas throughout the day. Table 2.2 lists the levels of intimacy and prayer focus for each step in the taxonomy.

Three measures of growth. This study generalizes growth measurements into three continuums of development. First is the continuum from *verbal to nonverbal*. The beginning of a life of prayer focuses upon verbal conversational prayer. A person expresses his or her prayers in language that mimics personal information between two people. As people mature in prayer, their use of language decreases and the nonverbal communication increases.

Table 2.2. Levels of Intimacy with God along with Prayer Focus for Each Level

Level	Relationship Name	Prayer Focus
1	Holy Sovereign	Self-centered
2	Forgiving Savior	Pray because one "ought to" but also out of love
3	Loving Father	Prayer based on right thing for spiritual health, get own needs met

4	Faithful Companion	Worship and praise intensify— begin seeking God’s agenda more than before
5	Good Friend	Views quality time with God as very important— prayer becomes more God centered to please God
6	Intimate Friend	Prayer life is a constant flow throughout the day as though God was visible and ever present

Source: Martin and Ginter 21-27

A person does not need to “impress God with [his or her] eloquent choice of words, but to express as simply and as honestly as [he or she] can what is in [his or her] heart” (Wright 102). Another consideration in verbal versus nonverbal prayer is the idea of listening. The more a person comes to God in prayer, the more he or she begins to understand that prayer is a process of listening and not just about telling.

Second is the continuum of *pre-thought patterns to extemporaneous* prayer. Similar to the previous measure, this continuum focuses on the pattern of communication chosen. A formula for prayer is common for those who are beginning in their lives of prayer. As they increase in experience, the formula tends to become more abstract and heartfelt. It becomes more a guidance by the Spirit rather than a set formulation. Many will begin by praying the Scriptures, or reciting a liturgical prayer that leads them into deeper intimacy with God. Over time, however, a particular pre-thought prayer will not satisfy the heart of the person praying. He or she will desire to express unique personal feelings, concerns, and praises.

The third continuum is from *self-focused to other focused to God focused*. When a person begins a life of prayer, he or she may be absorbed in concentration upon his or her own needs and desires. As a person grows in prayer, he or she tends to move toward

spending more time and energy on praying for others. Finally, a time will come when the praying person is totally centered on “God’s heart desire” (Martin and Ginter 36). The prevailing pray-er will not be absorbed with self or even this world at all, but totally absorbed in God. This Mystics called this state of absorption “union” with God. Wright states, “Growth in prayer, if it is truly an increase in friendship and union with God, means growth in concern about other persons and what happens to them” (103).

Conclusion to Steps in Prayer

Throughout history, leaders and mentors have established structures to examine and detail an apprentice’s progress in growth through prayer. These structures help today in evaluating the process and measuring the steps to growth in striving to encourage others to progress on the three continuums of growth over time.

Conclusion to Historical Precedents

Prayer has been a topic for all people throughout history. Understanding how to motivate individuals to pray is the key to moving them to grow in prayer. Teaching them the approaches to prayer including experiences of prayer is central to keeping them in prayer. Measuring their growth through stages is paramount to understanding their progress.

Psychological/Sociological Precedents

In addition to the biblical/theological precedents and the historical precedents, the psychological/sociological precedents tend to control a person’s practice of prayer because one’s personality and social preferences guide his or her approach to God. This research study focused upon four components of how adults grow spiritually. First, personality, set the stage for temperaments and how they affected a person’s interaction

with God. Second, adult learning, established the basis for how people receive and interpret data. Third, small group training, helped explain the role of spiritual nurture in guiding people to growth in spiritual matters. Finally, this study examined the area of experiential personalization as it relates to spiritual growth.

Personality Area

The first consideration is in the area of personality. An individual's personality is the culmination of many factors in life including genetics, family dynamics, and life experiences. If people are going to develop a deeper relationship, with another, especially God, then their personalities will have a large effect on how those relationships develop and mature. Therefore, in learning how people grow in prayer, an individual's personality must be taken seriously. R.E.Y. Wickett explains, "[S]piritual leaders must recognize the diversity of spiritual growth paths and learning efforts which are useful to learners" (457). Because God made each person unique, people need to allow God "to call [them] to Himself in a way uniquely suited to [their] own personalities and the special friendship He offers [them]" (Wright 98-99).

Taking personality into the realm of spiritual development, learners need to understand how their individual temperaments determine their understandings of growth in prayer. Many in modern Christian education circles have neglected the provision for varieties of experiences that meet the assorted needs of different personalities. The education in religious communities has turned away from the psychological research that encourages learning through the senses. John H. Westerhoff points out the danger of neglecting sense awareness in Christian education:

Religious education must not shy away from sense-awareness exercises, imagination games, contemplation for fantasy experiences, and the use of

drama, dance, music, and the plastic arts. Concerns for the affections ought once again to become a central component of all educational programs with children, youth and adults. No longer can we permit persons to neglect the touch, smell, or taste of life; to escape the experiencing of feelings; or to avoid creative expression through the use of the arts. (614)

The neglect of sense awareness experience in Christian education limits the effectiveness of teaching and ignore the goal of learning. Westerhoff calls readers to remember the sensory aspect of learning.

Other personality components are also neglected in Christian education in favor of passive and theoretical learning. Peter Ainslei makes a statement about the majority of today's culture:

The vast majority of people in our culture are extroverted. They may not be interested in spending long periods in silence or on retreats. Instead they like to be with people or engaged in activity. The arts—dancing, sculpting, painting, and group praying—can be excellent prayer media for them. If Christians ignore personality type in learning to pray, they may continue to pray in ways unsuitable for any real growth or may simply stop praying altogether. Christian nurture in prayer can be immeasurably enriched if personality style is recognized. (23)

Too often teachers of prayer assume everyone is just alike. Therefore, when the differences between people's personalities are not recognized and addressed, some grow discouraged and abandon their pursuit of a deeper life of prayer. Thomas Merton points out how different personality types appreciate images in prayer:

People are told to allow the Spirit to lead them, without receiving much personal direction about exactly what to do. Most of the prayer books to which they turn are written by intuitive introverts, a minority personality type. Many of these books counsel to give up gradually all images in prayer, urging people to undertake the journey to the emptiness that ushers in mystical experience. According to Myers-Briggs, however, a large percent of Americans prefer to use the five senses in a dominant way. Whether they are introverted or extroverted, they like to use images in prayer. Where can these people find nurture? Their personality typology

might lead them to forms of prayer used by the Franciscans, Jesuits, the nature mystics or others, groups that traditionally have used images effectively. (43)

Chester P. Michael and Marie Norrisey have done the seminal research on how temperaments and prayer work together. They found that “[a]ll indicators point to a close relationship between our innate temperament and the type of prayer best suited to our needs” (16). The authors continue by writing, “Prayer touches and influences us only to the extent that it succeeds in activating the transcendent dimension of one or more of the four functions of Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, and Feeling” (17). Their landmark study determined some fascinating connections between Jungian temperament and prayer style. The results can help those who are training people in the art of prayer to consider the personality component when teaching persons to pray.

Michael and Norrisey detail for each of the four temperaments some particular issues that explain the differences between the temperament categories. Table 2.3 lists some of the characteristics from each personality temperament.

Table 2.3. Temperament Expectations from the Research

NF	NT	SJ	SP
Augustinian prayer	Thomistic prayer	Ignatian prayer	Franciscan prayer
12% of population	12% of population	38% of population	38% of population
Sensible imagination	Orderly progression of thought	Experiences details of history today	Free to be led by the Spirit
Application of words to today’s situation	Prefer to control the reality of their lives	Givers not receivers	Impulsive—hates to be tied down
Creative, verbal, writing	Usually leaders who develop systems	Prefers ceremonies and ritual	Prefers action events
Likes helping others	Perfectionist	Strong sense of history	Everything is negotiable

Idealistic search for perfection and holiness	Impersonal in relationship to others	Dislikes change	Prefers short projects rather than ongoing
Self-improvement in inner life important	Earnest pursuit of transcendental values	Prefers order and routine	Optimistic
Needs quiet and silence	Prefers discursive meditation	Pessimistic	Prefers acts of service
Never content with present	High desire to be seen as competent	Commemoration of past is important	Prefers real objects rather than symbols
Likes symbols	Systematically pursues personal goals	Prefers service to others	Flexible and free flowing
Prefers future over past and present	Prefers future over past and present	Prefers past over present and future	Prefers present over past and future

Source: Michael and Norrissey.

In addition to Michael and Norrissey's work on personality, Mulholland also analyzes the differences between Myers-Briggs temperaments to encourage people to pursue a spiritual journey that fits with their personality. Mulholland states, "Our spiritual formation always takes place within our given psychological state and personality preference pattern" (73). Table 2.4 illustrates some of the personality characteristics as detailed by Mulholland

Table 2.4. Specific Spiritual Tendencies According to Personality Component

N	S	J	P	T	F
Imagination	Use of senses	Structured	Spontaneity	Cerebral	Focus on relationships
Re-creating scenes	Use of incense	Regulated	Struggles with discipline	Reason	Emotional
Listening within	Chanting psalms Singing hymns	Planned Well-developed	Restless with order	Analytical Theoretical	Affective Incarnation of ideas

Listening to music	Systematic	Abstract concepts
Sounds of nature	Control relationships	
Working with hands	Closure	
Icons and symbols		
Movement in liturgy		

Source: Mulholland.

Mulholland also makes some predictions about worship styles for four of the Myers-Briggs temperaments. Table 2.5 lists those predictions according to personality component.

Table 2.5. Specific Worship Tendencies

Personality Component	N	S	J	P
Tendencies in worship	Periods of silence	Silence is uncomfortable	Likes to end on time	Has no need to end at all
	Reflective worship	Prefers activity not contemplation	Closure	Go with the flow
	Deeper awareness	Prefer lively modes of worship	Order	Spontaneity
	Awareness	Interaction with others	Regularity	
		Sensory input	Systematic	
	Sensory output			
	Service			

Source: Mulholland.

Adult Learning Area

The second area of consideration to explain one's psychological/sociological development comes from the study of adult learning theories. People have demonstrated

a propensity to favor a particular learning style as they progress to adulthood. A leader or teacher needs to keep these styles in mind while developing a methodology to help people grow in their faith. Thomas St. James O'Conner explains, "Adult education requires an awareness and use of a variety of learning styles and principles" (51).

In addition to these learning style considerations, the teacher/mentor must also consider the teaching style and the design style used. Three categories of teaching style include directive, facilitative, and collaborative. Design styles divide into three models: information-processing model, programmed-learning model, and person-centered model (O'Conner 51-52). The complex nature of learning requires a personalized focus for effective development to occur. James D. Foster and Glenn T. Moran conclude their study comparing secular teaching and Jesus' parables by stating, "It is suggested that effective techniques will be those that recognize and work within the limitations of the audience and the structure of the learning process" (102).

One of the most popular concepts in the study of learning theory today is in the study of the functioning of the cerebral cortex. Howard W. Stone's research of this subject in relation to ministry found that "for one's theology to have an impact on ministerial practice (and vice versa), both sides of the brain are required" (299). Once again, considering the complexity of human learning requires a diverse and inclusive teaching methodology. George G. Hunter, III points out that the Celtic people were more "right-brained" and therefore were "rooted more in the imagination than the intellect, and spoke in images more than in concepts" (72). Therefore, the Celtic people were less interested in the word-based gospel of the Roman church. These considerations inform a

teacher's understandings of how to communicate the truth and how to help people grow in their faith.

Small Group Area

A third area of consideration that informed this study is the consideration of small group theory. Dr. Dale Galloway from New Hope Community Church developed a small group organization that was one of the largest in the United States at one time. He states the five reasons why small groups are vitally important in the local church:

- (1) They provide multiple points of entry into the church.
- (2) They provide a very effective form of evangelism.
- (3) They are the only way to truly care for people.
- (4) They accelerate the spiritual growth of individuals and the church.
- (5) They properly shift the work of the church to the people and fulfill Ephesians 4. (Galloway and Mills 10)

Galloway has successfully used small groups to develop faithful disciples and effective leaders through small groups. This methodology has been used by many in history to great effect.

A success story that pervades religious history is the story of Wesley and his use of a small group development model to nurture people into faith and in growth toward sanctification. His small group development model was one of Wesley's primary means of grace. Harper points out that "this means became the primary instrument of early Methodist renewal. Wherever Wesley preached, he sought to organize believers into bands, classes, and societies for their continuing nurture" (*John Wesley's Message for Today* 83). The bands brought together four to eight people of the same gender and similar maturity for sharing and accountability. The classes were groups of twelve people nurtured by class leaders to help them grow spiritually in an environment of commitment and encouragement. The societies, larger than the classes, were the source of the majority

of biblical instruction.

David Lowes Watson relates a search that the Perkins School of Theology undertook to establish a spiritual training model to use with Perkins students. After extensive research, the faculty at Perkins determined that the best model was to use Wesley's class meeting. Watson illustrated four reasons why this model met the criterion for curricular planning: (1) It was theologically sound; (2) it was a means of grace; (3) this model could accommodate a wide range of spiritual experiences; and (4) it was a time for accountability for faithful discipleship (122-23). The class meeting is as applicable today as it was at its genesis.

Another historic movement that relied heavily on the use of a small group development model was the Celtic Christian movement. Hunter details the methods that the early Celtic leaders used to help encourage people to become converts and help believers to grow in their faith. He points out the Celtic model for reaching people:

(1) You first establish community with people, or bring them into the fellowship of your community of faith. (2) Within fellowship, you engage in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship. (3) In time, as they discover that they now believe, you invite them to commit. (53)

This model is interesting in context of growth in prayer because it points out in historical fact that people, when allowed, will progress at their own pace in understanding and share in learning in a safe community. Commitment grows out of honest conversation rather than coercion. Michael E. Imediedu further explains the need for safety and community in spiritual growth:

This process takes place in a warm and loving community where a person feels that he/she is accepted by others. He/she will then experience the manifestation and realization of God's presence necessary for personal growth and establishment of interpersonal relatedness which will break the inner core and create freedom for spiritual growth. (366)

The environment for learning is as important as the content. This environment sets the stage for growth to happen by providing a safety and comfort for the participants.

Experiential Personalization Principle

A fourth area to be considered in this study is called the experiential personalization principle. The postmodern culture resounds with calls to personalization in life and spirituality. Michael Slaughter and Warren Bird state, “Our culture today is all about personalization. Unlearning churches focus on personalized pathways of discipleship that meet individual needs, rather than one-size-fits-all programs for the masses” (35). This sentiment concurs with that of another popular spiritual formation author, Thomas. In his book *Sacred Pathways*, he recognizes the need for personal paths of spiritual growth: “Good spiritual directors understand that people have different spiritual temperaments, that what feeds one doesn’t feed all. Giving the same spiritual prescription to every struggling Christian is no less irresponsible than a doctor prescribing penicillin to every patient” (17). Thomas has studied historical Christianity and personality theory and has determined nine distinctive “spiritual temperaments” he calls pathways (see Table 2.6).

Table 2.6. Nine Sacred Pathways

Name	Brief Description
Naturalists	Loving God out of doors—moved by creation—similar to contemplatives
Sensates	Loving God with the senses—awe, beauty, multi-sensory worship, incense, architecture, music, language, holy touches
Traditionalists	Loving God through ritual and symbol—historical dimensions of faith—structure, discipline, Sabbath
Ascetics	Loving God in solitude and simplicity—left alone in prayer, internal existence, introspective
Activists	Loving God through confrontation—justice orientation, standing against evil, energized by interaction with others,

especially in conflict

Caregivers	Loving God by loving others—interaction with needy people
Enthusiasts	Loving God with mystery and celebration—energized by joyful celebration, cheerleaders, want to experience concepts
Contemplatives	Loving God through adoration—seek to love God with the purest, deepest, and brightest love imaginable
Intellectuals	Loving God with the mind—live in the world of concepts, energized by studying and arguing principles

Source: Thomas, *Sacred Pathways*.

Conclusions in Psychological/Sociological Precedents

In addition to the biblical/theological and historical precedents, perceiving the personal temperaments and learning styles of persons seeking to grow in prayer can help make the process of growth more effective and pleasing. The culture of modern society expects personalization in all areas of life. The church needs to be aware of the many facets of learning experiences that are necessary to reach the wide span of individual personalities and learning styles. *The importance of prayer in the lives of all people is too vital to ignore these considerations in training.*

Conclusion to Precedents in Literature

Based on the literature reviewed, this study selected ten practices of prayer that take into consideration the various personality types, diversity in traditions, and variety in learning styles to use as the basis for the experiences in prayer. The prayer practices selected for this study include: *Lectio divina*, Liturgical prayer, Naturalist prayer, Journaling prayer, Prayer walking, Visualization prayer, The Jesus prayer, Prayer partners, Contemplative prayer, and Intercessory prayer. Table 2.7 lists the ten prayer experiences selected for this study in order of the weeks used.

Table 2.7. Prayer Practices Selected for Study in Order of Application

Order	Prayer Practice Selected
Week 2	<i>Lectio divina</i>
Week 3	Liturgical prayer
Week 4	Naturalist prayer
Week 5	Journaling prayer
Week 6	Prayer walking
Week 7	Visualization prayer
Week 8	The Jesus prayer
Week 9	Prayer partners
Week 10	Contemplative prayer
Week 11	Intercessory prayer

This section details each prayer experience selected and is the basis for the material that was discussed in the small group in preparation for each week's practice of each experience. The participants also received a detailed booklet to take home explaining each prayer experience and the expectations for that week's practice.

Lectio divina. *Lectio divina* or divine reading is a practice that goes back to the fourth and fifth centuries composed of four parts, each part is a rung of the "ladder of escalation" (Michael and Norrissey 31) that moves the heart closer to God through experience. The *Scripture reading* first introduces the content into the mind by means of sensory reading of the words. Second, by *meditating* on the Scripture, a person is able to use his or her intellect to reflect upon the message of the text. Third, through *personal dialogue* questions, a person applies the Scripture reading to his or her own situation. Last, in a time of silence and *contemplation*, a person seeks the presence of the Holy Spirit to sense the deeper meanings of the text. Foster says, "This is the kind of reading in

which the mind descends into the heart, and both are drawn into the love and goodness of God” (*Prayer* 149-50).

Liturgical prayer. A spiritual practice that connects the modern Christian with centuries of tradition and faith is praying the ancient liturgies. Since the founding of the Tabernacle and the developing of the Levitical priesthood, people have cried out to God using ancient liturgies. The Bible is full of rituals, liturgies, and ceremonies that express a person’s heart to God. Even Jesus would have practiced the basic liturgical prayers of the Jewish people: the *Shema* and the *Tephilla* (Foster, *Prayer* 106).

Sources of liturgical prayer experiences for private prayer are limitless, but the main categories of resources include the book of Psalms, other Scriptures, prayers of the saints, and devotional writings. Each enhances a person’s ability to understand which words to use in prayer as well as provides an expansion of the issues of prayer.

Another part of liturgical prayer is the concept of the prayers of the hours. A structured approach to prayer that encourages participants to pray during early morning, during noontime, and again in the evening helps develop a discipline of prayer.

Naturalist prayer. An appreciation for nature and creation leads many persons into a deeper understanding and sense of the presence of God. Thomas describes this predisposition as that of the “Naturalist,” pointing out, “Naturalists often learn their best lessons in the out-of-doors. Three particularly come to mind: they visualize scriptural truths; they see God more clearly; and they learn to rest” (*Sacred Pathways* 38). A holistic connection between the Creator and the created is waiting to be manifested in the lives of Christians. Lee Van Ham writes about the power of praying in nature: “Once we are connected, communication expands in accordance with God’s self-revelation. ...

Icons of nature help us overcome the wall of separation between matter and spirit” (840).

Journaling prayer. By keeping a written dialogue of a person’s interactions with God, one creates a permanent record of God’s faithfulness over time. This record can become a reflective tool to reveal the power and presence of God while also assisting a person in his or her personal examination of conscience. Jan Johnson writes, “The Spiritual discipline of journaling moves beyond and behind mere descriptions of life events, providing a place to identify and evaluate the pattern our lives are weaving” (35). A psychological value is found in journaling. “Writing makes issues concrete on paper as my own, rather than as concepts floating around in my head. ... It also helps clarify feelings and thoughts” (Bianchi 76). Historically, humankind can “reflect with exuberance that in spite of our failures and achievements, self-pity, and self-sufficiency, God has charted the course over the months and years” (Johnson 41).

Prayer walking. Prayer walking is a modern practice of prayer defined by Calvin Miller and Dan Crawford as “intercession on location, with information, in cooperation, against opposition, for glorification” (12). It is intercession on the personal level. This active practice of prayer reminds people that prayer is not only a solitary pursuit but an opportunity to participate in the lives of others while praying for them. Two main forms of prayer walking are to be considered. Nondirected prayer walking is that experience where a person walks in an unfamiliar area offering general prayers for the people he or she encounters in the area, all the while intentionally looking for indications of specific needs. The second form of prayer walking is where a person walks and allows people to interact with him or her as he or she walks and prays for those who happen to cross his or her path.

Visualization prayer. Modern Christians are finding a long-lost connection with their imaginations. Historically, people of prayer such as Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola, and Julian of Norwich recognized the power of imagination and how it can intensify their prayer experiences (Meehan 8). This prayer practice has many applications. A person can enter a biblical scene through the imagination and experience the event firsthand. Another way to use imagination is for a person to communicate with a biblical character through normal conversation while visualizing that person in his or her presence. Bridget Meehan, addressing the needs of people for tangible experiences of God's love, writes, "We need images to fill our inner being with creative and powerful messages of divine love" (10).

Another part of visualization prayer is the process of communing with Christ in an imaginative encounter. This simulation allows people to speak as if they were talking to a live person in the room. Prayer should not become trivialized, but prayer must become personal, as comfort and ease envelop it.

Jesus prayer. The admonition of Paul to "pray without ceasing" has led many into a desire to keep the mind and soul continually in the presence of God by refocusing the mind, moment by moment, through repeating a word or phrase. Maloney explains the importance of using the name of Jesus Christ:

There are various degrees of faith-appreciation of the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. As we grow through life's desert experience into a deeper faith, our pronouncing of His holy Name will have ever greater effects on our prayer. At the beginning of our prayer life, it can be used as an ejaculation throughout the day, it can also serve as a preparation for prayer. (139)

The phrase that is repeated is usually a variation of "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Others just repeat the name *Jesus* in slower and more

impassioned ways. The point of this practice is to strive to stay in connection with the presence of God throughout each part of the day or to refocus the mind on God when facing temptations or distractions.

Prayer partners. When a person shares a moment of prayer with another, he or she enters into the thoughts, feelings, and interests of another. The experience will include the sharing of prayer concerns, communications of understanding, and a time for silent or verbal prayer where each person lifts up the other's prayer concerns. The prayer partners may want to pray for a concern that they both have in common.

Contemplative prayer. The contemplative practice of prayer tends toward an experience of detachment from one's personal surroundings. Contemplation experience is done in solitude and silence where a person takes an idea or Scripture and seeks to meditate on it until he or she loses awareness of his or her surroundings. Contemplation is considered one of the most difficult of all of the prayer practices.

Intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer is holy, believing, persevering prayer where a person pleads to the heart of God on behalf of another who desperately needs God's intervention. When praying for others, the pray-er should practice "positional prayer," which includes (1) identification—the process of incarnational ministry with the person for whom he or she is praying in order to understand that person's specific needs at a personal level, (2) sacrifice—sharing in the pain and suffering of the person for whom he or she is praying to enable the heart and soul to empathize and engender a compassionate relationship with the person, and (3) authority—bringing the intercession to God with passion built on genuine love and concern for the person for whom he or she is praying (Dunn 84-91).

Summary

Summarizing the foundational literature that establishes the basis for this study points to the biblical description of a covenant God who initiates a relationship with his people and guides them by the Holy Spirit to recognize that his Son Jesus Christ models a conversational relationship with his children. Throughout history the church has been developing a sense of the look of these communication patterns and how effectiveness is affected by the heart of the prayer. Through developing rules of prayer and specific goals for growth in prayer, prayers have sought to evaluate and invigorate their lives of prayer through a process of growth toward more effective ministry and relationship with God. The sociological fields have added helpful research to clarify the means of teaching and mentoring people to learn truths about how God created and developed the human mind and its capacity for relationships. These sociological foundations inform choices of the means most fruitful in effectively influencing a person to grow in spiritual directions as a lifelong pursuit. Not only does this research inform the material presented in this study but also the choice of format and the forms of experiences chosen for analysis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

People learn to pray in many ways. Some spend a substantial amount of time watching and reading about leaders in the faith as they demonstrate their public prayer lives. Some learn through trial and error by beginning with simple prayers using elementary language, developing a personal style of communication over time. The process of learning to pray is very much like learning to walk and talk. With help, a person can learn the motor skills and the dialect of walking and talking. Without much help, a person has to step out tentatively until confidence and practice achieve consistency.

When a person learns to pray using models of prayer from others, he or she tends to emulate others' prayers rather than formulating his or her own particular style of communication. When students teach themselves how to pray, they tend to limit their knowledge and practice to a few simple forms. All heartfelt and sincere communication with God is prayer, but much more is involved in being *effective* in prayer than most realize.

A biblical, historical, and psychological/sociological approach to prayer focuses on individuals' motivation to pray, their past experiences on how to pray, their personal enthusiasm generated by their progress in growth, and the amount of encouragement guided by experiential personalization that is available to them. It involves breaking out of an old paradigm of prayer that limits the forms and means, allowing people the freedom to practice a personal communication with God in ways that energize them. By

placing people in small groups for support and encouragement as they are guided through a variety of practices of prayer, one should come to understand the dynamics of a fruitful relationship with God that brings joy and increases interest and motivation for prayer.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the affective and behavioral changes that occur in the practices of prayer of forty participants, according to their temperament, from WellSpring CC and Aldersgate UMC as a result of a twelve-session small group process in various practices of prayer over a period of twelve weeks.

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

This study naturally separates into three distinct components: the small group process itself, the outcomes in the lives of those who have participated in the small group process, and the comparison of the participants' temperaments with their outcomes. The first research question compares each participant's behavior and feelings in relation to prayer prior to the small group experience with the results one month after the study to determine the increase or decrease of these measurements. An examination of the control group provided a comparison of changes that are resultant of the study process. The second research question examined the specific elements of the research design, comparing them to the measured temperament of each participant to determine how these specific temperaments rated each practice in prayer. The third research question considered possible intervening or confounding variables that were not controlled in the research design.

Research Question #1

What behavioral (consistency and variety) and affective (enjoyment) patterns characterize the participants two weeks prior to the Experiences in Prayer: Pathways to

Intimacy with God study as compared to these measures one month following the study?

The answer to this question provides an analysis of the participants' experience of prayer before the introduction of the independent variable, which for this study is the small group process of twelve sessions of experiences in practices of prayer. Without the pretest as a baseline measurements, it would be impossible to determine the effect, if any, of the small group process on the participants' affect and behavior in relation to biblical, historical, and psychological/sociological facets of prayer.

The question also provides the measurements after one month following the study. These pre- and posttest measurements determined the effectiveness of the chosen curriculum and the implemented format in changing the behavior and feelings of the participants. The posttest results for the study were compared to the posttest results from the control group to determine if any significant differences were found between the two groups.

Research Question #2

What is the correlation, if any, between the participants' Keirsey temperament and their self-evaluation of each of the experiences in this study based on three specific measures, including effectiveness, likeability, and likelihood to continue?

The prayer literature and the psychological/sociological research reviewed for this study highlight the importance of temperament, learning styles, and experiential personalization on the spiritual growth of the individual. After attempting each experience in prayer, I administered an evaluation form for each participant to record his or her responses to the experiences. These responses indicated which of these experiences were effective in helping that person experience some level of communion with God

during that week. I compared the likeability score with the likelihood score to see if these ratings correlate together. By comparing the likeability score to the Myers-Briggs temperament scores for each participant, the correlation shows us an answer to this research question.

Research Question #3

What other variables might correlate with changes in behavioral and affective growth in the participants?

Potential intervening variables in this study included gender and age. These variables were controlled by their placement on the pre- and post-study questionnaires.

Population and Participants

The population for this study consisted of active adult participants (18 years and older) who attend WellSpring CC in Prattville, Alabama, and Aldersgate UMC in Montgomery, Alabama, at the principal worship service at least three times per month.

The research population of forty people was a subset of these congregations. This sample consisted of a combination of two small groups, one on each campus and two control groups, which met only to fill out the pre- and posttests. Each participant determined to participate based on a personal invitation and a sign-up process limited to the first fifteen who responded. Both groups participated in an identical study. The material including the outlines for the study sessions, the booklets handed out, and the evaluation forms were used exactly the same ways in both groups. No possibility of exact replication between the two groups was possible, due to personality, maturity, and group dynamic issues. Nevertheless, the cognitive component and the data collection methods of both groups were identical.

Design of Study

This project was an evaluative study in the experimental mode that utilized a pretest, posttest design with a comparison group and a weekly evaluation form for each experience. The worship attendees of the WellSpring CC and Aldersgate UMC who self-selected themselves to be a part of this study and met the three-week attendance and membership requirements served as the two experimental groups. A pre-study questionnaire was given to participants two weeks prior to the first session of each small group (see Appendix A). The pre-study questionnaire provided a baseline of the participants' recent behaviors and feelings about prayer as well as their general pattern of prayer.

The post-study questionnaire retained the prayer questions in exactly the same form as presented in the pre-study questionnaire.

Weekly Session Formats

Each of the weekly small group sessions was divided into six sections. The first section, approximately fifteen minutes, was a time of welcome and ice-breaker activity. During the second section, approximately fifteen minutes, participants completed an evaluation form (see Appendix B), which enabled them to rate their responses to the experience that they had attempted. Each person received an opportunity to share the positive and negative aspects of the experience and their likelihood of adding this practice to their general pattern of prayer in the future. After the participants evaluated each experience, they shared their feelings with the group verbally. The third component, the general topic discussion section, allowed twenty minutes to discuss topics that span the larger realm of prayer. Appendix C lists the teaching plan for all twelve sessions of

the small group. Fourth, an “experience expectations” section, introduced the next experience that was going to be attempted. Following twenty minutes of lecture-style presentation of the biblical, historical, and personal foundations of the upcoming experience, were ten minutes of discussion and interaction. The fifth component was the distribution and explanation of the next experience including a booklet (see Appendix D for a sample booklet) that detailed all the expectations for completion plainly expressed. This section involved another fifteen minutes. The final section, of fifteen minutes in duration, was a time of sharing prayer concerns and modeling prayer. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the bimonthly lesson plan.

Table 3.1 Weekly Lesson Plan Overview with Time Limits

Order	Structural Element	Time Limits
1	Welcome and icebreaker	15 minutes
2	Review and analysis of previous experience	15 minutes
3	General topic discussion	20 minutes
4	Lecture and discussion of biblical, historical and personal foundation of next experience	10 minutes
4	Distribution of forms and explanation of experience with expectations	15 minutes
5	Prayer concerns expressed and modeling prayer	15 minutes

Instrumentation

Three instruments collected the data for analysis. I created a questionnaire to measure some basic information about a person’s spiritual life, his or her current spiritual practices, and his or her use of particular approaches to prayer. I also developed an

evaluation form to measure each participant's level of likeability, desiring to know whether the experience brought him or her closer to Christ and whether or not he or she would consider using this experience in the future. I also used a personality test called the Keirsey Temperament Sorter was used to determine each participant's temperament. The participants filled out the temperament questionnaire and the pretest questionnaire prior to the small group process. Each week the experimental group filled out the experience evaluation forms. One month after the small group process ended, the participants filled out the pretest again, which then became a posttest.

Keirsey Temperament Sorter

The Keirsey Temperament Sorter is made up of seventy questions that are easily scored with a provided answer sheet. Each participant did have access to the book *Please Understand Me* by Keirsey and Bates so that the use of the temperament sorter would be permitted by the publisher.

Researcher-Designed Questionnaire

The pre- and posttest questionnaire was composed of thirty questions that catalogue the affective and behavioral self-measures regarding prayer and patterns for each participant (see Appendix A). The questionnaire is composed of three sections.

Personal faith history. First is the section of personal faith history questions Q1-Q8. These questions probe the faith history of the participants by asking questions about whether they were raised in a Christian home, whether they had accepted Christ as Lord and Savior at some time, and whether or not they had been baptized. This section also asked about their level of involvement in the local church. Questions seven (Q7) and

eight (Q8) involved rating their personal relationship with God and their consistency in personal daily devotions over the past six months.

Recent personal practice of spirituality. I call Section 2 of the questionnaire the recent personal practice of spirituality section. These seven questions, Q10-Q16, allowed the participant to rate his or her involvement in general terms in areas such as spending time in prayer, reading of Scripture, involvement in small groups, family devotions, sharing his and her relationship with Christ with others, and serving others. The overall score in this area gave a strong indication of just how involved in spiritual matters each participant was at that specific point in time.

Recent experiences of prayer. The final section of the questionnaire was designed to focus attention on specific approaches to prayer that the participants had the opportunity to rate as a significant part of their prayer lives in the past two weeks. These fourteen questions, Q17-Q30, determined if any of thirteen different approaches were a significant part of the participants' lives in the past two weeks. The final question, Q30, asked the participants to rate their enjoyment of prayer in their personal lives in the past two weeks. With this question, the participants established the starting level of enjoyment and allowed comparison to the final level expressed in the posttest at the study's conclusion.

Table 3.2. Categories of Analysis and Questions Used in Each Category for Pre- and Posttest Questionnaires

Faith History	Recent Personal Practices of Spirituality	Recent Experiences of Prayer
Q1 – Q8	Q10 – Q16	Q17 - 30

Researcher-Designed Evaluation Form

After the participants worked through a seven-day routine of experiences with the various approaches to prayer, they evaluated several aspects of that experience. The evaluation cards showed three categories. The first category, likelihood and likeability, allowed participants to rate each experience on how much they enjoyed the experience and whether or not they were likely to add it to their prayer regimen in the future. The second category dealt with accountability. The participants stated how many times in the previous week they attempted the experience. The final category was a question asking the participants to rate whether or not the experience made them feel closer to God. Table 3.3 lists the categories and the questions that relate to each category.

Table 3.3 Categories of Analysis and Questions Used in Each Category for Experience Evaluation Cards

Likelihood and Likeability	Accountability	Effectiveness
<p>Is this practice something that you would like to do more often in your prayer life in the future?</p> <p>On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being “dislike” and 10 being “loved it,” how would you honestly rate this experience for you?</p> <p>Please list some things you liked about this experiment.</p> <p>Please list some things that you did not like about this experiment.</p>	<p>How many times in the last week did you attempt this practice of prayer?</p>	<p>Did this practice help you feel closer to God as some time in the last week?</p>

Face Validity

To ensure the highest possible face validity of the researcher-designed questionnaires, the research reflection team evaluated the questionnaire and evaluation

forms for this project to make sure that all the questions were appropriate and clearly understood by participants.

Variables

The independent variable of this research project was the twelve-week small group experience. Several individuals discussed and focused the content of these sessions with me prior and during the presentation of the sessions. These individuals served on a research reflection team during the entire process to evaluate and advise the content and presentation of the study material.

The three dependent variables this study measured were the participants' affective (enjoyment) and both behavioral consistency and variety responses as a result of experiencing the small group process and material. The changes resulted in comparing the pre- and posttest measures. Each participant also evaluated each experience of prayer each week of the small group study.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the outcome was dependent upon the researcher-designed instruments used for data collection. Although the questionnaire used for the pre- and posttest was simple in design with simple questions and simple answers, the differentiation between the possible answers was challenging for the participants to quantify because a measure of *significance* or *consistency* is a very subjective choice. However, the measurements do not need to be precise because the study was not measuring quantified measures as much as comparisons of variance between measures. The underlying variance is reliably measured with a choice between four simple categories.

The reliability of the evaluation card is more precise because the likeability, effectiveness, and likelihood scores are a choice between either yes or no, or, in the case of likeability, on a larger scale with a specific measure. Therefore, the validity of the evaluation form is clearly established.

Data Collection

The data was collected at three separate times throughout the study: during the initial meeting, during the twelve-week study, and at the end of the study.

Initial meeting

Each participant in the study had one personality test and one answer sheet from the Keirsey temperament sorter self-administered and self-scored prior to the beginning of the small group process. At the initial meeting of the small group study, I checked the results. All questions were answered. In addition to the temperament questionnaire, each participant completed a pretest questionnaire and returned it at the initial meeting of the small group process.

During The Small Group Meetings

During the small group meetings, except both the initial and final meetings, the experimental group took time to fill out an evaluation card for each experiment attempted. Participants finished the evaluation cards while I clarified any questions that arose during their task. Upon their receipt, I checked the cards for accuracy and completion. Table 3.4 lists the forms that existed at the end of the study for each participant in the experimental group.

Table 3.4 Form Names and Total Per Participant for Entire Study

Form Name	Total Per Participant
Keirsey Temperament Sorter answer sheet	1
Pretest questionnaire	1
Posttest questionnaire	1
Experiment evaluation forms	10
Total forms and questionnaires	13

Confidentiality

Although much of the information in this study was shared within a small group environment, the participants maintained the level of confidentiality on the issues related to their personal spiritual lives that they deemed necessary. All information turned in on the questionnaires was coded with a private identification number to ensure confidentiality. The digital files were password-protected for electronic confidentiality. I transferred all data from paper to digital form along with the help of the research reflection team to ensure that no data was exposed to other participants or to the general public.

Data Analysis

The primary statistical procedures employed in analyzing the data gathered in the pretest and posttest questionnaires and the experiment evaluation forms were t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis.

Ethical Procedures

Due to the personal nature of spiritual topics such as prayer, the ethical considerations are extremely important to avoid forcing participants into disclosing more than they are comfortably sharing and maintaining strict confidentiality through the

study. To avoid these two negative events, several procedures were put in place to control the content of data collection and remove any fears about confidentiality.

Statements of Comfortability

In the letter sent to all participants prior to the study, I clearly stated that the study would not infringe upon the participants' personal boundaries of communication and disclosure. All experiences were voluntary and all discussions were optional when expressing positive and negative responses to experiences and anything that revealed a person's personal spiritual struggles. Each week of the small group, these statements were repeated so that no obligation for anyone to report or voice anything that would embarrass or reflect on him or her in a negative light. In several experiences that required participants to step out of their comfort zones, allowances enabled anyone who struggled to participate for any reason a comfortable way out. In the study of prayer partnering, for example, some were concerned about having to pray out loud with another person. I addressed this issue openly to the entire group, relieving everyone with the assurance that vocal prayer was not required of anyone as part of this experience.

Confidentiality

Another ethical concern was the confidentiality of the data recorded during the study. All participants designed an ID number that used four digits of their choice, along with their gender letter (F or M) and the year of their birth as a unique number to delineate each person from one another. Members of the research reflection team converted data from written documents to computer to ensure that no other participants or the general public came into contact with another's personal data.

Data Collection

All the participants maintained anonymity by using a personal identification number of their choice. These numbers were not recorded anywhere so that each number is truly connected with a person only in the mind of the person. I collected the data securely in allowing the participants to place their evaluation forms into envelopes themselves. This procedure ensured that no other participant was allowed to preview the results of an individual's evaluation form. I immediately placed all pre- and posttests into a yellow envelope to ensure proper analysis.

Data Analysis

After all data was converted from paper form to computer form by the research reflection team, I did all statistical analysis on the data without disclosure to anyone about specific reports.

Data Reporting

In Chapter 4 no data reports include any names or ID numbers to ensure that the anonymity of the participants remains secure. All data was destroyed after the completion of the study for the protection of the research study participants.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the affective and behavioral changes that occur in the practices of prayer of forty participants, according to their temperament, from WellSpring CC and Aldersgate UMC as a result of a twelve-session small group process in various practices of prayer over a period of twelve weeks.

Given my pastoral experience at several churches over twenty-plus years, I was not aware of any research that clearly defined correlations between individuals' prayer lives and their personalities or how a person grew through varied experiences in prayer. I also had not found any method of mentoring people in their relationship with God through prayer that truly helped people grow closer to God. The discovery of several significant findings in this study between a person's personality and a specific prayer experience as well as positive results from pre- to posttest for a group of participants is exciting because it gives leaders and mentors hope to help them lead disciples in the area of prayer. If a small group methodology built around accountability, relationship, and experiential learning can make a difference in the behavior, and enjoyment of respondents then a pastor or mentor can help people advance in their relationship with God. This chapter provides a profile of respondents' answers and relates the research findings to the three research questions outlined in Chapter 3.

Respondent Profiles

To ensure the likelihood of every respondent's anonymity, this study limited the personal identification information to two questions. First was a seven-digit personal

identification number chosen by the respondents with four number digits, one gender digit, and four digits representing the respondents' birth years. The second piece of personal information collected was the name of the church where the respondents were actively involved. I limited the participants to adults over the age of 18 who have been actively involved, attending worship at least three times a week, at their church for at least the last six months. Of the forty people who completed the researcher-designed survey instrument, 56.5 percent (n=23) were women and 42.5 percent (n=17) were men. These adults attended two different churches including 30 percent (n= 12) active at WellSpring CC in Millbrook, Alabama, and 70 percent (n=28) active at Aldersgate UMC in Montgomery, Alabama. Table 4.1 reflects the respondents who took this survey from each church.

Table 4.1. Respondents by Gender and Church Involvement

Church Name	Total n	Total %	Males	Females
WellSpring Community Church	12	30.0	n=5 42%	n=7 58%
Aldersgate United Methodist Church	28	70.0	n=12 43%	n=16 57%
Total Sample	40	100.0	n=17 42.5%	n=23 56.5%

The questionnaire instrument asked respondents to give their birth year as part of the identification number. By dividing the respondents into age categories based on the year of their birth. Those born prior to 1944 as the GI Generation (n=14) were 35 percent , and those born between 1945 - 1963 as the Boomers (n=21) were 52.5 percent, and those born after 1964 as the Busters (n=5) were 12.5 percent. Table 4.2 reflects the age distribution of the respondents.

Table 4.2. Age Distribution of Respondents by Category

Age Distribution Categories	Total n	Total %
Before 1944 (GI Generation)	14	35.0
1945 – 1963 (Boomers)	21	52.5
1964 – 1980 (Busters)	5	12.5

With regard to respondents' relationship with God, 100 percent of the respondents reported (n=40) that they had "accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior" and "have been baptized at some point in my life." When asked, 90 percent of the respondents (n=18) reported that they have "experienced a deepening relationship with God" in the past six months. Several questions in the pretest questionnaire measured the participants church involvement. In answer to a question about whether the respondent has been involved in a local church, 100 percent (n=20) reported "yes." When asked if they would consider themselves "active" again 100 percent (n=20) reported "yes." When asked about a deeper level of involvement 60 percent (n=12) said "yes" to being a leader in the local church. Table 4.3 lists the respondents' responses to other questions, that help define their relationship with their local churches.

Table 4.3. Respondents Who Answered "True" to Questions about Church Involvement

Question	n	%
Q4 In the past two years, I have been involved in a local church:	20	100
Q5 In the past two years, I would consider myself "active" in a local church:	20	100
Q6 In the past six months, I would consider myself a "leader" in a local church:	12	60

The respondents chose to be a part of the study group and the control group by means of a general invitation given at both churches and a sign-up list that was limited to the first fifteen people who signed up. In order to represent both church populations with equal comparisons, both the study group (n=20) and the control group (n=20) had equal numbers of participants from each congregation. The number of participants in the study group at each church mirrored the number of participants in the control group from each church. Table 4.4 reflects the number of participants in each group from each church.

Table 4.4. Participants in Each Group According to Church Involvement

Church Name	Total n	Total %	Study Group	Control Group
WellSpring Community Church	12	30.0	6	6
Aldersgate United Methodist Church	28	70.0	14	14
Totals	40	100.0	20	20

Research Question #1

The first research question was, “What behavioral (consistency and variety) and affective (enjoyment) patterns characterize the participants two weeks prior to the Experiences in Prayer: Pathways to Intimacy with God study as compared to these measures one month following the study?” This section details the comparisons between the control and experimental group and within the experimental group.

The data collection for this study included two researcher-designed tools. The first, a questionnaire with three sections dealing with the spiritual history and current practices of the participants (see Appendix A) and the second an evaluation form with six

questions used to rate each prayer experience (see Appendix D). The questionnaire was used as the pre- and posttests for the experimental and control groups. The evaluation card was used only by the experimental group during the twelve-week study. The findings that relate to the effect of the small group process compare the results of the pre- and posttests for the experimental group and the control group.

The first set of findings is derived from the data taken from the questionnaire from questions in section two, which elicits input relating to the participants' recent practice of spirituality. These seven questions sought to lay a foundation of spiritual tendencies and disciplines in which a person may be involved on a regular basis.

Experimental Group Section 2 Comparisons

Each respondent was asked to rate the truth of each statement on seven questions on a four-point continuum scale. Three significant changes emerged through the paired t-test comparisons. First, the responses to question ten regarding time to pray regularly showed significant change from the pretest to posttest ($n=20$; $t=2.44$). Second, question eleven regarding consistency in reading Scripture showed significant changes from pretest to posttest ($n=20$; $t=2.31$). Finally, question twelve dealing with attendance at small groups also showed significant increases from the pretest to posttest ($n=20$; $t=2.31$). Table 4.5 details the significant findings when comparing the pre- and posttest data on the three questions in section two of the survey instrument. The t-test results do not satisfy the $p<.01$ level, but the results are considered significant at the $p<.05$ level, which is the standard for educational, sociological, anthropological, and related research.

Table 4.5. Significant Findings in Section 2 of the Questionnaire

Question	n	Mean Pretest	SD Pretest	Mean Posttest	SD Posttest	t two-tailed
Q10 In the past two weeks, I have attempted to designate a time to pray regularly:	20	2.53	.90	3.27	.70	2.44
Q11 In the past two weeks, I have attempted to be consistent in my reading of Scripture:	20	2.60	.99	3.27	.70	2.32
Q13 In the past two weeks, I have attempted to be consistently involved in a small group, prayer meeting, or leadership team for nurture and support of my spiritual life:	20	3.05	1.10	3.68	.75	2.31

Table 4.5 shows not only a significant increase in the mean scores but also a decrease in the standard deviation scores. This variance shows that the respondents answers were moving toward a centralized point around the mean, which gives more credence to the measurement.

Experimental Group Section 3 Comparisons

In the third section of the questionnaire, thirteen questions deal with current practices of prayer carried out over the past two weeks prior to the survey. Each respondent was asked to rate the truth of each statement on a four-point continuum. Five significant findings emerged in comparisons of the pre- and posttest data in this section. From section three of the questionnaire, several significant findings appear. *Lectio divina* and The Jesus prayer scores rose a very significant amount from pre- to posttest respectively (n=20; t=3.28; p<.01) and (n=20; t=3.19; p<.01). Naturalist prayer, Visualization prayer, and Acts of service increased significantly also (n=20; t=2.57),

($n=20$; $t=2.75$), and ($n=20$; $t=2.34$). Table 4.6 lists the significant findings and the questions that correlate with them.

Table 4.6. Significant Findings in Section 3 of the Questionnaire

Question	n	Pretest	SD Pretest	Posttest	SD Posttest	t stat
Q17 In the past two weeks, <i>Lectio divina</i> has played a significant part in my personal prayer life:	20	1.42	.75	2.05	.89	3.28*
Q19 In the past two weeks, nature as a means of meditation has played a significant part in my personal prayer life:	20	1.68	.82	2.35	.99	2.57
Q22 In the past two weeks, visualization has played a significant part in my personal prayer life:	20	1.67	.91	2.33	1.10	2.75
Q23 In the past two weeks, the Jesus Prayer has played a significant part in my personal prayer life:	20	1.57	.93	2.48	.87	3.19*
Q26 In the past two weeks, acts of service have played a significant part of my personal prayer life:	20	2.67	1.0	3.24	.77	2.34

*Significant at $p<.01$ level. Others significant at $p<.05$ level.

Experimental and Control Group Comparisons

In order to compare the results of the pre- and posttest responses based on the three measures highlighted in research question #1, consistency, variety, and enjoyment, some of the responses on the researcher-designed questionnaire were pooled together to form three new subgroups of responses.

Consistency subgroup. First, questions eight and ten through fourteen were

combined into a subcategory called *consistency* because the word *consistent* or *regularly* is included in each of these particular questions. I added the total score for each question, which means giving the four answers available a numeric score from one to four and adding the totals together for a grand total score. The possible range of total scores for this subcategory is from six to twenty-five.

Variety subgroup. Second, I combined the results in questions seventeen through twenty-nine by noting the frequency of answers other than “not true,” meaning that these approaches to prayer were being employed to some degree at the time the person filled out the questionnaire. I tallied the frequency score for these thirteen questions, calling the score of this subcategory *variety*. The range of responses for this subcategory was zero to thirteen.

Enjoyment subgroup. Third, I tallied responses to question thirty as a subcategory that asked the respondents to rate how much they have *enjoyed* their personal prayer life in the past two weeks, and I called this subcategory *enjoyment*. The range of this response was from one to four. Table 4.7 lists the three main categories for analysis with questions and ranges.

Table 4.7. Three Subcategories with Questions and Range

Category	Questions	Range
Consistency	Q8, Q10–14	6-25
Variety	Q17–29	0-13
Enjoyment	Q30	1-4

With these three subgroups of responses, I compared the pre- and posttest data for

the control and experimental group to determine what changes, if any, occurred due to the study in these three areas. An ANOVA, or analysis of variance, is an efficient way to deal with two sets of independent variables and three sets of dependent variables all at the same time. I ran a 2x3 ANOVA on the comparison of the control group to the experimental group on the three subcategories of data.

The ANOVA discovered an interaction between dependent variables for the control group and the experimental group in the variety score ($f= 13.30$; $p<.01$). Table 4.8 lists the results from the ANOVA on the comparison of the pre- and posttest results for the control group and experimental group on each of the three subcategories.

Table 4.8. 2 x 3 ANOVA Results of Control and Experimental Group Results over Three Subcategories.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Posttest consistency	between groups	32.237	1	32.237	2.074	.158
	within groups	559.474	36	15.541		
	Total	591.711	37			
Posttest variety	between groups	79.605	1	79.605	13.300	.001
	within groups	215.474	36	5.985		
	Total	295.079	37			
Posttest enjoyment	between groups	1.684	1	1.684	2.050	.161
	within groups	29.579	36	.822		
	Total	31.263	37			

Correlation analysis further clarifies the results of this analysis by pointing to a significant relationship between the consistency scores on the posttest and the enjoyment scores on the posttest ($r=.75$; $n=38$). This result demonstrates that as a person is more

consistent in his or her practice of approaches to prayer, his or her enjoyment level will increase. The alternate statement is also confirmed, stating that as a person is less consistent in his or her practice of prayer approaches, his or her enjoyment score decreases.

The ANOVA and correlation analysis did not find statistically significant connections between the consistency score and variety score or between the variety score and the enjoyment score. One can infer from this lack of finding that the number of prayer experiences one practices has no significant relationship to the consistency or enjoyment score.

Pre- and posttest average changes for control and experimental groups. The control group filled out the same questionnaire as the experimental group. The comparisons of pretest and posttest for this group set the baseline expectations for changes in the study group. In the control group results, I noticed no significant changes in means between the two responses for each question, but I discovered a slight increase in the responses from pretest to posttest. The average response from the pretest (n=20; m= 2.45) compared to the posttest (n=20; m=2.67) increase was .22 (7.5 percent increase) for all responses to the questionnaires. At the same time, the average response increase for the experimental group from pretest (n=20; m=2.37) to the posttest (n=20; m=2.78) was .41 (14.4 percent increase) over all responses. Therefore, the expectation would be that in general from pre- to posttest a 7.5 percent increase would be measured without a treatment event and that the differences between this result for the experimental group was due to some interaction or treatment between the pre- and posttest.

Research Question #2

In question two the issue moves from affective and behavioral responses on the pre- and posttest to an analysis of the evaluation forms and the temperament scores for each respondent.

Individual Personality Temperaments

Given the complexity of humanity, the second research question was the most difficult to quantify for analysis. The research question I hope to clarify asked, “What is the correlation, if any, between the participants’ Myers-Briggs temperament and their self-evaluation of each of the experiences in this study?” The purpose of this question was to determine if personalizing and particularizing prayer experiences can enhance the prayer life of individuals and encourage more prayer time in their personal prayer lives. I developed an assessment card made up of six questions to encourage the participants to evaluate their experience after they had a week to practice the prayer experience (see Appendix D). At the first session of the study, each participant filled out the Keirsey Temperament Sorter and scored the results along with my support and clarification. Each participant became aware of his or her two-digit Keirsey temperament score (NF, SJ, NT, and SP) that would be used to compare his or her evaluations of each of the experiences. The participants in the small groups were made up of the four temperaments including 25 percent rated themselves as NF temperament, 60 percent rated themselves as SJ temperaments, 5 percent rated themselves as NT temperaments, and 10 percent rated themselves as SP temperament. Of the respondents in the experimental group (n=20), Table 4.9 details the total temperaments represented in this study.

Table 4.9. Participants' Keirsey Temperament Scores (n=20)

Myers-Briggs Temperaments	Total n	Total %
NF	5	25
SJ	12	60
NT	1	5
SP	2	10

Because so few temperaments emerged in the NT and SP temperament category, making any significant findings for these temperaments is not possible. Their answers were included in the overall calculations for the means for each experience, but their particular correlations were not tabulated.

Likeability score. Of the six questions that respondents answered on the evaluation form for each prayer experience, question number four (known as E4 from this point forward) provided the clearest measure of the participants' likeability of the experience. This question stated, "On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being 'dislike' and 10 being 'loved it,' how would you honestly rate this experience for you?" This question was designed as a self-selection on a ten-point Likert Scale from zero to ten in increments of one. By comparing the answers to this question using a two-tailed t-test to measure the significant difference between the means of the particular Keirsey temperaments from the overall mean for all respondents on that experience, I found two significant correlations for the NF and SJ temperaments.

SJ temperament finding. First, in the area of visualization prayer, the SJ temperament varied significantly ($n=12$; $t=2.4$; $p<.05$) with a mean of 8.20 ($SD=1.06$) from the overall mean for this experience of 7.47 ($SD=1.90$). This finding is interesting due to the preconceived idea that SJ temperaments typically appreciate concrete facts and

tend to struggle to allow imagination and visualization to be productive experiences for them.

NF temperament finding. Second, in the area of journaling, the NF temperament varied significantly ($n=5$; $t=3.47$; $p<.05$) with a mean of 8.4 ($SD=1.52$) compared to the overall mean for this experience of 6.2 ($SD=2.76$). This finding is not surprising in that NFs in general show a propensity toward expressing their feelings in writing and in reflection.

Effectiveness, Likelihood, and Likeability

Another deduction from the evaluation forms for each experience was to understand which experiences, if any, the overall study group liked and found effective in bringing them closer to God. I drew my conclusions by examining the participants' self-reports of the likelihood that they would engage in the specific experiences more often in their future prayer lives.

Likelihood question. Question E2 stated, "Is this practice something that you would like to do more often in your prayer life in the future?" Each respondent had a choice of "definitely, maybe, or no." I scored this question by assigning all of the "no" responses a score of 1, the "maybe" responses a score of 2, and the "definitely" answers a score of 3.

Effectiveness question. Question E3 asked, "Did this practice help you feel closer to God at some time in the last week?" The three answer possibilities for this question were "definitely," "somewhat," or "not at all." I scored this question by giving a "not at all" check mark a score of 1, the "somewhat" check mark a score of 2, and the "definitely" check mark a score of 3.

Likeability question. As mentioned above, the likeability score comes from question E4 and is a measure on a ten-point scale rating the overall experience for the respondents.

These three questions help answer research question #2 in that it points to whether likeability and effectiveness will lead toward likelihood of applying this approach to prayer in the future. One of the major goals of this study was to determine how particularization along personality can add significantly to a person's future prayer life and experience. To determine the overall ranking of the experiences in prayer in this study, I added the total ranks of likeability score, likelihood score, and effectiveness score to form a total ranking score. The lower the score the higher the rankings overall. Intercessory prayer received the highest ranking with prayer partners second, and visualization prayer third highest. Contemplative prayer and Liturgical prayer received the lowest rankings. Table 4.10 lists the particular experiences, with their E4 overall means and standard deviation, the percentage that chose "definitely" in E2 along with a ranking, and the effectiveness score with their ranking from one to ten, highest to lowest.

Table 4.10. 3 x 10 Matrix of Each Experience with (1) Likeability Mean, SD, and Rank Score; (2) Percent Who Selected "Definitely" on Likelihood with Rank Score; And, (3) Effectiveness Mean and Rank Score

Experience of Prayer	n	Likeability Mean (rank)	SD	Likelihood "Definitely" % (rank)	Effectiveness Mean (rank)	Total Rank Score
<i>Lectio divina</i>	18	7.44 (3)	2.20	.56 (7)	2.54 (4)	14
Liturgical prayer	18	4.84 (9)	2.67	.28 (9)	2.42 (6)	24
Naturalist prayer	19	7.42 (4)	2.71	.53 (8)	2.53 (5)	17
Journaling	20	6.05 (8)	2.77	.60 (5)	2.38 (8)	20
Prayer walking	20	6.62 (7)	2.33	.60 (4)	2.33 (9)	20
Visualization prayer	18	7.39 (5)	1.91	.56 (6)	2.79 (2)	13

Jesus prayer	16	6.88 (6)	3.37	.63 (3)	2.40 (7)	16
Prayer partners	19	8.32 (2)	2.81	.84 (2)	2.68 (3)	7
Contemplative prayer	17	3.77(10)	2.59	.18 (10)	1.76 (10)	30
Intercessory prayer	16	8.93 (1)	1.07	.88 (1)	2.80 (1)	3

Correlation analysis. In addition to perceiving the measurements of likeability, effectiveness, and likelihood, I did a correlation analysis of the three variables on each evaluation card for each experience to determine any direct correlation between the three variables. In almost every case, a significant correlation between effectiveness and likelihood and between likeability and likelihood. If .70 is a significant level of correlation for social science studies, then the average correlation coefficient for interaction between effectiveness and likelihood was $r=.703$. The average correlation coefficient for interaction between likeability and likelihood was $r=.81$ for all evaluation cards ($n=200$). Even though the interaction between effectiveness and likeability did not reach the .70 threshold, it did average $r=.63$. Table 4.11 lists the correlation information for the comparison of the three variables.

Table 4.11. Correlation Coefficients for Effectiveness, Likeability, and Likelihood

Subcategories	Effectiveness	Likeability	Likelihood
Effectiveness	1.0		
Likeability	.626606	1.0	
Likelihood	.702821*	.805071*	1.0

* Greater than the .70 expectancy for significance

Most liked experiences. By adding the ranking numbers and ordering the experiences in prayer from lowest to highest ranking, Table 4.12 emerges as a list of most

highly “liked” prayer experiences.

Table 4.12. Prayer Experience from Highest Ranked (Most Liked) to Lowest (Least Liked)

Prayer Experience	Ranking
Intercessory prayer	1
Prayer partners	2
Visualization prayer	3
<i>Lectio divina</i>	4
Jesus prayer	5
Naturalist prayer	6
Prayer walking	7
Journaling	8
Liturgical prayer	9
Contemplative prayer	10

This matrix is helpful because it allows people who are assisting others in their prayer discipleship to lean toward the highest-ranked prayer approaches first and toward the lower ranked approaches as a person matures in his or her spiritual life. Finding that the Jesus prayer and visualization prayer were so highly ranked is surprising because I considered these approaches to prayer outside the mainstream for most people.

Research Question #3

The final research question deals with issues that could have contributed to the changes in the respondents’ answers outside of the study itself. The third research question is, “What other variables might correlate with changes in behavioral and affective growth in the participants?” Two main variables isolated in this study are considered: gender and age.

Gender

The gender factor revealed interesting results throughout this study.

Overall means comparisons. The females who participated in the study group (n=11) tended to rate their experiences on the likeability score (E4) higher than their male counterparts (n=9). The average mean for the ten prayer experiences was 6.942, while the male's average mean for the same experiences was 6.313. These means are not significantly different, but they bear examination in future research issues. The fact that men did score higher than women on some experiences is interesting. Table 4.13 lists the three times the mean score for the males was higher than the female's mean score.

An ANOVA examining the mean values for men and women compared over each prayer experience resulted in a highly significant interaction ($f=9.36$; $df=9$; $p<.01$).

Table 4.13. Mean Scores for the Prayer Experiences Where Men Scored Higher than Women

Prayer Experiences	Men's Mean (n=9)	Women's Mean (n=11)
Visualization prayer	7.56	7.22
Prayer partnering	8.56	8.10
Contemplative prayer	3.89	3.63

A further correlation analysis revealed a strong correlation between men and women ($r=.81$), demonstrating that the gender factor is an important internal variable when analyzing the changes that resulted from the treatment. Table 4.14 lists the means for all ten experiences for men and women.

Table 4.14. Mean for Likeability Scores on Each Experience in Prayer for Men and Women.

Prayer Experience	Women	Men
<i>Lectio divina</i>	7.2	6.3
Liturgical prayer	5.3	4.0
Naturalist prayer	8.2	6.4
Journaling	7.5	4.8
Prayer walking	7.0	6.5
Visualization prayer	7.4	7.6
Jesus prayer	7.6	6.0
Prayer partnering	8.1	8.7
Contemplative prayer	3.6	3.9
Intercessory prayer	9.3	8.7

Journaling mean comparison. Regarding journaling, women scored significantly higher than men ($t=2.58$; $p<.05$). This result is not surprising based on the preconceived idea that women express themselves more often in writing than do most men.

Age

The age factor was another interesting component throughout this study.

Overall means compared. As part of the questionnaire direction, each participant gave his or her birth year as a part of his or her ID number. With this data, we can compare how respondents evaluated the experiences on the evaluation forms by age. In order to put some form of clarification on this data, the age groupings detailed in Table 4.2 (p. 102) are examined to see if the GI Generation has any differences with the Baby Boomers and Generation X.

An ANOVA analysis comparing the three age groupings with the means of the

ten prayer experiences on the likeability score for each participant revealed a highly significant interaction among the three groups ($f= 4.51$; $df=9$; $p<.01$). Correlation analysis reveals a strong connection between group 1 (oldest grouping) and group 3 (youngest grouping) that is lower than the standard for significance ($r=.70$) but very close ($r=.68$). This result is surprising because those two groups would be expected to have very different responses to the likeability on these experiences. Table 4.15 lists each experience and the mean score for each age category.

Further correlation analysis comparing each of the means of each prayer experience revealed some very interesting correlations between experiences. Both positive correlations and negative correlations emerge from the analysis of the data.

Table 4.15. Each Experience in Prayer with the Mean on the Likeability Score by Each Age Category

Prayer Experience	GI Generation	Boomers	Busters
<i>Lectio divina</i>	6.63	8.00	5.00
Liturgical prayer	5.57	3.00	5.40
Naturalist prayer	6.57	8.43	7.20
Journaling	5.25	6.25	7.80
Prayer walking	7.13	8.00	4.20
Visualization prayer	8.14	6.29	8.20
Jesus prayer	6.62	8.00	5.25
Prayer partnering	8.83	7.50	9.00
Contemplative prayer	5.00	3.67	1.75
Intercessory prayer	8.86	9.20	9.00

Correlations by experience and age. The correlation analysis points to a connection between eight experiences in prayer. The correlations would mean that

persons in the age category that chose to score one experience in a positive or negative way would be similarly expected to score another experience that is correlated to that first in the same way. In other words, the score on one experience varies directly as a response on another experience.

Age group rankings. Another way to view this data and place concrete insight in the area of age and likeability of these experiences is to rank the experiences for each age category. The data revealed how each age group scored the specific experience. Table 4.16 ranks the top four experiences for each age category.

Table 4.16. The Top Four Ranked Scores for Likeability for Each Age Category

Age Category	Experiences
GI Generation	Intercessory Prayer partnering Visualization Prayer walking
Boomers	Intercessory Naturalist prayer <i>Lectio divina</i> Prayer walking Jesus prayer
Gen Xers	Intercessory Prayer partnering Visualization Journaling

Summary of Major Findings

The following summation focuses primarily on the statistically significant findings in this study. For the purposes of review, as well as further synthesis in the final chapter of this dissertation, the following summary collects the research findings into three broad categories based on the two main research tools used in this study and the other variables.

Pre- and Posttest Questionnaires

1. A 2x3 ANOVA comparing the control and experimental groups based on the means of the consistency grouping, variety grouping, and enjoyment grouping revealed a significant interaction between groups.

2. Section 2 pre- and posttest results showed a significant change in the questions relating to praying regularly, consistently reading Scriptures, and being consistently involved in a small group.

3. Section 3 analysis revealed a significant increase for the pre- and posttest for the experimental group in the areas of *Lectio divina*, naturalist prayer, visualization prayer, Jesus prayer, and acts of service.

Experience Evaluation Cards

1. The SJ temperament scored significantly higher than the overall mean for the study of visualization prayer, and the NF temperament scored significantly higher than the overall mean for the study of journaling.

2. A significant correlation was present between effectiveness scores and likelihood scores and between likeability score and likelihood scores.

Other Variables Findings

1. Women scored higher on seven of ten scores on E4 and significantly higher on Journaling likeability score.

2. The ANOVA and correlation analysis revealed a highly significant interaction among the three age groupings and their answers on the likeability score for each experience with the correlations among experiences showing significant differences when age is used as an independent variable.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This study was initially fueled by comments and concerns shared with me about the lack of enjoyment and satisfaction expressed by my parishioners in view of their prayer lives. The final chapter of this dissertation discusses the major findings with some explanation and opinion from my years of experience and informed research on these topics. Following a discussion of the major findings, the study responds to each research question with a succinct research answer, outlines the limitations of the study, offers implications of the findings and practical applications, as well as provides contributions to research methodologies. Finally, it offers a number of suggestions for further research.

Major Findings

Examining the correlation between consistency, variety, and enjoyment, the changes in spiritual practices, along with the specific prayer practices where significant changes occurred will complete the analysis of the pre- and posttest questionnaire findings. How people with certain Keirseley temperaments responded to specific experiences and the strong correlation between effectiveness, likeability, and likelihood will conclude the analysis of the experience evaluation cards. Examining the effect of gender and age on the research finalizes the explanation of the major findings of my study.

Consistency, Variety, and Enjoyment Interactions

The 2 x 3 ANOVA statistical test used to compare the control group and the experimental group in comparison with the consistency score, the variety score and the enjoyment score showed a significant interaction between variety scores and between the

different groups. This result provides compelling insight into the basis for this entire study in that the goal for the study was to introduce variety in order to connect people with a prayer approach that gives them more effectiveness and enjoyment and leads to greater consistency in prayer as a whole.

The results indicate that a small group process based on accountability, discussion, and experiential exposure to new prayer approaches can increase an individual's future use of a variety of prayer approaches. The positive correlation is an exciting result for pastors and Christian educators who are seeking answers for moving people into a more consistent and enjoyable prayer life.

Changes in Spiritual Practice

In the area of overall spiritual practice, I found it surprising that the pretest and posttest comparisons from the experimental group showed a statistically significant change in the areas of (1) setting aside time to pray regularly, (2) reading of Scripture consistently, and (3) participating in small groups consistently. Due to the higher level of spiritual maturity, in my opinion, for the respondents in the experimental group, I was not expecting to see much improvement in general areas such as these. However, based upon the focal points of the study, I was excited to see that the participants acted upon the momentum of the study to grow in these areas.

Setting aside time to pray regularly. In the twelve-week study, the group discussed the importance of making prayer time a regular and urgent priority. The classic writings of men and women such as Bounds, Teresa of Avila, and Brother Lawrence call all generations to plead in earnest prayer in a regular and specific pattern. The priority to discipline oneself became a mantra during the study as an essential component of our

relationship with God. Prayer is not an alternative or additive in the spiritual progression toward sanctification; it is the core of all piety and holiness. Therefore, the result was not surprising that the experimental group showed significant positive changes ($n=20$; $t=2.44$; $p<.05$) in this area. Pastors and mentors should realize that challenging people to set higher personal standards and to reach further spiritually can have a positive effect on their lives holistically.

Reading of Scripture consistently. Even though the reading of Scripture was not the specific focus of the study, the use of Scripture throughout in both the small group sessions as well as in the weekly homework sessions encouraged the participants to regard Scripture with a higher level of respect, authority, and devotional sensitivity. The research showed a significant increase in their consistency in the reading of Scripture following the study than prior ($n=20$; $t=2.54$; $p<.05$). The reading of Scripture was a major component of the *lectio divina* section because the act itself is the meditative reading and contemplation of Scripture, letting the Spirit speak “through the text” to the heart. The liturgical prayer section spent time with a strong emphasis on the reading of the book of Psalms as the guideline for prayer. Every week at each daily prayer session in the weekly guide booklets, a Scripture reference was included for the purpose of preparing the heart and opening the soul to God in prayer. I wanted to make sure that this study and all activities tied together the depth of wisdom of God’s revealed truth with the powerful presence of God’s Holy Spirit, so that Scripture remained a key component of this study.

Participating in small groups consistently. The posttest results showed a clear significance in the area of consistent small group participation after the study compared

to the pretest results ($n=20$; $t=2.31$; $p<.05$). The small group process employed by the study was designed to maximize the relationship building among the participants while encouraging open discussion about very personal spiritual struggles in prayer. The evaluation cards that were filled out each week held a measure of accountability for all those involved. I was concerned prior to the study that the participants would become concerned about the evaluation cards and might even resent the time spent filling them out each night of the small group. However, three positive factors emerged surrounding these cards that added to the interest in the people being a part of a small group. First, these cards required people to account honestly for their commitment to the weekly prayer experience by asking them to report how many times the experience had been practiced the prior week. This level of accountability was substantial in maintaining group involvement. Second, the evaluation card made people feel as if their input was essential in the overall focus of the study. Cooperation is the second element in the small group success. Third, the evaluation card gave people an opportunity to write down the positive and negatives about each prayer experience. This provision allowed them a few moments prior to the open discussion to rehearse and refine their thoughts. Such advance preparation made the group discussions very profitable for everyone because people had real insights that were well thought-out and communicated. The small group was the conduit to encourage the cognitive component of this study as well as the affective component of relationships and openness to exploration.

Specific Changes in Experiential Prayer Practices

The study revealed that five of the ten approaches to prayer showed significant increases from the pre- to the posttest results for the experimental group. The approaches

were *lectio divina*, naturalist prayer, visualization prayer, the Jesus prayer, and acts of service.

Lectio divina. Even though *lectio divina* has a long history within the traditions of Christendom, the result was surprising in that most in the modern church who participated in this study had a very limited knowledge and appreciation for this approach to prayer. The highly significant increase from the pre- to posttest results ($n=20$; $t=3.28$; $p<.01$) in connection with this prayer experience lend backing to what was expected to be an effective tool at connecting people to Scripture and to God through Scripture meditation and contemplation.

Naturalist prayer. To see and experience the wonder and majesty of God through an interaction with the natural world turned out to be a refreshing experience for most in the study group. The fact that the increase from pre- to posttest was significant ($n=20$; $t=2.5$; $p<.05$) was not surprising based on the discussions that the group enjoyed following this experience. The group took special care to avoid worshipping the created order by focusing upon Scriptures that herald the Creator rather than centering on the creation.

Visualization prayer. This study revealed a significant increase from pre- to posttest results for the experimental group ($n=20$; $t=2.75$; $p<.05$) in the area of visualization prayer. The use of the imagination in prayer and spirituality has been pushed aside by rationalism in the modern world only to the detriment of a major part of the human psychology. In visualization prayer, participants were encouraged to use the visualization of their imaginations to focus upon an image of those who were needing prayer while they were praying as a means to identify and focus their attentions. They

also used visualization to communicate with Christ personally on issues that were sensitive and painful. Imagination is effective at releasing tension and expressing true feeling as people see with their inner eye the Lord with his hands and heart reached out to them. Many had never tried this technique on a regular basis and found it to be an avenue worth discovering. Visualization must always remain focused and not stray toward emptiness. By always placing Scripture at the center of the focus that opens the mind to God and to the needs of others, this danger is avoided.

The Jesus prayer. The Jesus prayer is an ancient practice that focuses the mind on Christ and centers the heart in order to hear from God in prayer. The results of the respondents increased by a highly significant amount from the pre- to posttest for the experimental group ($n=20$; $t=3.19$; $p<.01$). The discussion fostered by this particular experience in prayer was the most substantial of all the prayer experiences. Despite the large expanse of information in the religious community regarding using a set phrase for centering prayer, the community that participated in this study was largely unaware of the usage and possibilities of this approach to prayer. The most common question from all the participants in this study was about how to stay focused during prayer and not losing concentration and connection through distractions. The Jesus prayer was a welcomed answer to this most challenging concern by employing the phrase whenever a person wandered away from the prayer connection. The repetition drew participants back to God and to their dependence upon God's grace for restoration and holiness.

Acts of service. A theme that resonated throughout the study material was the idea that effective prayer maintains a balance. A tri-fold balance must exist between one's personal petitions, the immediate needs of others, and humanity's broad-based

burden to reach the world for Jesus Christ. Each of the weekly prayer sessions was designed to balance a person's prayer time on personal needs, moving him or her to consider the needs of others as well. Especially built into the methodology of prayer walking, intercessory prayer, and prayer partnering is the idea that prayer is the ultimate act of service for others. The realization that a person can provide essential help for another's specific needs through lifting him or her before the throne of God encourages further prayer.

Significant Differences between Temperaments and Prayer Experiences

One of the goals of this study was to consider constructing a matrix of prayer experiences that would correlate with a person's Keirse temperament in order to inform and guide prayer mentors in directing people to effective means of prayer that would add consistency and enjoyment to prayer. This study revealed two significant findings that could be added to this matrix.

NF temperaments and journaling. The study revealed an interesting finding in that the NF temperaments who participated in this study were significantly higher than the mean for the overall experience (mean=8.4; n=5; t=3.47; p<.01) compared to the overall mean for all participants (mean=6.0). Other researchers doing studies on personality and prayer have pointed out that the NF temperament enjoys journaling as a means of connecting the visionary nature with the stability of the real world in writing.

SJ temperaments and visualization. The most surprising finding in the area of temperament was the result regarding visualization prayer that showed a significant difference between the overall mean (mean=7.4) and the mean score for the SJ temperament (mean=8.2). My normal assessment for the SJ temperament tends toward a

person who is highly grounded in reality with facts, details, and structure. However, this finding reveals a person who expressed a high level of enjoyment with imagination and the inner world. People who explore personality temperaments should keep from forcing individuals into too strict molds. Prayer is possibly an alternative balance to a life in the depths of details and may provide refreshing outside the norm for those with the SJ temperament.

Correlations between Effectiveness, Likeability, and Likelihood

Three subcategories of questions were pooled together to form three scores that were compared using correlation analysis to see if any of the three were correlated. The analysis revealed that for each experience a strong correlation existed overall between the effectiveness score and the likelihood score, and the likeability score and the likelihood score.

Effectiveness and likelihood. The first correlation that emerged in the study was the average correlation between effectiveness and likelihood ($r=.70$) over all ten experiences. Effectiveness means that the participant believes the experience brought him or her closer to God. The likelihood score states the level of possibility the person plans to continue this experience in the future. This correlation points out the simple truth that when one thinks that a prayer experience is effective at connecting him or her with God, he or she will be more likely to continue to do that experience. If one feels that the experience did not connect him or her with God, he or she will not likely continue the particular prayer experience in the future.

This correlation is significant in this study for three reasons. First, as a basis for this study, I speculated that if I could find experiences that would connect people with

God more effectively, these experiences would be adopted and added to a repertoire of experiences already being employed. The goal was not necessarily to increase variety for variety's sake but to find the right variety of approaches that led to a heightened effectiveness in a person's relationship with God. Second, these more effective approaches can be used in times of dryness or lethargy to spice up or restart a prayer pattern. Employing a variety of prayer approaches provides options for exploration, deepening, and refreshing when the challenge of deadness appears. Third, the strongest correlations were when the negative is true. In other words, when one reported that a specific prayer experience was not effective, a strong correlation emerged with a negative likelihood of putting that prayer experience in practice in the future. This finding underlines the essential component of a personal connection with God and leads pastors and Christian educators to seek approaches that connect people in personal ways with God.

Likeability and likelihood. The strongest overall correlation was between the likeability score and the likelihood score ($r=.81$) over all ten experiences. Just as was found in the previous correlation, the more one reported to have liked the experience, the more likely he or she will employ that experience in a future prayer life. The opposite is also true: the more one disliked the prayer experience, the more unlikely he or she is to put it into future practice.

Other Variables in Experiences in Prayer Results

The last grouping of findings deals with other variables that could elicit the changes reported in this study. The study revealed variables that had significant effect on the changes that resulted from the treatment.

Gender

The first variable that impinges on the outcomes for this study is gender. There are both general gender differences and one specific gender-related outcome.

General gender differences. The research indicates a specific difference between men and women and their expressions of measures of likeability. The results showed that women are more positive in their likeability of experiences. The strong correlation between the gender scores as a whole lends defense to the idea that men and women do experience spiritual things differently.

Women and journaling. Another finding in this study related to gender is the significant difference between men and women on the likeability of journaling ($t= 2.58$; $p<.05$). Traditionally, journaling is something stressed for women as a means of expressing their emotions to God. I know that as I approached this week in the study, most of the men began to complain and make excuses while the women testified to the power and beauty of learning from experience over time. Even though pastors and leaders who guide people in prayer may succumb to the pressure to ignore men in the area of journaling, I raise the challenge to assert journaling as an approach to prayer that can open their eyes and hearts to God over time. Men can learn this discipline along with others, and many will find a treasure of new insights and inspiration from giving this time and effort to their spiritual nourishment.

Age

Another variable that affects the results of this study is age. Due to the fact that the participants used their birth year as part of the identification number, the age variable can be used as an analysis tool. There are general age differences as well as specific

correlations that deal with the age category.

General age differences. After grouping the respondents into three groups according to their birth year (GI Generation, Boomers, and Gen Xers), the evaluation form results can be compared to the likeability scores for each age group. An interesting trend developed that went counter to prior expectations. The oldest grouping (G I Generation) and the youngest grouping (Gen Xers) began to track along the same corresponding means. Correlation analysis determined that a strong correlation existed between these two groups ($r=.68$) even though the correlation does not exceed the necessary standard of $r=.70$. Further investigation uncovered the fact that the middle group (Boomers) showed the strongest responses to each experience both positive and negative. For five of the ten experiences, the Boomers age category had the highest likeability ratings. For two other times the Boomers represented the lowest score for likeability on experiences.

I entered this study with a preconceived idea that the older group would prefer the more traditional approaches to prayer and the younger group would lean more toward the more progressive and modern approaches. In actuality, these realities did not prove true in this study. The age factor does play an important role in analysis, but not in stereotyping generations into spiritual boxes. Pastors and mentors must take care to personalize their expectations rather than forcing people into preconceived ideas about what specific age groups would or would not like. For example, to expect the older generations automatically to think more traditionally and therefore not be interested in modern developments of spiritual growth limits the pastors' and mentors' abilities to allow people to discover their own personal approach to spiritual development.

Correlations and age categories. Correlation analysis discovered some relationships between how different age groups responded on the likeability score for each experience in prayer. The correlations were strong connections in both negative and positive coefficients. The analysis established twenty-three relationships between the means in each of the ten approaches to prayer, fifteen of them in the negative. The correlation indicates that as one age group responded positively on one experience, it responded just as negatively on another experience and vice versa (see Table 4.12, p. 120 for a listing of the ranked order for each age category).

Implications of the Findings

The implications of this study will likely become increasingly pertinent to the practice of ministry as the postmodern cultural era continues to emerge. More and more a lack of training in basic spirituality and prayer in general exists, yet the need for both may never have been greater than it is now in an increasingly truth-hostile world. For those particularly in the pastoral and Christian education leadership roles who have the overwhelming responsibility of discipling people from vast different spiritual foundations, I offer two applications. These can be most useful in guiding people into a deeper, more satisfying prayer relationship with God.

Small Group Model

For the first application, leaders should recognize that the use of the small group model in Christian education can have a considerable effect on the spiritual development of disciplines and spiritual growth. For years, the trend has been toward using small group methodologies as relational or cognitive vehicles to effect changes, but this model also has noteworthy possibilities in training believers to be more effective disciples

through prayer. The leader does not need to be afraid to impose a higher than usual level of accountability upon the group members involved because accountability facilitates real effort and motivates positive change. As mentioned in Chapter 2, from the Celtic movement through the Wesley awakening and into the modern strategy for discipleship, the small group remains as a powerful deployment strategy for spiritual experience and community development. The essential revelation of this small group approach was a key finding in this study.

The small group model is ideal for another reason as well. The participants in a study of this nature are encouraged to share at a deeper level on personal spiritual issues, which requires them to develop a deeper level of trust and camaraderie with the other participants. A high-commitment small group environment where relationship is fostered while sharing is modeled and rewarded leads the group to a deeper overall level of communication with each other. This unity of purpose and trust is essential for the group to deal with and take seriously the growth potential of this type of study. The environment for learning is as important as the content, especially when challenging persons in spiritual experiences.

Focusing on Likeability and Effectiveness through Personalization

For the second application, this study encourages people to connect with God on a personalized level both through using their own personal experience and according to their God-given personality traits. Helping people find their personality temperament and connecting them with particular approaches to prayer was found to open people up to new and exciting opportunities in spiritual growth. Testing each person's openness to growth by exposing each to various experiences and then allowing each to determine the

likeability and effectiveness of each experience was a positive experience. Rather than focusing on traditions, the leader or mentor can focus on the person being guided through the spiritual pursuits.

Limitations of the Study

Every research project is a work-in-progress that offers observations and analysis from a particular historical and cultural context. As such, each one offers both strengths and weaknesses. This study is no exception. Undoubtedly, the greatest limitation, in my opinion, is a lack of opportunity to have had large populations with which to work in this time and place. More people to go through the study over time would have provided a much broader base to analyze as well as given more opportunity for all of the Keirseley temperaments to be readily represented in this study.

If more people were available in the population to take this study, the possibility that I could have had groups selected for specific reasons, based on spiritual maturity, church membership, or temperament could have been chosen. The resultant analysis might have been much more clearly defined according to the specific characteristics of these people. Isolating intervening variables would become a great deal easier.

Another limitation of this study was the researcher-designed tools for data collection. The desire to create a respondents' questionnaire that was easy and quick to complete weakened the data collection efforts of the study. A few more well-designed questions pointing to more specific issues and practices of prayer would have required less interpretation and provided foundational information to build upon. The wording of the questions in both tools needed more forethought to ensure that clarity was maximized and confusion was minimized from all the participants.

A final limitation was the length of the actual study group. To expect much change in the behavioral and affective growth in prayer requires a significantly longer period of relationship, experiential experience, and accountability. The twelve-week model was a reasonable length of study based on what people are commonly involved in while connected with a small group. However, spiritual changes rarely come quickly if at all. Participants were only able to taste the experiences and the small group environment. If the study could have lasted for one year or more, the long-term prospects of real change would have drastically increased.

Unexpected Observations

In terms of unexpected observations, some unforeseen observations relating to fasting and service appeared in this study.

Fasting Question

The first unexpected observation was in the area of fasting. One question on the pre- and posttest asked the respondents if fasting was a part of their practice of prayer. Surprisingly, the results of all questionnaires turned in by all parties resulted in the fact that 95 percent of all respondents reported absolutely no use of fasting in their recent spiritual practice. No other question in the entire study resulted in such a strong negative answer. The fasting observation raises some concerns for all who lead people into growth in prayer due to the appearance that leaders may be neglecting to train people in the ancient discipline of fasting. Fasting was a core discipline for many of the ancient mothers and fathers of faith, yet it is less important in the lives of the respondents that took part in this study.

Unfortunately, this study did not emphasize fasting as a significant part of the

study material or practice. Based on these responses, the study material for this small group will be amended to include information and training on this highly important issue.

Praying for the Needs of Others Question

The second unexpected observation deals with service and outward focus in general. Opposite of the fasting question related previously, this question received the strongest positive answer of all the questions asked throughout the study for both the experimental group and the control group. The question asked respondents to rate their score on service to others on a four-point scale. The mean for the experimental group as a whole was $m=3.88$ with a mean of $m=3.67$ for the control group overall. I find this result interesting because most people hold a preconceived idea that people who pray focus primarily upon their own needs. This observation reveals the fact that many are outward-focused in general rather than being self-centered.

Contributions to Research Methodologies

The greatest contribution this study makes to research methodology involves the use of the experience evaluation forms filled out by each participant after each experience in prayer. This form was designed to gather data about each experience, but it became a motivational tool, a discussion starter, and an opportunity to evaluate experiences. This form motivated the participants by allowing them to report their faithfulness to the experience on the form each week. This motivation was not manipulative because the participants' answers were anonymous from each other, yet the expectation of weekly questions for reflection made many more faithful to the process, effecting more effort than a study without this form included or with discussion only.

The form was also an excellent discussion starter in the group. Each person had a

few moments to write down his or her opinion of each experience, including strengths and weaknesses prior to a time of open discussion. During this pre-discussion phase, participants had an opportunity to validate their arguments in writing and express their struggles in ink before the option to speak was available. I believe that this process of pre-thinking led to a much more productive, informed, and focused discussion about each experience. The evaluation form was also quite effective at helping people learn to evaluate activities in their lives even outside the study. Many suggested that they might continue that methodology in the other spiritual parts of their lives, realizing that if something is not effective in bringing them closer to God, then they may need to move on to something else. If the likeability score for something that they had been doing for years is very low, the possibility exists that this activity is just a habit and does not really resonate with their personality and personal approach to God. Through evaluating week after week, the form becomes its own tool for guiding people to grow through prayerful evaluation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Without question, the challenge related to the development of tools of data collection that deal with deep and personal spiritual pursuits is daunting, especially given the inherent reluctance of postmodern individuals to be categorized or solicited. Despite this assessment, future research in this area could be aided by the development of a statistically standardized scale that addresses spiritual matters, especially one that focuses on how, when, and why people pray. More likely, further research would need to be done on the underlying ideas that people develop from first hearing about a God figure until they mature in their ongoing relationship with him. The research scale would then flow

from these foundational truths.

Another question growing out of this study would discover the spiritual resistance that people have to changes in the area of personal prayer habits. Prior to the study, I suspected that respondents would be very open to experiencing new ideas. However, throughout the study a persistent resistance to venture to new territory continued with many of the participants. I realize that the more time and maturity a person has in his or her particular routine of spiritual endeavors, the more resistant he or she seems to confronting established paradigms with new insights and possibilities. Regardless, I would take great fulfillment in knowing that these findings served as some starting point for future research processes in this very important area.

Postscript

After six years of preparation for this work, I know that I have been truly challenged and changed by this entire experience. During these years, my family and I have been through two church restructuring times, a departure from a mainline denomination, and the establishment of the new independent church that is now beginning to take flight with God's grace. In addition to these church upheavals, I have been teaching full-time in a private high school, working with over ninety students every day while my wife works full-time with kindergarteners and heavily partners with me at WellSpring. Most importantly, we are trying diligently to raise our two children to trust and follow Christ wholeheartedly.

This study will not pass from me now; in fact, it has only just begun with me. I have realized the potentiality of guiding others in the area of prayer and have determined to make this a lifelong endeavor. I intend to establish a prayer research center in the

future where more results and studies can continue to be funneled for compilation. I have already decided that this twelve-week study will be a key part of my leadership development for my leadership teams and core team at the WellSpring Community Church where I serve. Because no more important task exists than to pray, no greater responsibility exists than to help others become effective, empowered, and employed in prayer.

18. In the past two weeks, pre-written prayers have been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
19. In the past two weeks, nature as a means of meditation has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
20. In the past two weeks, journaling has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
21. In the past two weeks, prayer walking has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
22. In the past two weeks, visualization has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
23. In the past two weeks, the Jesus Prayer has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
24. In the past two weeks, praying with someone else has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
25. In the past two weeks, contemplation has been important in my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
26. In the past two weeks, acts of service have been important as a part of my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
27. In the past two weeks, fasting from food has been important as part of my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
28. In the past two weeks, praying for the needs of others has been important as part of my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*
29. In the past two weeks, using the Psalms has been important as part of my personal prayer life:
Definitely True *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*

30. In the past two weeks, I have enjoyed the practice of prayer in my personal prayer life:
- Definitely True* *Somewhat True* *Slightly True* *Not True*

APPENDIX B

Sample Experiment Evaluation Form

Experience
Number 1



EXPERIENCES IN PRAYER

Lectio Divina Evaluation Form *Transformation Through Contemplation of God's Word*

Participant #

Myers-Briggs Personality

To evaluate your response to the first experience in prayer, please answer the six questions as honestly as you can. Please use the back of this card for more comments if necessary. Make sure you place your Myers-Briggs personality letters in the box just to the right and below your Participant ID #. Please include any prayer request that you would like me to remember for you this week. Thanks.

How many times in the past week did you attempt this practice of prayer?

- 5 - 7 times
- 3 - 4 times
- 0 - 2 times

Is this practice something that you would like to do more often in your prayer life in the future?

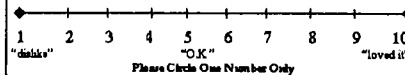
- Definitely
- Maybe
- No

Private Prayer Concerns:

Did this practice help you feel closer to God at some time in the last week?

- Definitely
- Somewhat
- Not at all

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "dislike" and 10 being "loved it", how would you honestly rate this experience for you?



Further Evaluations:

Please list some things that you liked about this experience:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please list some things that you did not like about this experience:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

APPENDIX C

Session Plans for Twelve-Session Small Group Meetings

Session Plan #1—Introduction and Overview of Study

Session Plan #2—Lectio Divina

Session Plan #3—Liturgical Prayer

Session Plan #4—Naturalist Prayer

Session Plan #5—Journaling

Session Plan #6—Prayer Walking

Session Plan #7—Visualization Prayer

Session Plan #8—The Jesus Prayer

Session Plan #9—Prayer Partners

Session Plan #10—Contemplative Prayer

Session Plan #11—Intercessory Prayer

Session Plan #12—Review and Reflect on the Study

Introduction and Overview of Study

Experiences in Prayer - Session #1

Welcome, Paperwork, and Introduction to Prayer

Outline:

1. Introductions: (10 minutes)

2. Fill out paperwork for study (15 minutes)

- I. Establish a participant number and overview the expectations for participation in the study.
- II. Fill out Personal Prayer History and Current Practice Survey.
- III. Fill out Keirsey Temperament Sorter.
- IV. Score Keirsey results on Keirsey answer sheet.
- V. Establish Myers-Briggs Temperament letters.

3. Overview of Entire Study: (5 minutes)

- I. General outline of weekly meeting:
 - a. Welcome and fellowship time.
 - b. Ice-breaker for team building.
 - c. Evaluation of previous experience
 - i. Filling out evaluation cards for previous experience.
 - ii. Discussing strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes about the previous experience.
 - d. General topic discussion
 - e. Introduction to the next prayer experience
 - i. Discussion of the experience as a whole.
 - ii. Expectations for the weekly experiences or this study.
 - iii. Walking through the booklet for the week that is provided.
 - f. Closing prayer concerns and a time of prayer.
- II. Explanation of the testing procedures throughout the study
- III. Explain how the results will be tabulated and applied to the body of knowledge in the area of spiritual formation.

4. Introduction of Myers-Briggs Temperaments: (15 minutes)

I. Introduction of Myers-Briggs

- a. History of the Jungian model
- b. Use in learning
- c. Biblical basis for the holistic needs of the body of Christ

II. Brief description of the four temperaments

- a. NF - Augustinian
- b. NT - Thomistic
- c. SP - Franciscan
- d. SJ – Ignatian

III. Interaction of four temperament groups (Optional)

- a. Divide the group by temperament
- b. Allow them time to meet and greet within this sub-group
- c. Sub-group project – based on the material that we have discussed – what does the OTHER temperaments bring to the body of Christ that can help US in our spiritual walk?

5. Overview of Premise and Purpose of “Experiences in Prayer”: (5 minutes)

- I. Increasing “connection” in prayer through discovering “natural” forms for each person.
- II. Through raising compatibility and level of enjoyment and interest in prayer, our goal is to increase the amount of time the average person prays on a regular basis.
- III. Guide participants into a deeper understanding of prayer and spiritual formation.

Secondarily:

Develop a personality/prayer grid through which a spiritual advisor could guide persons toward prayer styles that commonly fit with their Myers-Briggs personality temperament.

Lectio Divina

Experiences in Prayer – Session #2

Continued Introduction to Prayer

I. Review of Last Week (5 minutes)

II. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 minutes)

III. General Topic Discussion (30 Minutes)

A. Introduction to Prayer:

I. What is Prayer?

- A. Definitions
- B. Techniques/Forms
- C. Personalizing

The Communication Cycle



III. Introduction to Lectio Divina(30 Minutes)

- A. Introduction to Lectio Divina
 - a. Brief historical development
 - b. Using Scripture in prayer
 - c. Having structure in prayer experiences.

B. Four parts of Lectio Divina

- a. Lectio (3 – 5 minutes)
 - i. Slow reading of the Scripture periscope
 - ii. Repeated reading until the major ideas are clearly delimited
- b. Meditatio (5 – 10 minutes)
 - i. “From the mind to the heart”
 - ii. Consider the main ideas of the Scripture and ask yourself how the Scripture applies to your life personally. Ask yourself how God is speaking to you through this Scripture.
- c. Oratio (5 – 10 minutes)
 - i. Have a “conversation” with God.
 - ii. Use ACTS methodology to determine specific points in conversation
 1. A – Adoration
 2. C – Confession
 3. T – Thanksgiving
 4. S – Supplications
- d. Contemplatio (5 – 10 minutes)
 - i. Time for silent reflection
 - ii. Notice the insights that continue to return to your mind.

C. GOAL – Four times this week.

IV. Closing Prayer Requests and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Liturgical Prayer

Experiences in Prayer – Session 13

Continued Introduction to Prayer

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 Minutes)

II. Evaluation of Lectio Divina (10 Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants(5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 Minutes)

III. General Topic Discussion (20 Minutes)

II. Why Pray?

- A. Does prayer change God or change me?
- B. Partnership with God
- C. Jesus' Prayer life

IV. Introduction to Liturgical Prayer (30 Minutes)

A. Introduction to Liturgical Prayer

- a. “liturgy” – “Order of Service”
- b. Reasons to consider Pre--written prayers
 - i. Pre--written prayers have been “crafted” and “fine-tuned” through the centuries
 - ii. Helps to move individuals out of the “prayer rut” into new thoughts and expressions
 - iii. Joins the body of Christ into the flow of traditional history and reminds us of a larger world.

- c. Having structure in prayer experiences.

B. Five Fold Form of the Collect

a. Invocation

- i. Attention toward the one we are praying toward
- ii. Expression of reverence and humility.

b. Basis for petition

- i. State the reason why we can expect the petition to be heard
- ii. Based on the nature of God, the promises of God, or other scriptural authority

c. Petition

- i. Statement of the reason for our prayer
- ii. All petitions are welcomed to the heart of a father

d. Purpose

- i. Often use a “so that” statement
- ii. We speak our purpose in making the request so that we can know the holy intent

e. The Ending

- i. Close prayer in the authority of the who hears us and responds
- ii. “in the name of Jesus Christ” or “through the power of the Holy Spirit that works within us by the blood of Jesus Christ who saves us”.

D.

E. Prayer of the Hours

- a. Instituted to assist people in “praying without ceasing”
- b. Is not specifically stated in Scripture as a rule or guide, was designed by the faithful in history to draw men to God in a patterned and regular manner.

- c. Stems back to the first tabernacle and the Levite schedule of lighting the candles and burning the incense on the altar. These events happened on a schedule of morning, noon, and evening. Some contend that these events became ritual moments when pre-written prayers were repeated.
- d. Some have practiced a system of 7 daily prayer times.
- e. Most have agreed that the morning, noon, and night hours are the most practical. The morning starts the day off with our attention focused on God and his strength to remain strong. The Noon hour focuses us back on God from the business of the day and allows us to confess and purify our hearts in the midst of the day. The Evening prayer returns our focus as the last thing we put in our minds for the day and allows us to confess any sins and purify our hearts at the close of the day.

F. Our daily procedure

- a. Read the collect in your booklet for the time of day. This is a centering prayer and a yielding prayer to God.
- b. Read the Scriptures on the time of day in your booklet. Notice the theme and allow the theme to settle in your mind.
- c. Pray either a prayer of expectation and hope, a prayer of strength and purity, or a prayer of forgiveness and peace.
- d. You can use the Five Fold Form of the Collect if you would like or you can pray extemporaneously.
- e. Our goal should be to take 10 minutes 3 times a day rather than 30 minutes at one time.

V. Prayer Request and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Naturalist Prayer

Experiences in Prayer - Session #4

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 minutes)

II. Evaluation of Liturgical Prayer Experience (10 Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants(5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week(5 minutes)

IV. General Topic Discussion (20 Minutes)

III. Why Pray?

B. Partnership with God

C. Jesus' Prayer life

V. Introduction of Naturalist Prayer (30 Minutes)

a. Biblical foundations of appreciation of creation in prayer and praise

b. Use in teaching people to pray

i. The nature of God

ii. Jesus taught with parables using basic natural metaphors

i. Naturalist prayer vs. Naturalism Philosophy

ii. Brief description of sources for Naturalist prayers

iii. Human nature – Personality, sociology, spirituality, and ethnicity.

iv. Order and structures of all that has been created

v. Beauty of all kinds

c. Brief description of the process of Naturalist Prayer

vi. Heart preparation

vii. Finding a place to experience naturalist prayer

viii. Allow senses to flourish

ix. Praise God for the miracle of creation

- x. Listening to God
- d. How does Naturalist prayer help a person grow in prayer?
 - xi. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
 - xii. Growth from verbal prayers to non-verbal
 - xiii. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
 - xiv. Developing a habit of presence

V. Prayer Requests and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Journaling Prayer

Experiences in Prayer - Session #5

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 minutes)

II. Evaluation of Naturalist Prayer Experience (10 minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants(5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 minutes)

IV. General Topic Discussion (20 Minutes)

C. Jesus' Prayer Life Continued

V. Introduction of Journaling Prayer(30 Minutes)

I. Overview of Journaling

A. Biblical foundations of writing information down

II Brief description of four benefits of journaling

- a. Remembering God's faithfulness
 - i. Recalling a need and remembering God's faithfulness
 - ii. Making lists of answered prayers and unanswered ones
- b. Realizing personal tendencies
 - i. Recognizing ongoing struggles
 - ii. Monitoring ongoing growth
- c. Expressing thoughts in concrete language
 - i. Pen to paper and the ideas start flowing
 - ii. Because writing is slower than talking or thinking, it slows our steps and forces our careful consideration
- d. God's continued revelation of himself in our written language
 - i. As we process what we are writing, the Holy Spirit can guide us in our understandings of what God is leading us to hear and do.
 - ii. Our Spirit is constantly interpreting the words that are flowing through our pens and showing us God's will in those times of writing.

III. Brief description of the guidelines and process of journaling prayer

- a. Heart preparation
 - i. Clearing our minds and confessing anything that inhibits our relationship with God
 - ii. Scripture reading to get our minds focused in the foundation of God's word.
- b. Journaling experience
 - i. Reflection then Journaling
 - ii. Open Journaling
 - iii. Prayer Journaling
 - iv. Chronological Journaling
- c. Use your senses to bring fullness to the writing
 - i. Using your senses brings the writing alive and reminds you more clearly of the situation.
 - ii. Use your imagination in writing to experience what "could be" as a means to build faith in what will be. Vision is the difference between what is and what could be! As your heart longs for what "could be" you can develop the vision to make it so.
- d. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you
 - i. Journals can turn negative rather quickly. Be sure to begin with praise and end with praise for God's continued revelation of Himself through the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Praise turns our eyes toward heaven and off of our self.
- e. Listening to God
 - i. Journals are made to be re-read. We need to go back a couple of days and remember and see the hand of God in our lives and our situation.
 - ii. Reflect and listen to the message of God as you re-read old entries.

VI. Prayer Request and Closing Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Prayer Walking

Experiences in Prayer- Session #6

Prayer Walking

I. Ice-Breaker Activity(15 minutes)**II. Evaluation of Journaling Prayer Experience (10 Minutes)**

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 minutes)**IV. General Topic Discussion (20 minutes)**

- i. Jesus' Prayer Life continued
- a. How Does Prayer Work
 - i. The Language of Prayer
 - ii. Faithfulness in Prayer
 - iii. Results in Prayer

V. Introduction of Prayer Walking(30 Minutes)***A. Overview of Prayer Walking***

- a. Biblical Foundations of prayer walking
- b. Use in teaching people to pray
- c. The early church use of cultural interaction
- d. The modern development of prayer walking

B. Brief description of four benefits of prayer walking

- a. Realization that prayer is an active process
- b. Compassion develops in interaction with needs
- c. Physical, mental, and psychological benefits of walking
- d. The witness of prayer walking in the community

C. Brief description of the guidelines and process of prayer walking

- a. Heart preparation
- b. Prayer walking experience
- c. Use your senses to bring fullness to the experience
- d. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you

- e. Listening to God

D. Four venues for prayer walking

- a. Your neighborhood
- b. Another neighborhood
- c. Public buildings/spaces
- d. Leadership buildings/spaces

E. How does prayer walking help a person grow in prayer?

- d. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
- e. Growth from pre--thought to extemporaneous praying
- f. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
- g. Developing a compassion for culture

VI. Prayer Request and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Visualization Prayer

Experiences in Prayer - Session #7

Visualization Prayer

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 Minutes)

II. Evaluations of Prayer Walking Experience (10 Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 Minutes)

IV. General Topic Discussion (20 minutes)

A. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 1 – *“The God we pray to”* – Matthew 6:9

- a. Before we pray, we should recall who God is
- b. As we pray, we should remember to honor who He is

B. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 2 – *“His Kingdom”* – Matthew 6:10

- a. “kingdom come”
- b. “Thy will be done”
- c. “On earth as it is in heaven”

V. Introduction to Visualization Prayer (30 Minutes)

A. Introduction of Visualization Prayer

- a. Biblical Foundations of visualization and imagination
- b. Use in teaching people to pray
- c. The modern development of visualization prayer

B. Brief description of the guidelines and process of visualization prayer

- a. Heart preparation
- b. Visualization prayer experience
- c. Use your senses to bring fullness to the experience
- d. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you
- e. Listening to God

C. Three dominant forms of visualization prayer

- a. Placing oneself in Scripture stories

- b. Experiencing **the prayer needs of another** as a means to intercede for them
- c. Visualize yourself in a **“Jesus Encounter”** and talk with Him and walk with Him.

D. How does visualization prayer help a person grow in prayer?

- a. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
- b. Growth from pre--thought to extemporaneous praying
- c. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
- d. Developing an expanded view of personality and prayer

VI. Prayer Requests and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

The Jesus Prayer

Experiences in Prayer - Session #8

The Jesus Prayer

I. Ice- Breaker Activity (15 Minutes)

II. Evaluation of Visualization Prayer Experience (10 Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 Minutes)

IV. General Topic Outline (20 Minutes)

- C. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 2 – *“His Kingdom”* – *Matthew 6:10*
- a. “kingdom come”
 - b. “Thy will be done”
 - c. “On earth as it is in heaven”

V. Introduction to the Jesus Prayer

A. Introduction of Jesus Prayer

- a. Biblical foundations of breath praying
- b. Use in teaching people to pray

B. Brief description of four benefits of Jesus prayer

- a. Keeps the purpose of life close to the mind
- b. Attempts to take every thought captive for the purposes of God
- c. Practicing the presence of God in the midst of all of life
- d. Centering as a mind focusing tool

C. Brief description of the guidelines and process of journaling prayer

- a. Heart preparation
- b. Jesus prayer experience
- c. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you
- d. Listening to God

D. How does Jesus prayer help a person grow in prayer?

- a. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
- b. Growth from pre--thought to extemporaneous praying
- c. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
- d. Developing a sense of presence within everyday life

VI. Prayer Requests and Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Prayer Partnering

Experiences in Prayer - Session #9

Prayer Partnering

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 Minutes)**II. Evaluation of The Jesus Prayer Experience (10 Minutes)**

- A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)
- B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 Minutes)**IV. General Topic Outline (20 Minutes)**

- D. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 3 – *“Our Daily Needs”* – *Matthew 6:11*
 - a. “Give us this day” – God created us with daily needs
 - b. “our daily bread” – God provides for our daily needs

V. Introduction of Prayer Partnering (30 Minutes)

- A. Introduction of Prayer partnering**
 - a. Biblical Foundations of praying in groups
 - b. Use in teaching people to pray
 - c. The modern development of prayer partnering
- B. Brief description of four benefits of prayer partnering**
 - a. Learning to listen to others
 - b. Practicing concern for the needs of others
 - c. Realizing that prayer is not always a private process
 - d. Building personal relationships through prayer
 - e. Developing practices that can be used in crisis with others
- C. Brief description of the guidelines and process of prayer partners**
 - a. Heart preparation
 - b. Prayer partner experience
 - c. Keep your prayer partner in mind daily and use the card to recall prayer concerns
 - d. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you
 - e. Listening to God and allow him to guide you in your response to these prayer concerns

D. How does Jesus prayer help a person grow in prayer?

- a. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
- b. Growth from pre--thought to extemporaneous praying
- c. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
- d. Developing a sense of presence within everyday life

VI. Prayer Requests and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Contemplative Prayer

Experiences in Prayer

Session #10

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 minutes)

II. Evaluation of Prayer Partnering Experience (10Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 minutes)

IV. General Topic Outline (20 Minutes)

D. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 4 – **“Forgive Us Our Trespases”** – *Matthew 6:12*

1. We admit that we are sinners

2. We admit that our community has sinned “us” and “our”

3. We admit the command to **“as we forgive those who have trespassed against us”**.

E. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 5 - **“Lead us not into temptation”** - *Matthew 6:13a*

a. And – linking word that ties together the three main requests in the prayer

b. “Lead us”

c. “Temptation”

d. Jesus leads us through temptation

F. The Model Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer – Part 6 - **“Deliver us from the evil one”** – *Matthew 6:13b*

a. “Deliver us”

b. “The evil one”

V. Introduction to Contemplative Prayer (30 Minutes)

A. Introduction of contemplation

a. Biblical Foundations of contemplation

- b. Use in teaching people to pray
- c. Jesus' view of silence, solitude, and meditation
- d. Early church adoption of the contemplation model

B. Brief description of benefits of contemplation

- a. Learning the disciplines of silence and solitude
- b. The psychological and emotional benefits of contemplation
- c. Differences between meditation, yoga, and contemplative prayer

C. Brief description of the guidelines and process of contemplation

- a. Heart preparation (5 minutes)
- b. Contemplative prayer experience (20 minutes)
- c. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you (5 minutes)
- d. Listen to God and allow him to guide you in your response to these prayers (5 minutes)

D. How does contemplation help a person grow in prayer?

- a. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
- b. Growth from pre--thought to extemporaneous praying
- c. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
- d. Developing a sense of presence within everyday life

VI. Prayer Requests and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

Intercessory Prayer

Experiences in Prayer

Session #11

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 Minutes)

II. Evaluation of Contemplative Prayer Experience (10 Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 Minutes)

IV. General Topic Outline (20 Minutes)

I. Part 1 - The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus – John 17

A. Overview

- a. Part 1 – Jesus prays for Himself (John 17:1 – 5)
- b. Part 2 – Jesus prays for His Disciples (John 17:6 – 19)
- c. Part 3 - Jesus prays for All Believers (John 17:20 – 26)

B. He looked toward heaven and prayed, “Father” – John 17:1

- a. One of six references to “Father” in this prayer.
- b. Like in the “Lord’s Prayer” there is a sense of imminence with God and intimacy with Him.

C. “The time has come”

- a. Marcus Rainfords, Our Lord Prays For His Own, calls this “*Thine hour (God’s hour), Mine hour (Jesus’ hour), Mine enemies’ hour, and My people’s hour.*”
- b. The purpose of Christ’s incarnation has arrived.

D. “Glory” - doxa – “to make renowned; hold in honor; magnify”

- a. Glorify in order to Glorify!
- b. “I gave you glory by completing the work you gave me to do” – John 1:4
- c. “Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” – John 1:5

E. The End of all things upon this earth, Christ desired to:

- a. Show us a perfect relationship with “the Father”.
- b. Show us perfect obedience to God
- c. Show us the glory of God in a life poured out in love.

II. Part 2 – Jesus Prays for His Disciples –

A. Jesus' Petitions for His Disciples

- a. Keep them in Unity (vs. 11 – “they may be one as we are one”)
 1. Through your name (“Holy Father”)
 2. Jesus’ departure was going to cause a disturbance and possible scattering. (Matt. 16:32)
 3. While Jesus was with them – He had held them together (vs. 12)
 - b. Keep them from the evil one (vs. 15)
 1. Jesus knew that with his departure that Satan would shift his efforts from Him to His disciples
 2. Jesus does not ask for their removal – but their protection
 - a. In the world but not of the world (Mt. 5:14-16; Ph. 2:15)
 - b. Described in I Cor. 10:13 and Romans 8:35-39
 - c. Sanctify Them (vs. 17)
 1. Set apart for a holy purpose
 2. The instrument of sanctification – The Word of God
 3. Through sanctification by the word, the other parts of His petition would be realized
 - a. The word would keep them unified
 - b. The word would be their strength and defense from the evil one
- B. Why God should grant His petition
- a. The disciples are the Father’s gift to His son
 1. “...the men you gave me” (vs. 6)
 2. “They were yours, you gave them to me”
 - b. They received God’s word (6b)
 - c. They glorify Christ (10)
 - d. They no longer will have Christ on earth (11)
 - e. They will be hated by the world (14-15)
 - f. They were being sent into the world (18a)
 - g. Jesus gave all for them and He loves them (19a)

III. Part 3 – Jesus Prays for all believers –

- a. Jesus’ desire for us
 - i. That we be one
 1. The nature of oneness (21,23a)
 2. The purpose of oneness (21c,23b)
 3. The means to the oneness Jesus desires (22)
 - ii. That we behold His glory (24)
 - iii. That we be loved by His father (23,26)
- b. Carrying out Jesus prayer
 - i. Walk in Unity Eph. 4:3 – 6

- ii. Walk in faith He. 3:12 – 14
- iii. Walk in love Matt. 22:37-38; Jn 14:15,21; I John 5:3

V. Introduction to Intercessory Prayer

A. Overview of Intercessory Prayer

- a. Biblical Foundations of contemplation
 - i. Levitical Priesthood
 - ii. Christ' Priesthood
 - iii. Our Priesthood role
 - iv. Other Intercessors/Mediators in Scripture
- b. Use in teaching people to pray
 - i. Helping people to understand the “other centeredness” of prayer
 - ii. Practicing the “holy priesthood” principle
- c. The modern development of intercessory prayer

B. Brief description of benefits of intercessory

- a. Moves the prayer from self-focused to other focused
- b. Encourages the demonstration of love to other through sharing concerns

C. Brief description of the guidelines and process of intercessory prayer

- a. Heart preparation
- b. Intercession grows out of love for others
- c. The burden is on the Lord.
- d. The Holy Spirit will lay prayer burdens on our hearts that leads us to specific prayer for specific people or groups.
- e. The results are God's business.

D. Process of intercessory prayer

- a. Find a time and place for silence and solitude.
- b. Use the Jesus prayer or some centering prayer to focus the mind and heart toward God
- c. Visualize the persons that you have felt led to pray for and visualize their specific needs.
- d. Pray for God's will and purpose to be fulfilled in them and for the Holy Spirit to interact with them.
- e. Ask for specific ways that you can be part of the “hands and feet of God” in this situation.
- f. Praise God for the continued revelation of himself to you
- g. Listen to God and allow him to guide you in your response to these prayers

E. Six venues for intercessory prayer

- a. Your family
 - i. Your close family unit (children, spouse)
 - ii. Parents, grandparents, extended family members
 - iii. Specific needs known within your family
- b. Friends and Neighbors
 - i. Persons with whom you have developed a personal relationship
 - ii. Start with closest relationships and move to distant relationships

- iii. Specific needs known with family and neighbors
- c. Co-workers
 - i. Persons with whom you work on a regular basis
 - ii. Start with closest office to yours and work away from you
 - iii. Consider the obvious needs of each person and then prayerfully seek to understand the not so obvious needs
- d. Your Church
 - i. Pray for church leaders and their families
 - ii. Pray for church members and their families
 - iii. Pray for youth and children
 - iv. Pray for the church budget
 - v. Pray for the mission and ministry of the church
 - vi. Pray for the visitors that come to church
 - vii. Pray for the small groups in the church
 - viii. Pray for those around the church that do not attend the church
- e. Acquaintances and Specific Issues
 - i. Prayer burdens that God lays on your heart
 - ii. Prayer for people with unknown needs
 - iii. Prayer for people in roles without knowledge of specific needs
- f. Strangers – groups – nations – non-specific needs
 - i. Local governments, other churches, organizations
 - ii. National governments, organizations, groups
 - iii. Spiritual authority in all areas

F. How does intercessory prayer help a person grow in prayer?

- a. How specific personalities may respond to this practice of prayer
- b. Growth from pre--thought to extemporaneous praying
- c. Growth from self-focused to God focused prayer
- d. Developing a sense of presence within everyday life

VI. Prayer Request and Prayer Time

Review and Reflection on Study

Experiences in Prayer

Session #12

I. Ice-Breaker Activity (15 minutes)

II. Evaluation of Intercessory Prayer Experience (10 Minutes)

A. Write out answers on evaluation cards (5 Minutes)

B. Optional verbal discussion of evaluation of experience between the participants (5 minutes)

III. Review of Last Week (5 Minutes)

IV. General Topic Outline (30 minutes)

V. Part 2 – Jesus Prays for His Disciples – John 17:6-19

A. Jesus' Petitions for His Disciples

a. Keep them in Unity (vs. 11 – “they may be one as we are one”

1. Through your name (“Holy Father”)

2. Jesus' departure was going to cause a disturbance and possible scattering. (Matt. 16:32)

3. While Jesus was with them – He had held them together (vs. 12)

b. Keep them from the evil one (vs. 15)

1. Jesus knew that with his departure that Satan would shift his efforts from Him to His disciples

2. Jesus does not ask for their removal – but their protection

a. In the world but not of the world (Mt. 5:14-16; Ph. 2:15)

b. Described in I Cor. 10:13 and Romans 8:35-39

c. Sanctify Them (vs. 17)

1. Set apart for a holy purpose

2. The instrument of sanctification – The Word of God

3. Through sanctification by the word, the other parts of His petition would be realized

a. The word would keep them unified

b. The word would be their strength and defense from the evil one

c. The word as “truth” would set them apart from the world

B. Why God should grant His petition

a. The disciples are the Father's gift to His son

1. “...the men you gave me” (vs. 6)

2. "They were yours, you gave them to me"
- b. They received God's word (6b)
 1. Teaching of Christ
 2. Example of Christ's life and love
- c. They glorify Christ (10)
 1. By reflecting the light the Christ in them.
 2. By lifting Christ up and the messiah and the true "Son of God"
- d. They no longer will have Christ on earth (11)
 1. Christ will separated in dimension but not in closeness
 2. Each disciple will have to make decisions on their own
- e. They will be hated by the world (14-15)
 1. "You will face persecution" (John 15:18 – 21)
 2. "When the storms come ...and beat upon the house, it will not fall"
(Matthew 7:25)
- f. They were being sent into the world (18a)
 1. Their mission was dangerous and arduous
 2. Their challenge was ominous
- g. Jesus gave all for them and He loves them (19a)

IV. Part 3 – Jesus Prays for all believers –

- a. Jesus' desire for us
 - i. Second generation believers (20)
 1. Those "who believe in me because of their message"
 2. Christ concern was always for multiplication of the Kingdom
 - ii. That we be one
 1. The nature of oneness (21,23a)
 - a. "You are in me and I am in you" (21)
 - b. Complete intimacy – wholeness
 - c. "may they also be in us" (21b)
 - d. "they may be one as we are one" (22b)
 - e. Complete unity of purpose - cooperation
 - f. "I in them and you in me" (23a)
 - g. Complete connection between God and man – Oneness
 - h. "May they be brought to completion" – perfect wholeness (23a)
 2. The purpose of oneness (21c,23b)
 - a. Twice – "That the world may believe that you have sent me"
 - b. "have loved them even as you have loved me" (23c)
 3. The means to the oneness Jesus desires (22)
 - a. "I have given the glory you gave to me"
 - b. Just as Christ is carrying the "essence" of God in his life, so that "essence" has been transferred to us through association with Christ and through His presence in us.

This essence is the power and presence and purpose of God that we have inherited as coheirs with Christ.

- iii. That we may behold Christ's true glory (24)
 - 1. "Father" – sincere desire from a intimate relation
 - 2. Christ wants us to come to His realm and see his true glory that God has given to Him.
 - 3. The glory was given as a love gift not a role or responsibility
 - iv. The disciples know that Christ comes from God(25)
 - 1. The world does not know the truth of Christ's deity and His messiahship
 - 2. The disciples know the truth
 - 3. They know because Christ has revealed the truth to them in word miracles (26)
 - 4. Christ will continue to reveal the truth in His upcoming crucifixion and resurrection.
 - v. The love is transferred (26)
 - 1. "in order that the love you have for me"
 - a. Huge love from the creator of love
 - b. Huge respect for His own unity as part of the trinity
 - 2. "may be in them and that I myself may be in them"
 - a. The fullness of the love of God is within us!
 - b. He has shown us and continues to show us through the presence of Christ within us!
- b. Carrying out Jesus prayer
- i. Walk in Unity
 - 1. Eph. 4:3 – 6 –
 - 2. "Make every effort to keep in unity" – it is not natural or comfortable, but only through the work of Christ within us.
 - 3. "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God who is over all and through all and in all"
 - ii. Walk in faith
 - 1. He. 3:12 – 14 –
 - 2. "take heed...exhort one another daily...if we hold the beginning of our confidence"
 - 3. Again, faith is not natural or comfortable, it is only the Christ within us who gives us hope and courage to continue to keep the faith and fight the good fight.
 - iii. Walk in love
 - 1. Matt. 22:37-38 – love God – love neighbor - the greatest commandment
 - 2. Jn 14:15,21 – love = keeping the commandments
 - 3. I John 5:2 – love the children of God as we love to keep the commandments of God

V. Closing Discussions (20 Minutes)

- I. Review of experiences in prayer
 - a. Lectio Divina
 - b. Liturgical Prayer
 - c. Naturalist Prayer
 - d. Journaling
 - e. Prayer Walking
 - f. Visualization Prayer
 - g. Jesus Prayer
 - h. Prayer Partners
 - i. Contemplative Prayer
 - j. Intercessory Praying

- II. Review of original goals in the study
 - a. Information/spiritual growth
 - b. Community environment/fellowship
 - c. Accountability/encouragement
 - d. Discussion/shared experiences
 - e. Ultimately to encourage us all to seek new ways to connect with “the Father” in prayer more often and more powerfully.
 - f. Secondly: To develop a personality grid that would focus certain personality types (according to Myers-Briggs Temperament Sorter) toward “natural” prayer styles that would strengthen and encourage more prayer time.

- III. Reflections shared by the group

- IV. Greatest lessons learned

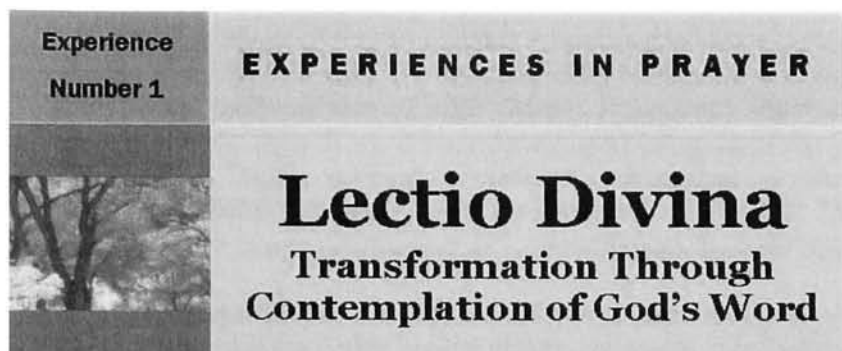
- V. Movements in maturity in prayer
 - a. From pre--thought to extemporaneous
 - b. From verbal to non-verbal
 - c. From self-centered to other centered

VI. Prayer concerns and Prayer Time (10 Minutes)

VII. Service of Holy Communion and Dismissal (10 Minutes)

APPENDIX D

Example of Experience Booklet



"We are listening with the heart to the Holy within. This prayerful reading, as we might call it, edifies us and strengthens us."

Richard J. Foster

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home

Inside this issue:

An Introduction to Lectio Divina	Pages 2 & 3
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Day 7 - 9	Page 6
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Reflections in Writing	Page 8

AN INTRODUCTION TO LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient practice of prayer that dates back to the fourth and fifth centuries. It was most likely brought to the West from the Eastern desert fathers by John Cassian. It has been closely connected with St. Benedict and Benedictine spirituality. It can be easily translated as “sacred reading”, however, it is more than just reading as it acts as a “ladder of escalation or intensification of prayer.” The scriptures are the central feature of Lectio Divina. Andrew Murray wrote,

“Before prayer, it is God’s word that prepares me for it by revealing what the Father has bid me ask. In prayer, it is God’s word strengthens me by giving my faith its warrant and its plea. And after prayer, it is God’s word that brings me the answer when I have prayed, for in it the Spirit gives me to hear the Father’s voice. Prayer is not a monologue, but dialogue; God’s voice in response to mine is its most essential part. “

This form of prayer generally addresses all four of the basic temperaments and all individual types of human personality.

Lectio Divina has four steps to guide you through your experience each day:

Step 1 - LECTIO - Reading of Biblical text to see what is there on the surface.

Take the Biblical text and read it several times until you feel like you can explain what is happening in the story or what is the major point of the scripture.

Step 2 - MEDITATIO Take time to think about the text and break it down into pieces so that you can see the deeper meanings implied in it.

Think about this passage for 5 to 10 minutes and try to see how the main point of the text applies to your life personally. What is God trying to tell you through this passage? Are there any things that you would like to avoid from this passage? Is this an area that God needs to get your attention?

Step 3 - ORATIO - Take time to carry on a conversation about this passage by discussing with God how this passage applies to your life and what this scripture challenges you to do.

Have a discussion about this passage for 10 minutes. Use the ACTS format to respond to the personal applications that you have discovered.

A = Adoration. What does this passage make you want to praise God about? How can you express your adoration for God personally?

C = Confession. What does this passage reveal in your life that needs to be confessed to God? How can you change your life in this way?

T = Thanksgiving. What does this passage reveal are things in your life that you need to thank God for? Can you take a moment to say "thanks?"

S = Supplication. Who or what do you want to ask God for due to this passage? Are there people in your life who need prayers? Family?

Step 4 - CONTEMPLATIO - Take time of silent reflection for God to speak to you through the Holy Spirit. He may speak to you about some of the insights from the first three steps or about something else.

Take 5 to 10 minutes and sit in complete silence and stillness. Let your mind jump from idea to idea as the Lord speaks to you. Take mental notes of the thoughts that linger in your mind. This may be the Lord's voice speaking in the silence.

SOME HELPFUL AIDS TO PRAYER

There are some things that we can do to make the prayer period in which we use Lectio Divina more rewarding and uplifting.

- Choose the time of day when we are most alert, least distracted, least tired, most well-rested, and without outside pressure. We should set aside prime time each day for prayer.
- Choose a place that is quiet and restful, comfortable, and conducive to giving our full attention to God.
- Keep your Bible, this booklet, a writing pen and a comfortable place to prayer in the same spot each day so that this place can become a holy altar in your life.
- Feel free to use a commentary if it helps you understand the passages better.

10 PRAYER SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICING LECTIO DIVINA

Day 1: **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____ **Complete** _____

Lectio: Read **Matthew 13:1-23**

Meditatio: Jesus gives six different results of his sowing of the seed. Three of them do not produce any fruit, but three of them do: 30, 60, 100 fold. Think of the different times in your life where these six situations have occurred. There have been times when we have heard the word of God, say at Sunday School or church, but before we get home, we have totally forgotten it (the first kind of soil). There have been times when we have heard the Word with great enthusiasm; but a week later it has withered away (the second kind of soil). Think of times when we have heard God's word, applied it to our situation, and have done something in response to it for a while, but then the cares and concerns of this world have choked out our good resolutions so that no good fruit resulted. Think also of the times when God's Word did produce good and abundant fruit in our life - perhaps even a hundred fold.

Oratio - Having applied the parable to our own life, respond accordingly. There probably will be room for confession, regret for past failures, fervent prayers for help in the present, good resolutions for the future. What can you say to God to insure that you will be in one of the groups who produce good fruit rather than in one of those who fail to produce any fruit?

Contemplatio - What new insights is the Holy Spirit giving you from reflecting on this parable of the sower and the seed?

Day 2: **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____ **Complete** _____

Lectio - Read **Matthew 13:44-52**

Meditatio - What is the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price which is waiting our discovery? "The reign of God (or the kingdom of God) is like a hidden treasure or pearl of great price." Have we discovered the reign (the kingdom) of God in our life? What does this mean? It is that situation where God and God's will become the center of our whole life, our every thought, word, deed, decision, desire. Once we have discovered this, we should be ready to sacrifice everything to obtain it. Is this true in my life? The kingdom of God is the situation where God has total freedom to do whatever he pleases with us and with the world. We are able to sue our freedom to thwart God's will for us and thus hinder or hold back the establishment of the kingdom of God.

Oratio - With as much feeling as possible, beg God for the grace to discover, recognize, and appreciate the value of the Kingdom of God in one's life. Having discovered its meaning, one can devote one's whole energy to attaining it and pay whatever the price needed to obtain it. Beg God for the

grace to sacrifice everything else if necessary.

Contemplatio - Be open to uncovering the particular meaning of the kingdom of God for you in your life. Be open to the price to be paid in order to obtain it.

Day 3: Time: _____ Place: _____ Complete _____

Lectio - Read **Matthew 16:13-20**

Meditatio - "Who do you say that I am?" What does Jesus mean to me? How often do I think of him in the course of an ordinary day? Is he truly the center of my life? What more can I do to make him the center of my every thought, desire, word, deed? In what way can we say that the church community in which we live is also built upon the rock of our faith? What can I do to increase my faith in Jesus Christ?

Oratio - Pray to Jesus for the faith of Peter. Pray that all whose faith is dependent upon you will be strengthened in their faith in Jesus Christ through you.

Contemplatio - Seek any new insights that might come about Christ.

Day 4: Time: _____ Place: _____ Complete _____

Lectio - Read **Matthew 18:21-35**

Meditatio - Jesus says that we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven. This can apply to the something which may have occurred many years ago but caused such a deep hurt that even though we have previously forgiven the person we need to reinstitute the process of forgiveness again and again. Unless we willingly forgive our neighbor, God will not forgive us our faults. Is there anyone who has hurt me in the past that I have not yet forgiven completely? What do I do about it now?

Oratio - Pray the Lord' Prayer, especially the second part, and try to mean it as deeply as sincerely as possible. Pray for each person who has in some way hurt or offended you in the past. This is the first step to forgiveness.

Contemplatio - Be open to the possibility that one needs to forgive again and again.

Day 5: Time: _____ Place: _____ Complete _____

Lectio: - Read **Matthew 9:36 - 10:8**

Meditatio: The compassion of Jesus for the people of his time is the model for our own compassion for the people of our time who are wandering aimlessly, not knowing where to go. Not only should we pray for vocations to Christian ministry, but we ourselves should also respond to the call to ministry. Having been summoned to ministry by Jesus, we are given the power and authority to expel unclean spirits, cure sickness, and disease, which would include spiritual diseases. All of this should be done freely without asking anything in return except what is necessary to sustain one's life and ministry. "Freely you have received, freely you should give."

Oratio: - Respond personally to the call of Jesus to ministry. Pray not

only for the call of others but that you too will respond generously to God's call.

Contemplatio: - Be open to any thought, desire, insights concern how one might do more in ministering to others.

Day 6: **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____ **Complete** _____

Lectio: Read **Luke 10:25-37**.

Meditatio: Read the parable of the good Samaritan and try to imagine yourself, first of all, as the priest who passes by on the other side of the road. What reasons could you give for refusing to get involved? Then try to imagine yourself as the person who fell among the robbers and who was left half-dead by the side of the road. What might you think as you see people pass you by and refuse your cries for help? Thirdly, imagine yourself as the Good Samaritan. Try to envision some situations today where you could act as a Good Samaritan to others in trouble.

Oratio: Allow God to lay a person or situation on you mind that needs your attention today. What needs to happen for you to open your eyes to those in need around you?

Contemplatio: - Be open to any thought, desire, insights concern how one might do more in ministering to others.

Day 7: **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____ **Complete** _____

Lectio: Read **Mark 10:46-52**.

Meditatio: Think of yourself as the blind Bartimaeus who hears that Jesus of Nazareth is passing. "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" Jesus calls you over and asks: "What do you want me to do for you?" "Rabboni, I want to see." "Be on your way, your faith has healed you." We all are spiritually blind, We so often miss the obvious. We are blind to the needs of others. We are blind to our own faults and sins. Say to Jesus, "Rabboni, I want to see." Jesus lays his hands on you and you experience healing. Your eyes are opened, and you see that to which you have previously been blind.

Oratio: Ask God to reveal areas in your life that need spiritual healing. As Jesus touches you today, do you want to be healed?

Contemplatio: Ponder the thought that while you can so easily see the failings of others, often it is very difficult to recognize our own shortcomings and sins.

Day 8: **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____ **Complete** _____

Lectio: Read **I Corinthians 13:4 - 8**.

Meditatio: "Love is never rude or self-seeking. There is no limit to its forbearance, no limit to its trust, its hopes, its endurance." This is an ideal for which we must continually strive. Talk to Jesus about your failures in charity and ask him what he wants you to do. Put your own name in the passage each time the word "love" or "charity" is used. How authentic would such words be in your regard? What do you need to change to make them authentic?

Oratio: Do you know how to love others? Can you love yourself? What does this kind of love look like when we think of our marriages, families, offices, and our church?

Contemplatio: How big, wide, long, and deep is the love of God for us who are His children?

Day 9: Time: _____ Place: _____ Complete _____

Lectio: Read **Daniel 3:26-90**.

Meditatio: Composing your own hymn of praise of God for all the beauties of His creation. Include the beauties of the inner world of the Spirit, on one's own nature, of friends, as well as of the physical world.

Oratio: Since God can create the universe and all that is seen and unseen, can he be trusted to deal with the issues that you face today? What fears do you need to turn over to God's control?

Contemplatio: What does creation reveal about the nature and power of God?

Day 10: Time: _____ Place: _____ Complete _____

Lectio: Read **Matthew 11:29; Luke 14:7-11; I Corinthians 4:7**.

Meditatio: Take the virtue of humility. Reflect upon it. What does it mean? What is the connection between humility and authenticity? What does Jesus mean when he says, "learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart." If you have some good spiritual book, you might read what it says about the virtue of humility. Think of some examples of persons in the Bible who were humble (Moses, Mary, Joseph).

Oratio: Where have you been humble in the past? What are some examples of your failure to be humble? What changes do you need to make in your life in order to be more humble? What do you need to do in order to grow in humility? What might you do this day to practice humility?

Contemplatio: End the period of prayer with petitions to God and Jesus asking them to help you to be more humble.

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