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Measuring the Value of Guided Preparation on the Worship Experience at First Baptist Greenville, SC

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MEASURING THE VALUE OF GUIDED
PREPARATION ON THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AT
FIRST BAPTIST GREENVILLE, SC

A PROJECT

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MATTHEW BENJAMIN ROLLINS

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APPROVAL FORM

MEASURING THE VALUE OF GUIDED
PREPARATION ON THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AT
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH GREENVILLE, SC
MATTHEW BENJAMIN ROLLINS

Approved by:

_____ (Faculty Advisor)

_____ (Field Advisor)

_____ (D. Min. Director)

Date: _____

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This work is dedicated to the congregation at First Baptist Church Greenville, which has loved and served me as much as I have loved and served them. In my time there, among my greatest joys were when someone was able to grow closer to God through involvement with the church, which is as good a description of my role of minister of spiritual formation as any. I hope this project will lead to more of the same.

I think my favorite day of this whole process was the Saturday that my family - Rolyn, Jack, Celie Ann, and Lucy - came with me to the church to help me prepare for the next day's pre-worship session. Still on crutches after breaking my ankle earlier in the week, I was struggling to get everything ready. They printed off the necessary copies, carried the sealed envelopes for the participants, and moved a table to the check-in area. Throughout this entire process, they pulled for me and looked at me with genuine pity any time I had to stay up late and type even though I was really tired. For all of this and for the loving time and space to complete this project, I will forever be grateful to my four favorite people in the world.

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ABSTRACT

Worship is a central part of the life of the church. There exists an understanding that the church will provide a time and space for regular, meaningful worship to occur, as well as an expectation that the people will attend and engage, open to an encounter with God, alongside their brothers and sisters in Christ. This study investigates the latter responsibility - that of the people to fully participate in worship that gives worth to God, listens to God, and responds to God. In this project, volunteers from First Baptist Church Greenville, SC, engaged with specially designed pre-worship guides to measure the value of intentional preparation for worship. The results of the experiment show that preparing for worship does in general lead to more meaningful worship.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

On Sunday mornings at First Baptist Church Greenville, where I serve as the associate minister for spiritual formation, I see our members, along with visitors, faithfully file into the sanctuary to worship God as a church family. After the worship hour is over, I see those same faithful people file out, heading back to their homes after a nice lunch with their family and friends. I often wonder what their worship encounter was like. How many truly prepared their hearts and minds for a complete experience in which they fully participated in worshipping and receiving a word from God. I wonder if there are things that could be offered to facilitate more effective ways for individuals to prepare for worship. This project asks these questions and tests ways to help worshipers prepare for a deeper and more meaningful worship experience that begins well before the worship hour and whose effect and impact can be felt and witnessed beyond it.

Ministry Setting

First Baptist Church Greenville has approximately 2,200 members, is located just south of downtown Greenville, SC, and was involved in the founding of both the Southern Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The church has a long standing practice of discerning what God is doing in the community and faithfully responding, a practice that later led to its breaking away from these two institutions over, among other things, the issue of ordination of female ministers and deacons.

The same commitment to seeking God's spirit at work in the world can also be found in the church's commitment to providing warm and reverent Sunday worship. The service follows a basic four part structure: 1) gathering; 2) a word from God; 3) a response from the congregation; 4) a sending forth.¹ Our gathering section consists of an organ prelude followed by a greeting from the welcoming minister who then leads the congregation in responsive litanies and an opening prayer. A hymn brings everyone to their feet as the acolytes process in carrying the Christ candle and the Bible, followed by the choir, deacons and other robed ministers. After the congregation and any visitors have been welcomed and called into a time of worship, we are ready for a word from God. The morning's scripture passage is read aloud, followed by a call to prayer, sung by everyone, and then a pastoral prayer which is led by another minister. Next a children's hymn is sung by all and a minister leads the children's sermon which typically will pertain to the worship theme or scripture passage. After this the choir sings a choral piece leads into the sermon. After the sermon, the time of response or commitment begins. This includes: 1) the invitation hymn and introduction of new members or new professions of faith, 2) the invitation to offering and the offering itself, 3) communion (once a month), and 4) announcements, or what we call the service and fellowship of the church. The singing of the doxology signals the sending forth as the ministers follow the Christ candle and the Bible out of the sanctuary (and back into the world) while the congregation remains standing for the benediction and the choral blessing. The postlude signals the close of the service. The reason I chose to investigate enhancing the worship experience was not because I feel the worship hour at First Baptist was in need of improvement, but rather

¹ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint For Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 49.

because preparation to encounter God should always be taken seriously on the part of the worshiper, and the encouragement and guidance of this practice lies primarily, although not entirely, with church leadership. Indeed, each service is well thought out in its liturgy and choreography, intentional in its commitment to theme and season, and authentic in its primary devotion to and focus on God, and I am honored to be a part of the planning and leadership of such a well rounded hour of worship.

CHAPTER 2

Detailed Project Description

The idea for this project arose primarily from unintentional mini-experiments that have occurred over the years when I have been asked to teach in our adult Sunday School classes, which meet in the hour before our worship service. Instead of following a curriculum or a provided lesson format, I typically present the scripture passage on which the upcoming sermon will be based and expose the participants to its context and original meaning and also to various interpretive angles. I invite them to share what stood out to them during the reading and what struck them as familiar or new. This invitation and the responses spur conversation, which leads to deeper reflection and understanding of the text because we have all journeyed through a thirty minute discussion on the key passage around which the worship service to come will center. In addition to being enjoyable and helpful for me, I have received positive feedback from many of those in attendance because it enabled them to engage with the sermon more fully. Hearing from the class members immediately after the service or later that week, these lessons seemed to prepare them in such a way that they entered the worship service with hearts and minds more open to understanding the message of the sermon. In these examples of feedback, only their increased understanding of the sermon was discussed, but in this project I address being prepared for the entire worship service.

Ministry Question

Despite the care in planning these services, I sensed that for the typical worshiper there was a gap between the quality of the worship service that has been planned and the

quality of worship that is actually being experienced. A reason for the gap is a general misunderstanding of their role in worship that leads many congregants to approach worship passively. I believed most congregants see worship as entertainment and consumption, because they have never thought of it as anything else. Most have never been exposed to the Kierkegaardian framework of worship as theater.² His discussion of worship roles puts God as the audience, the congregation as active participants, and the ministers and priests as the initiators: “In the most earnest sense God is the critical theatergoer, who looks on to see how the lines are spoken and how they are listened to: hence here the customary audience is wanting. The speaker (the minister or priest) then is the prompter, and the listener (the congregant) stands openly before God. The listener, if I may say so, is the actor, who in all truth acts before God.”³ Since most worshipers do not approach worship this way, the result is that they believe they are “worshiping” by merely sitting and listening and witnessing a performance. This misunderstanding undercuts intentional engagement in the worship of God, which is active, not passive.⁴ Other factors that lead to this lack of active participation include a compressed and rushed sense of time on Sunday mornings at First Baptist, the family and social obligations that require one’s attention and physical presence, and perhaps, most importantly, a lack of awareness of how valuable pre-worship preparation might be. I designed this project in order to provide an easy and accessible pre-worship guide that

² Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 57.

³ Soren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing: Spiritual Preparation For the Office of Confession* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1948), 180-181.

⁴ C. Welton Gaddy. *The Gift of Worship*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 201.

might enable people to enter the worship service feeling like active participants rather than passive ones.

The feedback from those who participated in the Sunday School lessons that prepared them for a richer understanding of the sermon prompted me to ask myself the questions that this project answered: if worshipers intentionally prepare for worship ahead of time, will it have an impact on the quality of their worship experience? In other words, is it more helpful for worshipers to be able to arrive for worship prepared for the service in terms of planning, themes, sermon passage and music selections, or is there no added value in arriving more prepared? Therefore, the primary ministry question I tested at First Baptist Church Greenville was: would an intentional time of preparation for worship, offered to worshipers before the service in the form of a written guide, lead to a more meaningful worship experience?

A second variable, which has to do with the makeup and substance of the preparation guide, is relevant as well. Therefore, my second ministry question was: if indeed a preparation guide turned out to be a valuable way to prepare worshipers for worship, which of the following types of guides was the most effective: 1) a guide based on *lectio divina*, 2) a guide based on centering prayer, or 3) a guide that offers a prayerful preview of the worship service to come?

The starting point for my primary ministry question was the assumption that, in general, it would be beneficial for worshipers to engage in a pre-worship preparation process before entering a Sunday morning service. As for my second ministry question, before implementing the experiment, I felt that the guide that offered a prayerful tour of

the upcoming worship service using the order of worship would prove to be the biggest help in preparing the worshiper for a deeper more meaningful encounter with God.

Project Goal

Because I believed that there were barriers which hindered the members of First Baptist Church Greenville from experiencing worship as a way of deepening their relationship with God and their understanding of how to be God's people, the overall goal of this project was to see if there is something First Baptist Church Greenville can provide its members in order to help them enter into more meaningful worship.

Since this project tested whether a time of guided preparation prior to worship could enhance the experience of the worshiper, it is necessary to define what meaningful worship is and to establish what it is about worship that preparation might enhance. In its most basic form, worship is revelation and response - a word from God, both verbal and nonverbal, followed by human response.⁵ For the subjective purposes of this project's individual feedback and analysis, worship was defined to be meaningful when the worshiper enters the sanctuary with an authentic openness to hearing a word from God, when God is the center of the worshiper's focus and praise, and when the worshiper is challenged theologically to live and think in a more Christlike way. In addition, there are other subjective parameters that can help the worshiper reflect on her level of preparedness, her understanding of the worship service, and her level of participation.

⁵ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 8.

These parameters were also included in the post-worship survey that was used to measure and compare the worship encounters of the congregation during the project's time frame.⁶

Project Outline

- January, 2018 - Ministry Project Workshop
- February to April, 2018 - Develop proposal
- Summer, 2018 - Prepared for experiment and recruited participants
 - Identified the four Sundays for the worship experiment
- September, 2018 - Scheduled and arranged for all guided preparation sessions
 - Advertised for church members to sign up to participate
- October, 2018 - Implemented the experiment phase of the project during the four Sundays in October

Experiment Design

The experiment phase of this project was carried out over the course of the four Sundays in October of 2018. On each of these Sundays, between twenty and thirty participants reported to First Baptist Church Greenville's Carpenter Chapel, eager to take part in my project. As they arrived, participants checked in and signed the consent form (Appendix A). They were then given a packet containing a pre-worship guide (pp. 19-25), a participation checklist (shown below), that morning's order of worship (Appendix B), and a hard copy of the post-worship survey, which also can be found in Appendix C.

⁶ Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*, 201-223.
 Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, 279-296.
 Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 3-18.

The following participation schedule was listed on the front of each packet.

Participation Schedule

- 9:00 to 9:30 - Participants report to the Chapel and check in
- 9:30 to 9:45 - Participants are welcomed and given an overview by me
- 9:45 to 10:15 - Participants engage with the pre-worship guide found in their packet
- 10:30 to 11:30 - Participants attend worship in the Sanctuary
- 11:30 - Participants may choose to fill out the hard copy of the survey found in their packet or fill it out online using a specific link emailed to them by me after worship

Checklist for Participating Today

1. Participate in the pre-worship session in the Chapel
 - a. Sign consent form and check in
 - b. Grab a packet and an order of worship
 - c. Listen to my instructions, then open your packet, which contains a guide (note your unique ID Code printed at the top) and a survey
 - d. Carefully read through the guide in your packet and let it lead you through some pre-worship preparation steps
 - e. Keep both the guide (and your unique ID Code) and the post-worship survey; return the white and manila envelopes

2. Attend this morning's worship service

3. Complete the post-worship survey (use your ID Code)
 - a. An online post-worship survey will be emailed to you this afternoon, or
 - b. Fill out the hard copy of the post-worship survey, which can be found in the manila folder in your packet; return it to front desk after worship or to my office or box by Wednesday
 - c. Only complete one post-worship survey, please

When everyone had arrived, I welcomed the group to that morning's session, described my project in general terms, and explained what they are committing to by participating. In order to be consistent with each group of participants, I used the same

script for each of the four sessions.

Script for pre-Worship sessions

- Welcome and thank you
- Overview
 - “I am testing something, and by being here you are agreeing to....,” etc.
- Consent
 - “You have all signed a consent form. It says:”
 - “You are here voluntarily.”
 - “You may stop at any time.”
 - “Your responses will remain anonymous.”
- Contents of your packet
 - “A pre-worship guide that I have created.”
 - “This morning’s order of worship.”
 - “A post-worship survey that you will fill out after worship and return to me.”
- Participation
 - “Please read through your guide and participate fully; follow the instructions as best you can.”
 - “Attend worship as you normally would.”
 - “Fill out the post-worship survey (either the hard copy in the manila folder or using the link you will receive by email later today).”
 - Please be honest when filling out the post-worship survey; that’s the only way to help me

The Worship Preparation Guides

In order to test and measure the effects of intentional preparation for worship on the worshiper experience of First Baptist Church Greenville members, pre-worship guides served as the independent variables in the experiment. I implemented four guides for the project - three designed by me to be tested and one that was an adult Sunday School lesson that served as a placebo. The three guides I designed were: 1) a traditional centering prayer guide intended to encourage prayerful focus and openness, 2) one based on *lectio divina*, and 3) a prayerfully guided preview of the order of worship for the service to come. The fourth guide, a curriculum series called Reading Between the Lines, served as a placebo.⁷

The *Lectio Divina* Guide

Lectio Divina, or divine reading, is a call to intimacy with God, a way of hearing the word of God speaking to us and through us.⁸ The process is a repeated reading of the same scripture passage with the intention of internalizing the scripture itself.⁹

Lectio Divina is a way of engaging with the Bible as if we were talking with Christ.¹⁰ Its purpose is not information, but insight, not learning, but encounter.¹¹ In other

⁷ D. Andrew Kille, ed., Reading Between the Lines (Charlotte, NC: The Educational Center, 2018), October 7, 14, 21, and 2, 2018.

⁸ Thomas Keating. *Intimacy With God* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997), 21.

⁹ Keating, *Intimacy*, 53.

¹⁰ Thomas Keating. *Open Mind Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Co., 2000), 138.

words, *Lectio Divina* is a sort of preparation. For this reason, I selected it as the basis for one of my worship preparation guides.

A typical encounter using *lectio divina* would include four steps or levels that guide the reader through a progression of readings, each increasing in meaning and enlightenment until the desired or hoped for level of intimacy is reached. The monks of the middle ages called these four levels the “four senses of scripture.”¹² Those four senses are: 1) *Lectio*, or reading and carefully, deeply listening to the scripture; 2) *Meditatio*, or meditation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; 3) *Oratio*, or affective prayer, a turning of the heart toward God; and finally 4) *Contemplatio*, or contemplation, or resting in God, the final level.¹³

Using this framework, I designed a pre-worship guide that would resemble these four senses of *lectio divina*, but that would also fit into the 45 minute time frame of our pre-worship sessions. The worshipers who received this guide in the pre-worship session they attended were instructed to engage with the morning’s scripture passage using my adapted *lectio divina* process. The guide that was used in the pre-worship sessions is provided below.

¹¹ Keating, *Intimacy*, 46.

¹² Keating, *Intimacy*, 46.

¹³ Carl Arico. *A Taste of Silence: A Guide to the Fundamentals of Centering Prayer* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Co., 2004), 105.

ID CODE for survey _____

[The entire scripture passage was provided each week in this space for the participants to use.]

1. Read the passage through.
 - a. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, apply the text to your life.
2. Read the passage again.
 - a. Open your heart to God
3. Read the passage once more.
 - a. Rest in God.
4. Read the passage a final time.
 - a. Turn your heart toward worship.

The Centering Prayer Guide

Centering Prayer, a method of prayer we know about thanks to *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a fourteenth century work by an anonymous writer, and to St. John of the Cross, is used to bring the praying individual into the presence of God, and to foster the contemplative attitudes of receptivity and listening.¹⁴ The roots of its reclamation for contemporary Christians reach back only to the second half of the twentieth century at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, where Thomas Keating was abbot. Not an

¹⁴ Keating, *Intimacy*, 11.

end in itself, centering prayer is an entry point to contemplative prayer.¹⁵ It is a way of being available to the presence of God.¹⁶ It can allow us to consent to God's presence more fully.¹⁷ Centering prayer also has a corporate element to it. When praying this deeply, it invites a bond and unity with those in the faith community.¹⁸

I chose this model as one of my guides because it is not corporate worship itself; however, it can be a way to enter into corporate worship more prepared to be open to the presence of God. The centering prayer guide used by the participants in the project is provided below.

ID CODE for survey _____

(with order of worship in hand)

1. Choose a sacred word from the order of worship as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
 - a. The sacred word expresses intention to be in God's presence and to yield to the divine action.
 - b. The sacred word should be chosen during a period of prayer asking the holy spirit to inspire us with one that is especially suitable.
 - c. Having chosen a sacred, do not change it during the prayer period.

¹⁵ Keating, *Open Mind Open Heart*, 109.

¹⁶ Keating, *Intimacy*, 36.

¹⁷ Keating, *Open Mind Open Heart*, 139.

¹⁸ Keating, *Intimacy*, 33.

2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
 - a. Sit comfortably enough, preferably with back straight, to avoid thinking about any discomfort associated with your body.
 - b. Close your eyes to let go of what is going on around and within.
 - c. Introduce the sacred word inwardly and as gently as laying a feather on a piece of absorbent cotton.
3. When you become aware of thoughts, which are a normal part of centering prayer, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Order of Worship Guide

The worship order guide is a prayerful overview of the service. The purpose of this guide was to give the worshiper a chance to preview the elements of the service so that familiarity could begin to form and so that the worship service would not be the first time the worshiper is exposed to the liturgies, the music, the scripture, the printed prayers, and other elements of the service.

I chose and designed these three types of guides so that the different approaches to worship preparation they each represent could be tested for effectiveness in how well they enhance the worship experiences of my project's participants. The centering prayer guide focused on the worshiper's open heart and receptivity. The *Lectio Divina* based guide allowed the worshiper to engage in the scripture in a prayerful way before the

service begins. The worship order guide was meant to provide the worshiper with a tour of the service ahead of time to allow a sense of familiarity to result in focused engagement. This guide is provided below.

ID CODE for survey _____

Call to Worship (with worship order in hand, imagine being called or summoned by God into a specific time of worship)

- Look at the front page
- Note any mention of the calendar year and any special worship elements for this service
- Note the care that went into planning this service and printing this order of worship
- Read the opening sentences
- Reread them
- Reflect on the themes or words that stand out to you.

Word from God

- Read the scripture passage (the passage for each week's service was printed on the reverse)
- What themes or words stand out?
- Note the sermon title. How would you preach from this scripture passage?

Pastoral prayer

- Quietly voice the pastoral prayer you might offer during the service

Response

- If able, look up and read any hymn or special music lyrics
- Read the printed offering scripture
- Briefly pray an offertory prayer that you would pray
- Pray for anyone...
 - Considering joining the church
 - Struggling

Sending Forth

- Read through the upcoming events in the Life of the church
 - How is God working in those opportunities
 - How do they relate to the mission of First Baptist Greenville
- Read or sing the printed Doxology
- What benediction or blessing do you think God would want the congregation to hear before being sent back out into the world?

Imagine the worship of God continuing even as you head back to your home and into your weekday routine and interactions.

The Placebo Guide

A fourth guide that I utilized for this project had no bearing on this experiment. Its purpose was to discern the presence of what is commonly known as a placebo effect, where results of an experiment can be affected by the anticipation of the experiment rather than by the experiment itself.¹⁹ Placebos are typically used in experiments related

¹⁹ R. Barker Bausell, *Snake Oil Science: The Truth About Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25.

to medical research and in experiments where a product is expected to positively impact the participants' condition, state, or illness. This is accomplished by employing double blind experiments where neither the participants nor the experiment leader knows who is receiving the test therapy or product or the placebo therapy or product. Therefore, using placebo groups is an excellent way to monitor the bias of anticipating a positive outcome that might impact the comparative results of the experiment.²⁰

For placebo in this project's experiment, I decided to use a basic adult curriculum that was not used at First Baptist Church Greenville, but that would be reasonably expected to be taught and discussed in a typical adult Sunday School gathering anywhere else and that might reasonably be expected to be the actual pre-worship guide that I was testing. This guide was actually a series of four lessons unrelated at all to this project. The lessons were published by Reading Between the Lines for each of the four Sundays of the experiment.²¹

The Worship Services

The worship services and the post-worship survey served together as the dependent variable, the results that changed depending on which guide was used. The participant's worship experience is the actual dependent variable, while the post-worship survey, which captures that experience using scales ranging from 1 to 10, is the record of that dependent variable. The orders of worship for the four October services are provided in Appendix B.

²⁰ Bausell, 25.

²¹ Andrew D. Kille, ed., Reading Between the Lines.

The Post-Worship Survey

The post-worship survey, which participants from both the test group and the control group completed in order to record their feelings about their worship experience, is the dependent variable of the experiment. I designed the first sets of questions to cover the worshipers' impressions of the full worship experience across several categories. These quantitative post-worship survey questions can be sorted into three types of questions: 1) *connection questions*, 2) *core questions*, and 3) *retention questions*. *Connection questions* asked about both the worshipers' role in the service and their relationship with other worshipers. They also asked how the service helped connect them to their role in the community. *Core questions* on the other hand focused on aspects of the worship experience having to do with one's identification with the major movements of the service, with the worshipers' impression of preparedness before and after worship, and with their understanding of one's encounter with God overall. Lastly, responses to the *retention questions* simply reported how much of the content of the various parts of the service were remembered by the worshiper. The questions are grouped below and numbered as they were in the actual post-worship survey given to participants.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent...

- 9) ...did you feel a connection to the hymns and music?
- 10) ...did you feel like an active participant in worship?
- 11) ...did the sermon help you identify God's activity in the world through the scripture passage?
- 12) ...did the sermon help you understand the church's role in the community?

13) ...did you feel stretched or challenged during the service?

15) ...did you feel a sense of Christian community and connection with other worshipers?

CORE QUESTIONS

On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent...

8) ...did you feel a sense of summons or call to worship?

16) ...did you feel you heard a word from God in the worship service?

18) ...did you respond in some way to God during worship?

17) ...did you feel prepared to go back out into the world at the end of the service?

7) ...did you feel prepared to worship God?

14) ...did you feel the presence of God in worship?

29?) ...do you feel that using a worship preparation guide helped you have a more meaningful worship experience?

RETENTION QUESTIONS

19) ...Around what passage of scripture did the service center?

20) ...In what ways did you notice themes from the scripture passage turning up in other elements of the service?

21) ...In a short sentence or phrase, what would you say was the primary theme of the sermon? *

22) ...Can you recall the sermon title?

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

23. ...How do you measure and/or or evaluate your worship experiences?

24. ...What does "meaningful worship" mean to you?
25. ...What role and responsibility as a worshiper in a pew do you believe you play during worship services?
26. ...How do you feel about being challenged or stretched during worship services?
27. ...In what ways is corporate worship (with other worshipers) important to your worship experience?
28. ...Did your participation in this project (attending a pre-worship preparation session immediately before attending a worship service at First Baptist Church Greenville) change your understanding of the nature or purpose of worship? If so, in what way?

Participant Selection

For this experiment, there were two groups of participants - the test group and the control group. Test group participants and control group participants were invited to participate in different ways. I wanted enough participants to establish significant results; however, the pool of participants was limited to those within the congregation willing to help. Therefore, in order to maximize interest from our members, I used our church's weekly newsletter, the best and most effective way to invite potential volunteers.

Test group participants were solicited well ahead of time, more than one month before the experiment phase of the project was implemented. I submitted an article in our newsletter encouraging readers to find out more about being involved in a "worship experiment" in October. Those interested were provided a link to my SignUp Genius account, where a complete description of expectations, time commitment and potential benefits were described. The names listed on the SignUp Genius sheet by October 3rd

were sent an email with instructions about where to report and when. These names made up the test group and were able to choose which Sunday in October they participated. The article is below.

Matt's Doctor of Ministry Project

I need participants for an experiment! This experiment, a ministry project that I have been developing for the past few months, is a worship experiment and represents the final hoop through which I need to jump in order to satisfy Gardner-Webb's requirements for my Doctor of Ministry degree. Many of you have been asking about my progress the past couple of years and cheering me on. Others of you had no idea I was back in school at all! Whichever camp you fall in, I could use your help for one Sunday in October (you choose the Sunday!). I am very excited about this "experiment," and for it to be successful and meaningful, I need plenty of participants (up to 120 in fact!). That's where you come in. If you are interested, please click the link below and sign up for one of the Sundays in October. Your voluntary participation will include 1) attending a thirty minute session during the Sunday School hour, 2) attending the worship service that follows and then 3) filling out a very brief and completely confidential survey. Pretty easy, right?

If you are interested in participating, please click the link below and select a Sunday that might work for you. I will then contact you by email in the days leading up to October with instructions about where to be and when. In the meantime, if you have any questions at all, please contact me at matt.rollins@firstbaptistgreenville.com.

Matt

(SignUp Genius link to volunteer to participate was here)

**Signing up for participation using this link DOES NOT obligate you to participate, and you may withdraw from the exercise at any time.*

The control group participants consisted of worshipers who did not go through a pre-worship session with me in the Chapel. They only attended worship. The way they were invited to volunteer as a control group participant was by responding to a mass email I sent out each Sunday immediately after worship to adult email addresses from our church membership database. On the first Sunday, I emailed all church members with a last name that began with anything from A to F. On the second Sunday, members with last names that began with anything between G and K received the email, and so on until all church members received this email from me by the fourth Sunday. In order to make sure that test group participants, repeat participants, and those who had not attended worship on that particular morning did not accidentally respond to my email and fill out the survey, I included the following message in the emails:

Good afternoon,

If you attended worship at First Baptist Church Greenville this morning, I would like to hear about your experience, so if you have a few minutes, please keep reading and see if you "qualify" to take this particular post-worship survey.

To "qualify" for this particular post-worship survey, all four statements below must be true.

1) I attended worship at First Baptist Church Greenville, SC, today, the

morning of October 21st, 2018.

- 2) I did NOT attend a pre-worship session just before worship in the Chapel, led by Matt Rollins.
- 3) I have not signed up to attend any of the other pre-worship sessions in the Chapel in October, and I am not planning to attend one either.
- 4) The three statements above are all true, and I am willing to participate in this project by clicking the link below and filling out the post-worship survey.

(post-worship survey link was here)

Thank you and God bless!

Matt

CHAPTER 3

Biblical and Theological Reflection

Why was this project of interest to me, and how was it warranted biblically and theologically? I explored the topic of worship preparation in this project because I wanted to make sure First Baptist Church Greenville was doing what it could to help the congregation engage in meaningful worship at our weekly Sunday services. I believed an increase in preparedness for worship could lead to a deeper, more meaningful encounter with God, and also to transformation in one's life outside of worship. Potential obstacles to experiencing meaningful worship in any church include the following: 1) not feeling open to God's presence when entering the sanctuary; 2) unfamiliarity and confusion during the service itself, and 3) a misunderstanding of the role of the worshiper, which can lead to passivity.²² Since these obstacles are not new to the worship of God, as part of my research into overcoming them, I looked both to the Bible and to worship trends across the history of the church for support.

For my biblical rationale, I explored four passages of scripture - two from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. These passages were Exod. 19:1-20, Neh. 8:1-12, Rom. 12:1-2, and 1 Cor. 11-14. Taken together, these passages show the importance of participation and comprehension in worship, aspects of worship that I believed would increase with proper preparation.

²² Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 60.

Old Testament Rationale

Exodus 19:1-21 and Preparation for Worship

The first formal meeting between the Israelites and Yahweh, known as the “Sinai Event” since it occurs at the foot of Mt. Sinai, is described in Exod. 19. I felt this passage was relevant to this project because the people are commanded to prepare themselves before approaching the space where the meeting will occur. Although the Mt. Sinai event itself predates formal worship gatherings associated with the temple period, the solemnity of the assembly, the mediation of the gathering and the set boundaries between the people and the presence of God certainly point to the later temple structure, the mountain serving as a sort of holy of holies.²³ Being the pivotal event in the history of the Israelites’ journey which set them apart as a priestly nation that would be treasured above all others, the people needed to prepare to fill this role in the world.²⁴ Likewise, the people needed to prepare for their meeting with God at Mt. Sinai.

The piece relevant to this project is the period of intentional consecration that God demands of the Israelites before the meeting can occur. Yahweh lets it be known that it is not appropriate for the Israelites to show up to this meeting as if it were just another gathering among themselves. They have been invited to meet the Lord, and there must be some sort of preparation. This preliminary step underscores the importance of being ready to encounter God, be it at the foot of Mount Sinai or in a modern day sanctuary on a Sunday morning.

²³ Jeffrey Tigay, “Exodus,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 105.

²⁴ Robert Alter, *The five books of Moses : a Translation with Commentary* (NY: Norton and Co., 2004), 422-23.

Summary and Interpretation of Exodus 19:1-21

As the passage opens, three months into their journey out of Egypt, the Israelites enter the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp at the foot of Mt. Sinai. God addresses Moses and instructs him to tell the people they will now be in holy covenant with the one who liberated them from Egypt; if they will obey the voice of the Lord and keep a covenant, they will be “a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.” Moses takes the terms of the covenant to the Israelites via the elders of the people, which the people accept by responding, “Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do.” Upon agreement of the terms, God tells Moses that he and the Israelites should expect in the next few days an appearance by their new covenant partner in a dense cloud. In anticipation of this meeting, a requirement of consecration is set forth by God so that the people will be properly prepared. The list of actions required to attain this state of purity includes washing their clothes, abstaining from women and keeping clear of the boundaries set forth at Sinai by God to maintain a physical separation.²⁵

In return, on the morning of the third day, the people are granted direct corporate access to God, who signals his holy presence with thunder and lightning, smoke and fire and a loud trumpet blast. Moses sets Mt. Sinai as the boundary past which the people may not pass. Moses serves as mediator, climbing to and descending from the top of the mountain to communicate with and deliver messages from the Lord.

The element of worship highlighted in this first meeting and measured in this project is intentional preparation, which in this case is required by Yahweh before the meeting can occur. While the contexts of post-Exodus Israelite life and 21st century

²⁵Walter Brueggemann, “Exodus” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 1. Ed. Leander Keck. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 833.

Baptist life represent two different approaches to preparation for worship, the principle is the same: to meet and worship God, one should prepare. Just as the Israelites were commanded to observe a period of consecration before gathering at the foot of Mt. Sinai to meet God, the modern day worshiper should be prepared for such encounters as well.²⁶ The preparation process satisfies the demands set forth by God, but another, perhaps indirect, purpose of the process is to make clear to the Israelites, and to the modern day worshiper, the danger they invite into their lives by approaching this mighty, holy presence.²⁷ Indeed, the mountain itself is set as a boundary for the protection of the Israelites themselves.²⁸ God wants them to gather, but not too close since there is risk involved when responding to God for worship. After encounters with God in worship, lives are at risk to be changed, and comfort zones might be challenged, but preparation helps brace for the jarring nature of God-initiated transformation.

The Israelites were instructed to wash their clothes and avoid contact with women. Each of these instructions served to focus the attention of the Israelites on the encounter with Yahweh. The washing of the clothes is a way to set apart the significance of the gathering, and the requirement to stay away from women is a precursor to the purity laws that will be given to Moses after the gathering. Yahweh is calling a special meeting, one which will require preparation, focus, and bringing one's best. For this project, I focused on the same principle of preparation that would increase focus and attention, and adjusted the details to fit the context of First Baptist Church Greenville.

²⁶ Walter Brueggemann, "Exodus," *NIB* vol. 1, 833.

²⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 569.

²⁸ William Johnston, *Exodus 1-19*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2014), 91.

Understanding and Response to Worship in Nehemiah 8:1-12

In Neh. 8, a group of Jewish people gathers, eager to hear Ezra the scribe offer a public reading of the book of the law. This will be the first gathering near the temple since the building of the wall after their return from Babylon.²⁹ In the passage, the reading of scripture is itself the point of the gathering, an abbreviated worship service centered around the hearing of the word of God. Two things from the passage stand out as elements of worship relevant to this project: 1) the emphasis on the people understanding the reading of scripture and 2) their response to the reading.

Summary and Interpretation of Nehemiah 8:1-12

A group of Jewish men and women, recently returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile, gather to hear God's word from Ezra the scribe. The gathered assembly calls for Ezra to bring the scroll and read. Standing on a wooden platform, Ezra invokes God's blessing and reads from early morning until midday. During the reading, elders in attendance walk throughout the crowd, assisting the people with understanding and translating the words that Ezra was reading. "They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8b).

The people respond to the reading at first with weeping, but Ezra, Nehemiah and the Levites urge them to, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord;

²⁹Paul L. Redditt, *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Co., 2014), 280.

and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” This then becomes the response of the people - eating, drinking and sending portions to the less fortunate.

Although not necessarily a worship service, this account of Ezra reading the book of the law to the gathered people can be viewed as an etiology for future synagogue worship structure. It exemplifies the importance of engaged comprehension during and intentional response after holy gatherings.³⁰ Ezra, although a scribe in vocation, operates more like a priest in this story. Just as Moses mediates the delivery of the Law from God in Exod. 19, Ezra mediates its reading to them.³¹ The assembly is active. The phrase “all the people” occurs several times and emphasizes the involvement of everyone, especially with respect to understanding the reading itself.³² For example, since hearing the reading of the law would most likely have been a new experience for most of them, a barrier almost certainly existed between them and the law’s meaning. Ezra therefore makes arrangements for help with translation and interpretation. In an effort to help explain and interpret, elders gathered in support to give people the sense of the readings in order for them to understand them better.³³ To those gathered, the value of this public reading is not measured by their mere presence alone; they must understand what is being conveyed through the reading as well. This project explored one way the church might also be able

³⁰ Ralph W. Klein, “Nehemiah,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*. Vol. 3. Ed. Leander Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 801

³¹ Hindy Najman, “Nehemiah,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1699.

³² Mark Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox press, 1992), 96.

³³ Franklin M. Segler, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1967), 122.

to provide valuable instructive and interpretive assistance to worshipers before the service, during an intentional time of preparation.

In addition to understanding the reading from the book of the law, the passage also highlights the people's response to it. After the time of reading is completed, it is reported that the people, "went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them" (Neh. 8:12). This response implies that the reading, and its comprehension, made a significant impression on the hearers and altered the way they saw the world.³⁴ This project also tested and measured how being prepared for worship correlated to being challenged to see the world in a different way.

Ezra's reading of the book of the law to the gathered Jewish people emphasizes the importance of both understanding and response on the part of the people. These two elements are also vital to Christian worship in the 21st century. Could guided times of preparation before the worship hour enhance its comprehension? Would this enhance understanding of the sermon as well, and then will consistently increased levels of understanding lead to transformation and response, as it did with those who gathered to listen to Ezra? In this project, based on the example recorded in Nehemiah, I tested whether preparation before worship could enhance the experience with respect to these two elements.

³⁴ Klein, "Nehemiah," *NIB*, 800.

New Testament Rationale

Romans 12:1-2 and Engagement in Worship

Paul asserts in Rom. 12 that the whole self is to be presented to God in both life and in worship.³⁵ Our worship experience should be comprehensive, requiring sacrifice of our hearts and minds to be offered up to God in hopes of transformation. One obstacle to devoting our whole selves to the worship of God is divided attention. Based on this passage about individual commitment to the Christian life through the lens of worship, this project addressed the sense of responsibility to piety, reverence, and commitment set forth in these two verses.

Summary and Interpretation of Romans 12:1-2

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

One difference between the worship of Exodus and the Old Testament and the worship of the early Christian church is the shift from sacrifice of plants and animals to an inner sacrifice.³⁶ In the context of the early church and of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome, this is a true sacrifice to God and represents a commitment to an internal

³⁵ N. T. Wright, “Romans,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*. Vol. 10. Ed. Leander Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 704.

³⁶ Andrew B. McGowan. *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 4.

transformation, effectively replacing temple worship as it once existed.³⁷ Paul calls this our spiritual worship, a worship which requires one's whole life and one's full attention. For the church in Rome, especially those Jewish Christians raised on ritual sacrifice in the temple, the sacrifice of the self is to happen in everyday life, not only in the temple and not in a perfunctory way.³⁸ Indeed, the language of offering their own physical body, *somata*, as sacrifice would probably have been jarring in many ways to them.³⁹ This is a new mindset, where there are no individuals set apart to perform the duties of Old Testament priests. Rather, the worshiper brings his or her own worship and behavior and life as the sacrifice.⁴⁰

The description of the sacrifice as living, holy, and acceptable, provides the key to its character: one that continues on a daily basis, not just at times of offering.⁴¹ Service is truly rendered to God when worship evokes a spirit of sacrifice from the worshiper.⁴² Offering oneself as a sacrifice requires worshipers to be more prepared for revelation from God as they enter the sanctuary, thus enabling them to be more open to being transformed as they return to their daily lives, better able to represent Christ in the

³⁷ Leander E. Keck. *Romans. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*: (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 691.

Wright, "Romans," NIB, 704

³⁸ Charles Talbert, *Romans*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 281.

³⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters and Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 291.

John Reumann. "Romans," *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. "Romans" (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 1304.

⁴⁰ John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1996), 28-29.

⁴¹ Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters and Thought*, 291.

⁴² Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 58.

world.⁴³ Thus, the offering of oneself in worship would be the result of intentional discernment prior to worship, a sort of preparation, and should likewise result in sustained internal transformation and renewal of the mind outside of worship as well.⁴⁴ Paul calls this a renewal of the mind, which in the terms of my project, I felt was analogous to preparation. It is a yielding to God before worship.⁴⁵ Therefore, based on Paul's discussion of offering oneself as a living sacrifice and my comparison of it to offering one's complete attention to worship and Christian life, I designed this project to explore a practical way for the church to provide a mechanism of preparation that might encourage worshipers to enter fully into God's presence so they can "leave transformed according to God's best purposes."⁴⁶

1 Corinthians 11-14 and Corporate Worship

Another aspect of worship that I tested in this project was the connection worshipers have and the role worshipers play with respect to the rest of the church during worship. The issue of these spiritual dynamics is addressed in 1 Cor. 11-14. In these chapters, Paul takes up the issue of attitude of the individual during worship with respect to spiritual things such as prayer and spiritual gifts, as well as the relationship between fellow brothers and sisters within their worship services. While the disagreements Paul

⁴³ Gary A. Furr and Milburn Price, *The Dialogue of Worship: Creating Space for Revelation and Response* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1998), 15.

⁴⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 192.

⁴⁵ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 442.

⁴⁶ Marva Dawn, *Reaching out Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995) 116.

seeks to settle in this particular first century setting are not what concerns my project, the principles he sets forth in his argument are relevant to it. The end result of Paul's comments on this matter to the church is that proper motivation and attitude are essential to true worship, which is corporate in nature and takes into account the relationship to other worshipers, to social constructs, and to religious contexts.

Summary and Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11-14

Paul begins his four-chapter discussion of worship issues in the Corinthian church with a few observations of physical matters. These physical matters are head coverings and hair styles with respect to prayer and eating habits related to the observance of the Lord's Supper. The first discussion, addressed in 1 Cor. 11:2-16, concerns gender identity and gender roles in worship. Paul explains that when praying, women should have their head covered, and men should not. Not much in the way of evidence or proof is given in the discussion; rather, it comes across as a reminder rather than new information. Paul seems to be encouraging both cultural norms and unified worship over and above individual expression.⁴⁷ Nevertheless I see this as one way the Corinthians were being asked to prepare by Paul. To meet his expectations, they must think about worship ahead of time and ask themselves what is appropriate attire for this important gathering, and how will that affect other worshipers and their experience? Thinking about worship ahead of time is preparation.

Along similar lines, Paul addresses how selfish behavior during the Lord's Supper, which, in this case, was actually part of a larger supper served to everyone as

⁴⁷ Robert Scott Nash. *1 Corinthians*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2009), 334.

they arrived, is also divisive rather than constructive.⁴⁸ He mentions how some are eating and drinking too much while others go without. This unworthy approach to communion is dangerous both to the health of the church and of the individuals: “Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves” (1 Cor. 11:28). Paul contrasts the practice of the Lord’s Supper by the Corinthian church, as it stands at the time of the writing, with the tradition handed down to him by the Lord and which he had passed along to them (1 Cor. 11:23-26). These two versions had become different to the point of dishonor to both the meal itself as well as to the point of it.⁴⁹ Paul encourages them to return to a Lord’s Supper that will both honor their commitment to Christ and that will foster the fellowship of the church as a whole.⁵⁰ Similar to the idea of thinking ahead about clothing, Paul seems to be suggesting a similar solution to prevent the food from running out. Since those who were last to arrive were not necessarily guaranteed enough to eat because of the appetites of those in the front of the line, Paul suggests the early arrivers consider eating ahead of time in consideration of those who might get left out. This is again a kind of preparation that Paul is suggesting in this discussion about eating: plan ahead and eat at home if you have the means to do so. This intentional decision to ensure everyone has access to the food is a Christian act in Paul’s eyes. It would have theological meaning. Furthermore, it would occur well before the worship service, which would have made it a preparatory act as well.

⁴⁸ Robin Meyers, *The Underground Church: Reclaiming the Subversive way of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 184.

⁴⁹ Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 347.

⁵⁰ J. Paul Sampley. “The First Letter to the Corinthians” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Vol. 10*. Ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 938.

In 1 Cor. 12, Paul engages their understanding of spiritual gifts. His primary point is that spiritual gifts, while taking on many forms and levels of usefulness, nevertheless are given by the same Spirit. He goes on to compare the human body and the parts who serve specific purposes with the new body of Christ, each member of which is similarly called to serve in roles that accomplish and further the goal of a higher purpose. In this chapter, Paul lays out his theology of unity in spirit through diversity of gifts. In general, Paul celebrates the zeal in their willingness to embrace spiritual gifts; however, he finds it necessary to warn them against using these gifts in ways that divide rather than unite.⁵¹ He closes the chapter in v. 31 with a promise to show them, “a still more excellent way.” This basic principle of using gifts for the common good, introduced in this chapter, is the groundwork for the larger conversation about corporate worship that will come in chapters thirteen and fourteen.⁵²

Paul, in 1 Cor. 13, continues his discussion of appropriate use of spiritual gifts begun in the previous chapter by focusing on love as the more excellent way he references there.⁵³ Although commonly read in weddings for the purpose of emphasizing the role of love in Christian marriage, Paul’s original intent for this passage was to emphasize the role of love as the foundation for all worthy uses of spiritual gifts. He argues that good deeds, prophetic powers, and even faith are nothing without love, *agape*, as the underlying motivation for those actions.

Paul explains in 1 Cor. 13:8-10 that the reason love is so important when speaking of spiritual gifts is that love will indeed still be around when prophesying, speaking in

⁵¹ Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 365.

⁵² Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 946.

⁵³ Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 372.

tongues, and even knowledge have all come to an end. Love, the spirit-given foundation for gifts, is permanent, whereas the tools that come from it, spiritual gifts and other holy tools at our disposal, are not. Love is eternal, brings fulfillment to God-given gifts, and seeks to build up others. This is the point Paul is driving home: if love is not behind it, they are to understand that it did not come from the Spirit.⁵⁴ Therefore, Paul reminds the Corinthians to examine the motivation behind the use of the gifts they embrace and use in worship. This discernment process would presumably have come at a time and place outside of the worship service, and might have resulted in an increased state of focus and openness to worship much like what I tested and measure in this project.

In the next chapter, 1 Cor. 14, Paul builds on his discussion about the importance of love as motivation for using spiritual gifts in worship and the life of the church. In 1 Cor. 14:1, he says to, “pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy.” Again, love must be connected to spiritual gifts. He continues in the first half of the passage by connecting these spiritual gifts to their practical use in worship, arguing for intelligibility in worship, and in the second half of the passage, encouraging its orderliness.⁵⁵ The communication of a worship service, and its intelligibility, defines the worship community.⁵⁶ Paul points out how they were prizing certain individual forms of spiritual gifts over corporate forms, a sure sign that love is not at the center of their use in worship (1 Cor. 14:2, 6, 9). The example Paul uses is the difference between speaking in tongues, merely an individual spiritual gift if not

⁵⁴ Sampley, “1 Corinthians,” *NIB X*, 955.

⁵⁵ Stephen C. Barton. “1 Corinthians,” *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 1344.

⁵⁶ Barton, “1 Corinthians”, 1344.

interpreted, and prophecy, a catchall term for teaching, preaching, encouraging and consoling, which benefits and builds up the entire gathering. If love is truly the foundation for using a spiritual gift, then it will edify the entire congregation, not just the individual, allowing true integration and full inclusion of the entire body to occur.⁵⁷ In addition, Paul references those instances when a worship service must also have value for an outsider - a member of the host's household or perhaps even a walk-in guest - who might be present and in need of inclusion in worship as well.⁵⁸ The principle holds true for modern day outsiders, those we would call guests visiting the church. Worship services that encourage outreach and a feeling of welcome to these "outsiders" is evangelistic.⁵⁹

Paul's discussion about spiritual gifts and worship demonstrates how he values corporate worship services which are both spiritually efficient and which result in understanding by all participants. These are practical points.⁶⁰ Speaking in tongues is a worship element directed to God, but unintelligible for everyone else; prophesying adds to worship understanding and increases its effectiveness for both the individuals involved and for the church in general.⁶¹ Some of worship is offering praise and conveying worth to God, but hearing from God is also a part of worship, and worship services that do not

⁵⁷ Sampley, "1 Corinthians," *NIB X*, 962.

⁵⁸ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 44.

⁵⁹ Nash. *1 Corinthians*, 378.

⁶⁰ Sampley, "1 Corinthians," *NIB X*, 960.

⁶¹ Richard B. Hays. *First Corinthians*. Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 235 and 238).

foster this hearing are not effective.⁶² Paul normalizes the fact that everyone plays a part in worship.⁶³ Paul reminds the Corinthians, and us, that worship is not only vertical. It also has a horizontal nature to it.⁶⁴

Overall, Paul takes a specific issue in the Corinthian church - inappropriate and impractical use of the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues - and produces a general theological argument for how to discern and use spiritual gifts for the benefit of the entire congregation in a decent and orderly way.⁶⁵ Since the worshipers are the ones leading in worship with their spiritual gifts, achieving this decent and orderly way would require intentional preparation and thought by them. It would have required an adjustment of attitude and expectation. Although not the same as a guided pre-worship process, this kind of preparation that Paul seems to suggest to the Corinthians would have resulted in a similar adjustment of focus and attitude that I hoped my guides would provide.

Paul spends a full four chapters emphasizing how to view, prepare for, and approach worship more responsibly and more theologically. His examples include normalized conventions of attire and abuses of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11, and in the three ensuing chapters, how the use of spiritual gifts can either benefit or take away from worship services, depending on whether or not they are intentionally used for the good of the church as a whole. The principle of worship preparation found in these four chapters that I tested and measured in this project concerned the kind of pre-worship preparation that builds up the church as a whole: 1) deciding ahead of time to wear appropriate

⁶² Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 491, 493.

⁶³ Robert Webber. *Worship, Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 47.

⁶⁴ Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 8.

⁶⁵ Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 384.

clothing, which will minimize distractions to others, 2) planning to eat before worship so that everyone will have enough at the table, and 3) thinking about ways to utilize spiritual gifts so that everyone benefits from that element of worship.

In Summary, based on the biblical principles of worship found in Exod. 19 (preparation), Neh. 8 (understanding and response), Rom. 12 (commitment and transformation) and 1 Cor. 11- 14 (intentional and thoughtful worship that builds up the church), this project tested and measured how intentional preparation would enhance the experience of worshipers with respect to readiness, understanding, commitment and transformation, and connection to the corporate nature of worship.

Theological Rationale

In addition to selected passages from scripture, I also looked to Christian history to see how major trends and movements in worship life might inform this project's goals and methods. Since my ministry question is based on worship engagement on the part of the individual, in this section I explored broad, easily identifiable trends in worship across the centuries and the ways they have both facilitated and prevented more active worship on the part of the layperson. Since it was not possible to justly cover the numerous trends, movements, shifts, and reforms across the history of worship, in this section, I have instead traced the underlying tension between worship that would involve full participation by the people and worship that would leave them passive. Throughout this span, in what ways has the church created space for God's people to worship fully and to be active participants in the life of the church? In what ways has the church

responded to the consistent activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church to allow for more authentic worship by God's people?⁶⁶ In what ways has it not done so?

Broad Worship Trends in Historical Context

Even though not much is known about their exact structure, the worship of the first Christian communities certainly included elements of singing, scripture reading, prayer, and preaching.⁶⁷ These assemblies also appear to have revolved around the sharing of meals, and by the turn of the first century, according to the *Didache*, gatherings involved two meals - one of sustenance and the eucharist.⁶⁸ In these celebrations of the eucharist, the early church placed an emphasis on the presence of Christ, not merely the remembrance of Christ, and participation on the part of the people was expected; thus worship involved an intentional "entering into," not merely a passive receiving of information.⁶⁹ By the time of Justin Martyr in the mid-second century, the eucharist was merely one part of the service. An excellent example of active scripture reading is found in his *Apology*, when after scripture is read, the leader encourages the people to pursue "imitation of these things."⁷⁰ This second century work provides the oldest known outline of a typical Christian worship service. His descriptions of the eucharist, the collection of alms, standing prayer and the encouragement by the leader

⁶⁶ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 93.

⁶⁷ Baker and Landers, *A Summary of Christian History*, 51.

⁶⁸ Andrew McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 31, 37-38.

⁶⁹ Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 44-45.

⁷⁰ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 164.

directed at the people are all examples of a very active group of worshipers.⁷¹ By the third century, services began to be organized into two distinct parts - the service of the Word and the service of the Table.⁷² This two-part structure of worship was a natural division of ancient liturgy and continued to exist as an invitational and participatory gathering. Into the 4th and 5th centuries, liturgies began to take shape and to even become regionalized.⁷³

Active participation by the people continued to wane over the next few centuries until worship became a priest-dominated ceremony, and came to be seen as a mystery, too important to be in the hands of the lay worshipers.⁷⁴ Priests began to be seen as mediators of worship and of the presence of Christ, and worshipers were seen more and more as attendees.⁷⁵ In this shift, the Lord's Supper became the centerpiece of worship, diminishing the role of preaching, scripture, and prayer, all elements that naturally lend themselves to participation.⁷⁶ The state of priest-dominated worship continued from 500 CE all the way to the sixteenth century, perpetuating a barrier between the people and God, and eventually becoming one of the drivers of the changes that occurred in the Reformation.

As the Reformation began to take shape in the sixteenth century, new approaches to worship developed out of the movement's larger changes, each with the goal of

⁷¹ Segler, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, 36.

⁷² Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 95.

⁷³ Webber, ed., Lloyd G. Patterson, *Twenty Centuries of Worship*, 38.

⁷⁴ Segler, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, 38.

⁷⁵ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 102-104.

⁷⁶ Baker and Landers, *A Summary of Christian History*, 95.

distancing themselves from what had become seen as the unnecessary traditions and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic liturgy. The three main voices of these new approaches were Luther, Calvin, and the Anabaptists. Each took different paths in this new way of doing worship. Luther remained closest to the traditions of Catholicism, allowing any practices not specifically rejected by scripture to remain and continuing to favor frequent masses. Calvin on the other hand pushed for inclusion of only what the Bible specifically taught.⁷⁷ Anabaptists and other free worship churches, eventually including Baptists, agreed with Calvin in embracing only what the Bible included in worship, but went further by emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit in the worship service.⁷⁸ Anabaptists and other free churches also brought preaching back to centrality, and encouraged congregational participation and singing.⁷⁹ This shift replaced the priestly role of worship planner and mediator with an emphasis on the laity's openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. Again, this change put more responsibility on the worshiper to enter worship prepared for an active encounter with God, not merely for a more passive priest-led service.

Almost a century after the Reformation began, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys established the English Baptist church after feeling led to combine the move to a scripture-based worship, championed earlier by Calvin and Zwingli, with believers baptism, a heretical viewpoint at the time.⁸⁰ Believers' baptism, with its emphasis on freedom of choice, continued the trend toward more engagement and participation by the

⁷⁷ James F. White, *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, 75-76.

⁷⁸ White, 78.

⁷⁹ Segler, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, 47.

⁸⁰ Baker and Landers, *A Summary of Christian History*, 258.

people. These principles were then spread to America by Roger Williams and John Clarke, two of the founders of the Baptist movement in America.⁸¹

Rejection of ceremony, a return of balance between Word and Table, efforts to hold services in native languages, and a focus on the Holy Spirit were all Reformation movements that were grounded in the stripping of unnecessary traditions that created barriers to true worship.⁸² Each of these changes represented first steps in seeing worship as a space for personal encounter with God.

By the twentieth century, many worship trends were taking shape across the world. Some were innovative twists that reflect fresh new ways to worship God, and some were returns to the traditions of the past. For instance, the decisions made in Vatican II, one of the only changes to Roman Catholic worship since the sixteenth century, put a renewed emphasis on preaching and allowed for mass to be done in the language of the people.⁸³ These two items, each of which brings fuller participation to the people, clearly echo the changes introduced four hundred years earlier in the Reformation.

Some protestants, namely evangelicals and fundamentalist Christians, have shifted even further away from tradition and symbols that might be seen as an obstacle to worship, popularizing two big changes to worship that increased participation and engagement by the worshiper. First, the reimagining of the revival, with its altar calls, resulted in more expectation of participation and responsibility on the part of the

⁸¹ Baker and Landers, *A Summary of Christian History*, 345.

⁸² Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 109-112.

⁸³ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 124-125.

worshiper.⁸⁴ Churches that provide this time in their regular worship services tend to choose spaces with enough room for people to come forward.⁸⁵ These congregations also tend to craft their services in a way that maximizes its approachability by both the churched and the unchurched. These contemporary services, also called seeker services due to their easy going nature and lack of difficult theological concepts, might appear secular to the liturgical congregations, but certainly have proven effective at drawing crowds and creating participation among the worshipers.⁸⁶

Mainline protestants, on the other hand, have tended to move in the opposite direction, reclaiming liturgy and ritual as a way to find common ground with Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and especially the original intent of the reformers and their push for true priesthood of all believers.⁸⁷ This movement, toward which First Baptist Church Greenville has shifted as well, represented an effort to engage in liturgy that involves the entire congregation without sacrificing personal devotion and experience. Since this trend put much of the leadership back into the hands of the pastors, it also posed a potential for worshipers to fall into the trap of passively attending worship, an issue that existed at the time this project was being implemented. This tendency for the worshiper to rely on church leaders to put on the service, rather than for the worshiper to actively participate was the primary reason I designed this project to test and measure how preparing for worship might encourage active participation by the laity.

⁸⁴ Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship: 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 131.

⁸⁵ Ramshaw, 131.

⁸⁶ Ramshaw, 132.

⁸⁷ David R. Newman, "The Protestant Liturgical Renewal" in *The Complete Library of Christian Worship: Volume 2, Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994), 117.

Many more worship trends, movements, and transformations occurred over the span of Christian history than can be discussed in this project, but the broad theme of these changes that related to this project were those which concerned the accessibility and participation on the part of the people. From the ancient Christian small groups gathering around a meal to the priest-dominated masses of the Roman Catholic Church to the Bible-based and spirit-led services of the Anabaptists, Baptists and other free church traditions since the Reformation, the degree to which the people of God have been able to engage in meaningful worship has shifted widely from one extreme to the other and back again.

Since I believe active worship participation is a vital part of Christian life and a sign of a healthy congregation, this project was chosen to enter into the conversations about worship that have been happening for almost two thousand years. It was designed to be at least a small part of the larger story line of increased active participation in worship. As this project began to take shape, I felt First Baptist Church Greenville, which offers a minister-led service with a liturgy and structure that lends itself to “follow along” in worship, was in a perfect position to explore ways to help its members avoid the traps of passivity. Just like the ordinary Christians and congregations throughout the years who looked for ways to help people engage in more authentic worship, I hoped the results I found in this project would enable First Baptist Church Greenville to do the same.

CHAPTER 4

Critical Evaluation

Review of Hypotheses

In broad terms, my primary ministry question was whether or not guided preparation for worship would enhance the experience. Reworded as a statement specific to this project's setting, my hypothesis was that First Baptist Church Greenville worshipers who used the pre-worship guides designed for this project (the test group) would respond to the post-worship survey with higher answers than would worshipers who did not use the pre-worship guides (the control group). Therefore the null hypothesis, or the no change hypothesis, was that there would not be a statistical difference between the responses of the worshipers in the test group and the worshipers in the control group. A second ministry question was this: if there was indeed measurable value in preparing for worship using one of the guides designed for this project, which guide proved most effective based on the survey responses?

Means of Evaluation

Two types of data were analyzed in this project: quantitative (scaled survey responses) and qualitative (open ended survey questions and conversational feedback recorded during the follow up session). All post-worship survey responses were gathered into a spreadsheet, divided into test group and control group, then sorted according to the corresponding pre-worship guide. Finally, the responses were further sorted by question into data sets, ready to be statistically analyzed and tested. A set of data is made up all responses to a particular question given across the four Sundays by everyone who used a particular pre-worship guide. For example, one data set might be all of the responses to

question 10 by everyone who used the *lectio divina* guide. At a minimum, therefore, there are eighty data sets - sixteen questions times five groups (the four pre-worship guides plus the one control group). Each data set has its own summary statistics - a mean (average), a median (center point), and box plot (a graphical description data points of the set separated into fourths).

After the data had been gathered, to protect against skewed results, I filtered out any outliers or any responses that clearly came from confusion on the part of the respondent, or from misunderstanding the response scale. Outliers are outside of the normal range of expected data points and can be identified visibly in box plots as points that literally lie outside the box.

The qualitative data came from the free response questions in the post-worship survey (question 23-28), and are recorded in short answer form, either accurately quoted when possible or summarized when not.

When evaluating the quantitative data from the post-worship surveys, statistical significance was used as the standard of discerning whether two sets of data could be considered different or not, and to what degree. Tests that calculate statistical significance calculate the probability that two groups of numbers could have come from the same set of data. The test that I used for these comparisons is called the Mann-Whitney U test, a statistical tool useful for comparing two groups of relatively small size and requiring few assumptions about the data.⁸⁸ It compares medians instead of means, so it is very useful

⁸⁸ Frederick Ruland, *The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney Test - An Introduction to Nonparametrics – With Comments on the R Program Wilcoxon.test.* (Columbia, SC: Frederick, 2018), 7.

with data from scales that might not translate to averaging as meaningfully.⁸⁹ Another name for this test is the Wilcoxon Rank Sum test, which is what it is called in R Studio, the software that I used to do the calculations. This type of test determines whether two distributions for samples are identical in shape variability and central location or not.⁹⁰

From these statistical tests, a hypothesis can either be confirmed or rejected.

More specifically, either the null hypothesis (the no change scenario), or the alternative hypothesis (the change that I am testing) will be confirmed, but not both.⁹¹

In statistical testing, the threshold of probability to confirm or reject a hypothesis is called the p-value. The p-value is the probability of observing the test sample, assuming that no hypothesis is true.⁹² The more extreme the test sample, the lower the p-value.⁹³ The standard p-value threshold in tests like this is 0.05. This means that any p-value below 0.05 shows an acceptable level of statistically significant difference and that it can be assumed with at least 95% confidence that the two data sets could not have come from the same pool of data. Conversely, a p-value above 0.05 means that there is not 95% probability the two sets of data are different and cannot be labeled statistically significant. In summary, as I was performing the Wilcoxon tests during my analysis, trying to show that two sets of data were statistically different, the range of p-values that I was looking for was 0 to 0.05. Any p-value above that range could not be shown to be

⁸⁹ Tillman Davies, *The Book of R: a First Course Programming Statistics*. (San Francisco: No Starch Press Inc., 2016), 401.

⁹⁰ Ruland, 11.

⁹¹ Davies, 386.

⁹² Davies, 387.

⁹³ Davies, 387.

significant; however, p-values up to 0.1 can be called trending, a range that shows results that are leaning toward significance, but for whatever reason did not rise to that level.

The analyses that I performed were between each worship guide data set and the control group. For each question, there was a unique null hypothesis (there is no change in post-worship survey responses when a pre-worship guide is used) and an alternative hypothesis (post-worship survey results of those who use a pre-worship guide will have higher median answers).

Non-numeric responses were gathered from the short answer portion of the post-worship survey (questions 19-28). Questions 19-22 are retention questions. They asked participants if they were able to recall certain elements of the service without consulting the order or worship. Since these responses are not recorded using a scale, a statistical test can not be performed to analyze them. Instead, I counted the number of correct answers for each question, organized again by guide, and compared percentage rates.

Survey questions 23-28 ask participants about their understanding of the purpose of worship. Since there are no wrong answers to compare, what I looked for from participants' answers were responses that distinguished them from those of the control group: words or phrases that occurred more frequently in the test group responses; fresh ideas that arose while using the guide; and techniques or practices that they explicitly state made it easier to enter into meaningful worship that morning. When coding these responses, I specifically looked for clarity of idea, relevance to the purpose of this project, depth of thought, and the level of care taken in the response itself. I then assigned the responses a code if it showed aspects of one or more of those four particular areas

(clarity, relevance, depth, care).⁹⁴ I then calculated (by guide, and for each question) the percentage of responses that earned one or more of these four codes.

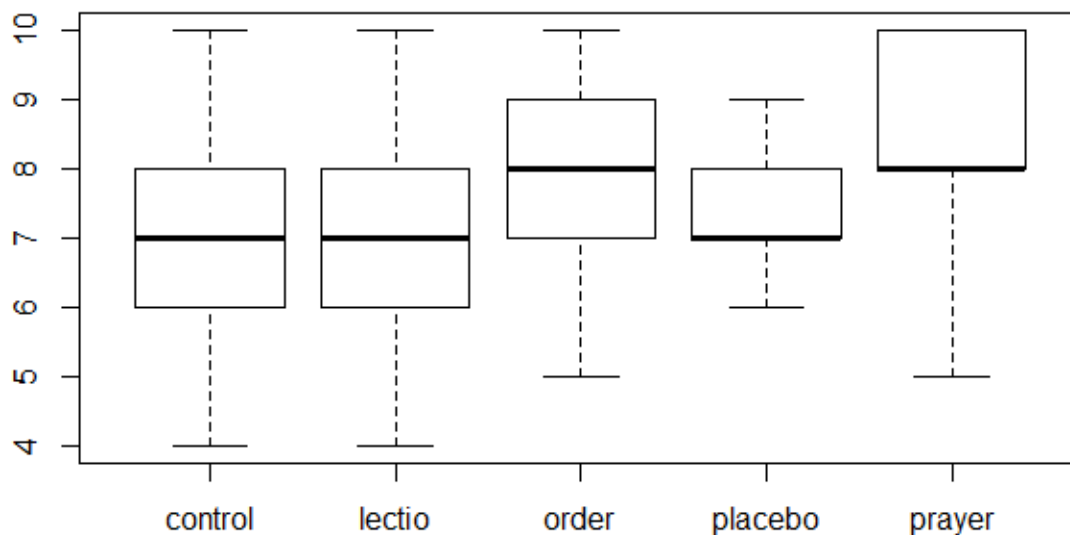
Results

Quantitative Data: Questions 7 - 18, 29

For these thirteen questions, participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 10 based on their impressions of their experience in the worship service. Each question is listed below and accompanied by a boxplot for each guide, the p-values for each guide as compared to the control group, and a short summary paragraph of what the results mean. The boxplots show the actual range of scores given by respondents for each guide by question. On those graphs, the horizontal axis separates out the response by group (control group, the lectio divina guide, the order of worship guide, the placebo guide and the centering prayer guide). The vertical axis shows the range of responses given on the 1 to 10 scale. The dark horizontal line in each box represents the median of that particular data set and is a good way to visually compare sets.

⁹⁴ William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry*, (Chicago: Exploration Press, 2002), 68.

Question 7. To what extent did you feel prepared to worship God?



p-value = 0.0259 (prayer, control)

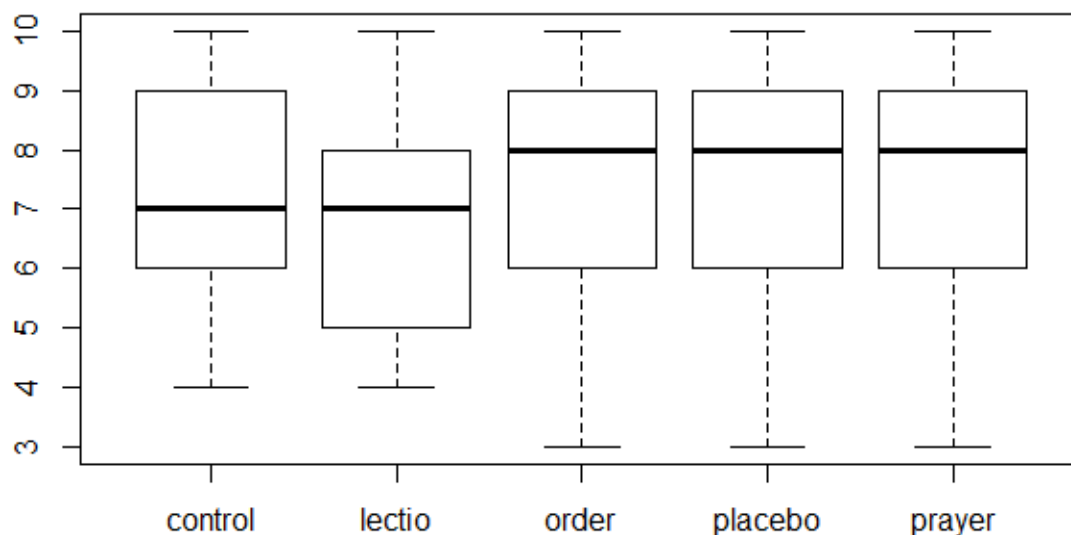
p-value = 0.120 (order, control)

p-value = 0.357 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.853 (placebo, control)

Question 7, the first question related to worship, asks the participants their feeling of preparedness to worship God. The boxplot shows that the order of worship and centering prayer guides performed the best. The median of each of those sets of data is 8, whereas the medians of the other three are 7. When examining the p-values of each guided compared to the control group, only the centering prayer guide, with a p-value of 0.0259 is significant. The order of worship guide, with a p-value of 0.120, could be described as close to trending toward significance.

Question 8. To what extent did you feel a sense of summons or call to worship at or before the beginning of the service?



p-value = 0.396 (prayer, control)

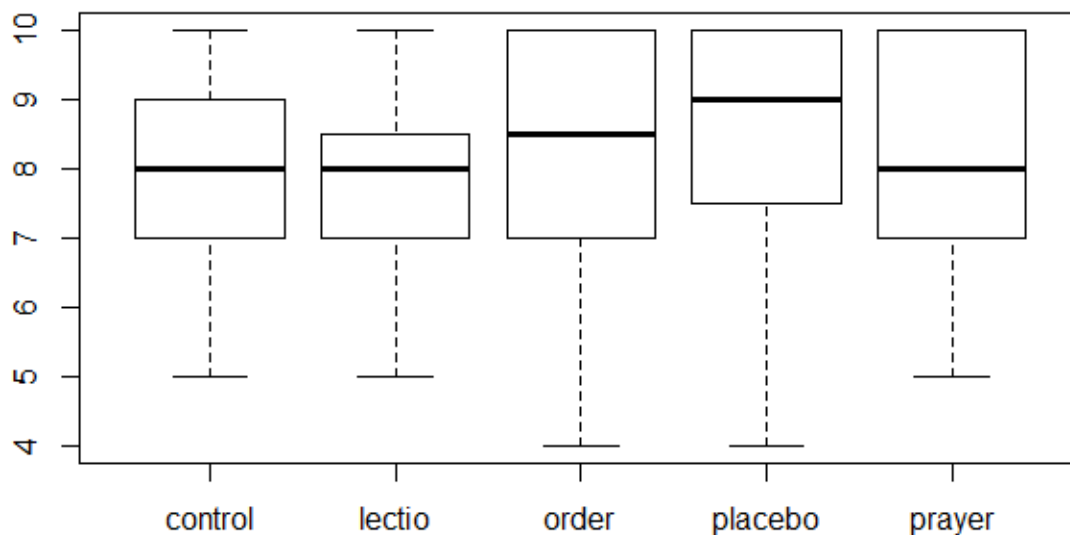
p-value = 0.223 (order, control)

p-value = 0.600 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.620 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants their feeling of a sense of being summoned to worship. The boxplot shows that the order of worship guide, centering prayer guide, and the placebo guide performed the best, each with a median of 8, whereas the medians of the other two are 7. When examining the p-values of each guide compared to the control group, none is significant, with only the order of worship guide, with a p-value of 0.223, approaching the 0.1 threshold of trending toward significance.

Question 9. To what extent did you feel a connection to the hymns and music?



p-value = 0.725 (prayer, control)

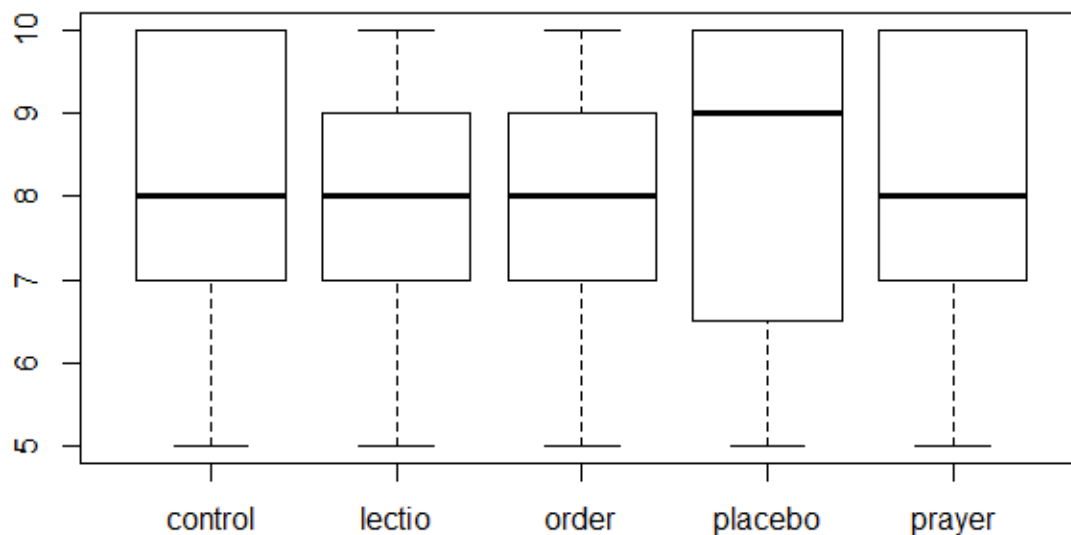
p-value = 0.766 (order, control)

p-value = 0.538 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.444 (placebo, control)

The third question related to worship asks the participants their feeling of connection to the hymns and music during the service. The boxplot shows visually that there is no separation of performance among the guides or between the test group and control group on this question. The median of each of those sets of data is 8, and no p-value is even close to the threshold of 0.05.

Question 10. To what extent did you feel like an active participant in the worship service?



p-value = 0.974 (prayer, control)

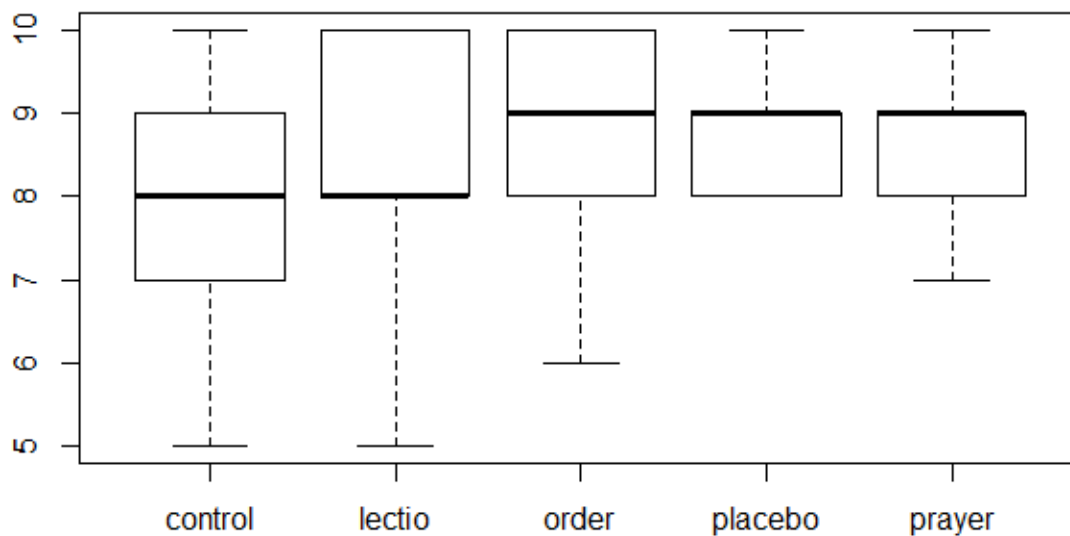
p-value = 0.787 (order, control)

p-value = 0.477 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.922 (placebo, control)

Question 10, the fourth question related to worship, asks the participants to what degree they felt like active participants in the worship service. The boxplot shows visually that there is no separation of performance among the guides or between the test group and control group on this question. The medians of each of those sets of data are 8, and no p-value is even close to the threshold of 0.05.

Question 11. To what extent did the sermon help you identify God's activity in the world through the scripture passage?



p-value = 0.0293 (prayer, control)

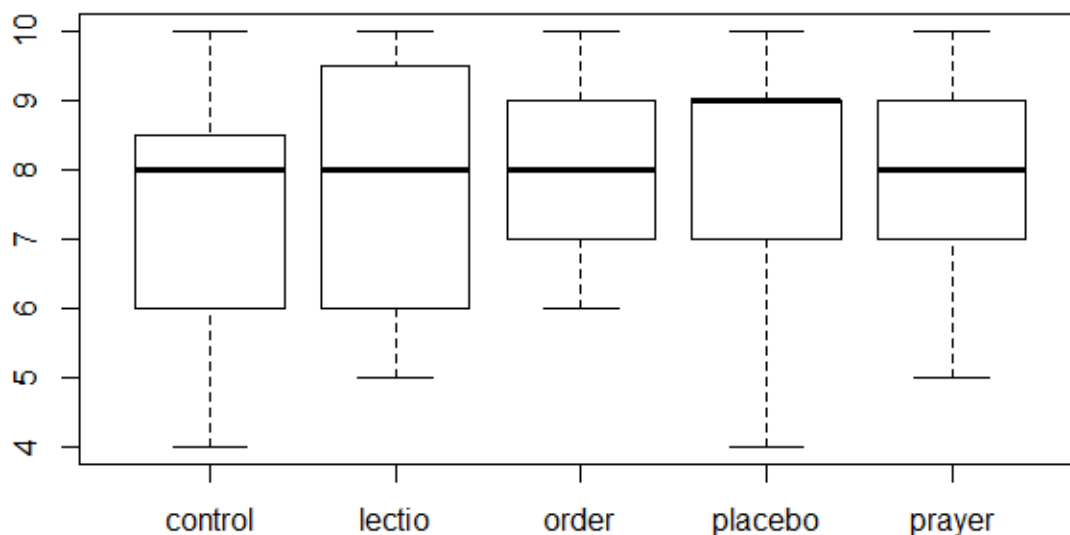
p-value = 0.0537 (order, control)

p-value = 0.182 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.0218 (placebo, control)

Question 11 asks the participants if the sermon helped them identify God's activity in the world, specifically through the passage of scripture. The boxplot shows that the centering prayer guide performed the best, with a median of 9, as compared to medians of 8 for the others. The centering prayer guide, with a p-value of 0.0293 is significant. In addition, both the order of worship guide and the lectio divina guide can be said to be trending toward significance, with p-values of 0.0573 and 0.182 respectively.

Question 12. To what extent did the sermon help you understand the church's role in the community?



p-value = 0.157 (prayer, control)

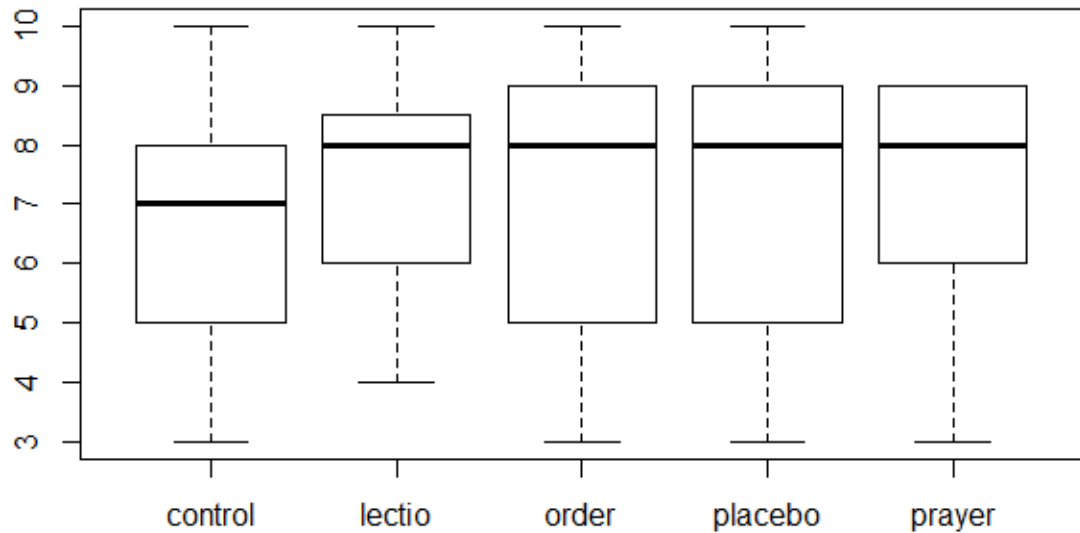
p-value = 0.139 (order, control)

p-value = 0.192 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.225 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants to what extent the sermon helped them understand the church's role in the community. The boxplot shows that all of the guides outperform the control group, with the placebo guide actually having the highest median. When examining the p-values of each guided compared to the control group, the centering prayer, order of worship and *lectio divina* guides are all trending, with p-values of 0.157, 0.139 and 0.192 respectively.

Question 13. To what extent did you feel stretched or challenged during the service?



p-value = 0.228 (prayer, control)

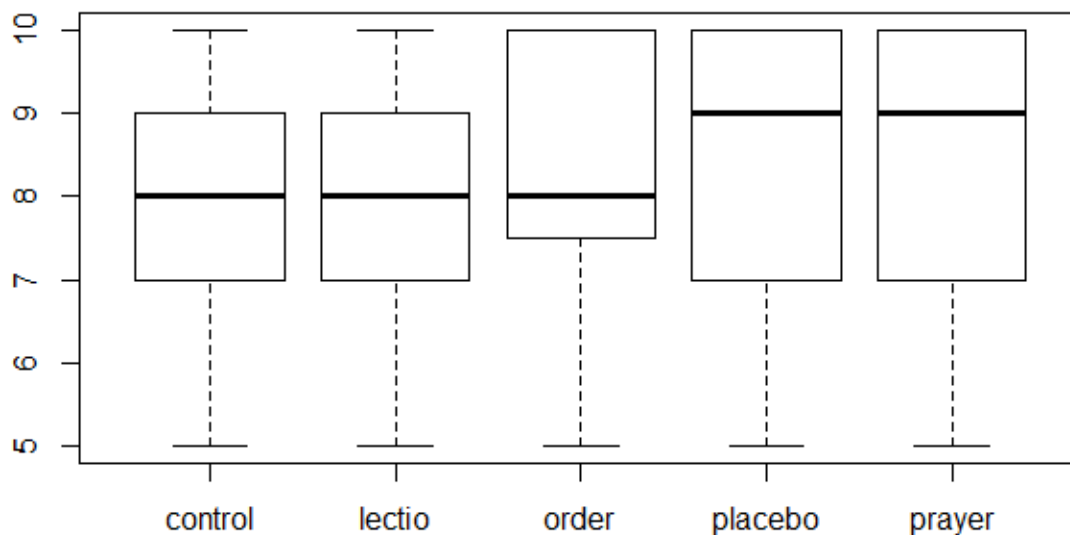
p-value = 0.267 (order, control)

p-value = 0.130 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.135 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants about feeling stretched or challenged during the service. The boxplot shows that all four guides outperform the control group, but that none in a statistically significant way. The closest to significance that any guide approaches is the *lectio divina* one, with a p-value of 0.130.

Question 14. To what extent did you feel the presence of God in worship?



p-value = 0.283 (prayer, control)

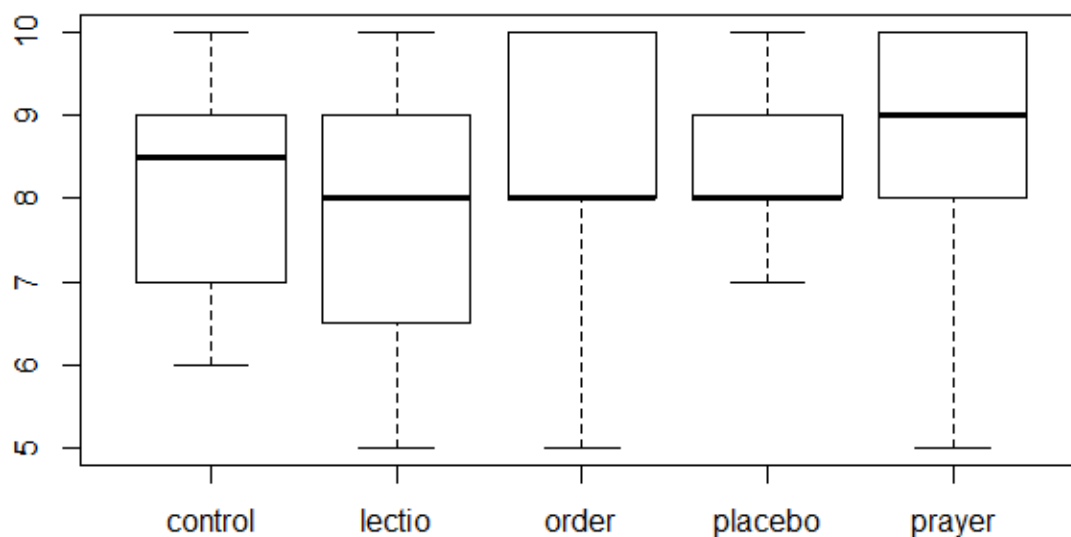
p-value = 0.361 (order, control)

p-value = 0.993 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.325 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants about feeling the presence of God. The boxplot shows that the centering prayer guide and the placebo guide outperform the others, but not in a significant way, although the p-value of the centering prayer guide, 0.283, could be described as leaning toward trending.

Question 15. To what extent did you feel Christian community with other worshipers?



p-value = 0.0772 (prayer, control)

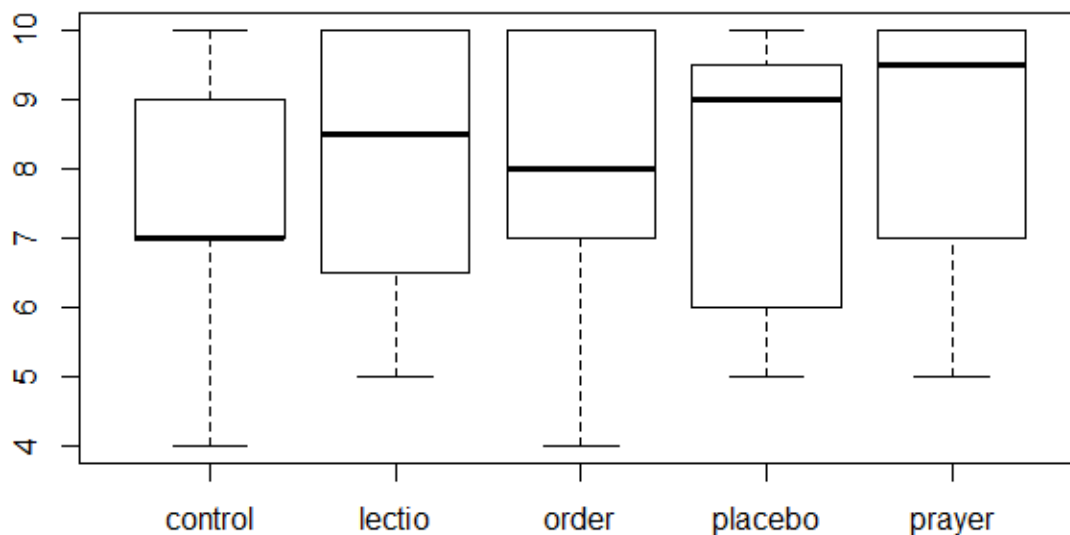
p-value = 0.720 (order, control)

p-value = 0.152 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.426 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants about Christian community with and connection to other worshipers. The boxplot shows that the centering prayer guide clearly outperforms the others with a median of 9. In addition, its p-value of 0.0772 shows trending toward significance when compared to the control group.

Question 16. To what extent did you feel you heard a word from God during the service?



p-value = 0.0380 (prayer, control)

p-value = 0.155 (order, control)

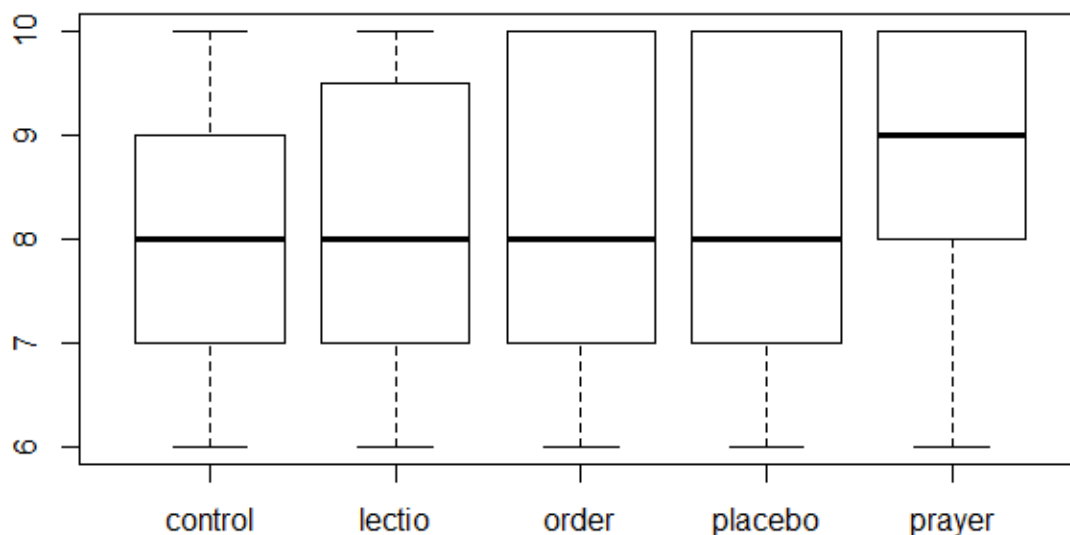
p-value = 0.307 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.336 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants to what extent they feel they heard a word from God.

The boxplot shows that the centering prayer guide, with a median of 9.5, performs the best. Its p-value of 0.0380 is statistically significant. In addition, the p-value for the order of worship guide can be said to be trending, with a value of 0.155.

Question 17. To what extent did you feel prepared to go back out into the world at the end of the service?



p-value = 0.0139 (prayer, control)

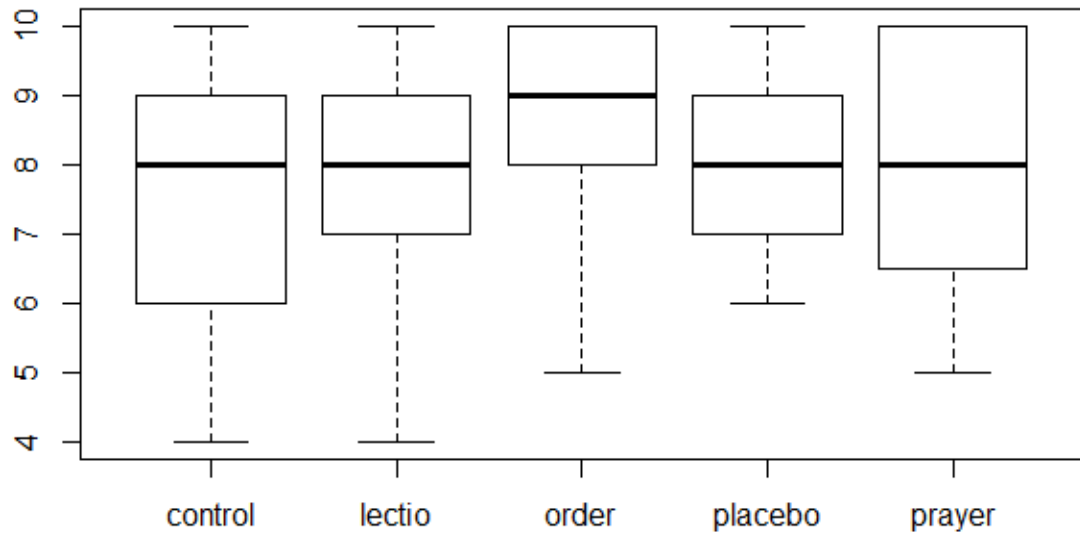
p-value = 0.377 (order, control)

p-value = 0.551 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.285 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants about their feeling of preparedness to re-enter the world after having finished worship. Once again, the boxplot shows that the centering prayer guide has the highest median of 9, while the median of the other data sets is 8. In addition, with a p-value of 0.0319, the centering prayer guide shows a significant difference when compared to the control group.

Question 18. To what extent did you respond to God during worship?



p-value = 0.282 (prayer, control)

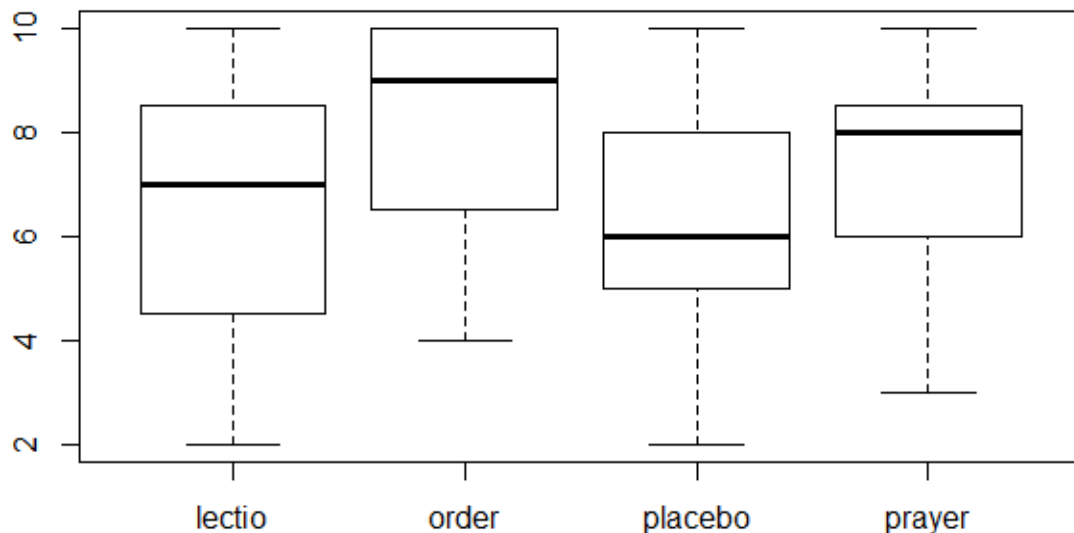
p-value = 0.0744 (order, control)

p-value = 0.644 (*lectio*, control)

p-value = 0.338 (placebo, control)

This question asks the participants about how they responded during the service. The boxplot for this set of questions shows the order of worship guide performing the best with a median of 9 as compared to 8 for the others. In addition, the p-value for this guide, when compared to the control group, trends toward significance, with a value of 0.0744.

Question 29. To what extent do you feel that using a worship preparation guide helped you have a more meaningful worship experience?



p-value = 0.0948 (*lectio*, order)

p-value = 0.533 (*lectio*, placebo)

p-value = 0.868 (*lectio*, prayer)

p-value = 0.0110 (order, placebo)

p-value = 0.0757 (order, prayer)

p-value = 0.288 (placebo, prayer)

This question asks the worshipers if they feel the worship guide helped. The boxplot shows that participants who were given the order of worship guide responded with the highest feedback, with a median of 9, as compared to a median of 8 for the centering prayer guide, a median of 7 for the *lectio divina* guide, and a 6 for the placebo.

In addition to the boxplot, I also performed Mann-Whitney tests for each combination of data set for this question. There is no control group data set for this question because it specifically asks participants about the effect their particular guide had on their worship experience. The control group did not receive a guide. Only one result, from the test comparing the order of worship guide and the placebo, shows significant difference, with a p-value of 0.0110. The tests between the order of worship guide and both the centering prayer guide and the *lectio divina* guide do show p-values trending toward significance though.

Hypothesis Evaluation: Questions 7 - 18, 29

The overall hypothesis for the experiment phase of this project is that participants who use a pre-worship guide before worship will respond with statistically significantly higher survey answers than will the participants who did not use a pre-worship guide before worship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is that there will be no change to the survey responses between these two groups. This hypothesis is evaluated differently, depending on the format of the data gathering tool. For questions 7-18, a linear scale from one to ten is used to get responses. Analysis of this section utilized a statistical test called the Mann-Whitney U test, also called the Wilcoxon Rank Sum test in R, the statistics software used for the analysis.

Survey questions 7-18 are quantitative data sets and were analyzed using statistical calculations. In this section, the twelve questions, each of which resulted in its own dataset to be tested against the control group responses. Therefore, to fully evaluate the overall hypothesis, it was necessary to apply this hypotheses and test against the control for statistical significance for each question and for each of the three guides and

the placebo guide. Ultimately, this combination of relevant comparisons resulted in thirty-six mini tests of the hypothesis that, when brought together in one discussion, result in a confirmation or rejection of the overall hypothesis. The results of these tests are gathered in the table below, which shows p-values for each individual analysis.

P-values for Wilcoxon Rank Sum Tests, Questions 7-18			
Data Set	Centering Prayer (vs. Control Group)	Order of Worship (vs. Control Group)	<i>Lectio Divina</i> (vs. Control Group)
Question 7	0.0259*	0.120	0.357
Question 8	0.396	0.223	0.600
Question 9	0.725	0.766	0.538
Question 10	0.974	0.787	0.477
Question 11	0.0293*	0.0537**	0.182
Question 12	0.157	0.139	0.192
Question 13	0.228	0.269	0.130
Question 14	0.283	0.361	0.993
Question 15	0.0772**	0.720	0.152
Question 16	0.0380*	0.156	0.307

Question 17	0.0139*	0.377	0.551
Question 18	0.282	0.0744**	0.644
*Statistically significant (p-value of 0.05 or lower)			
**Statistically trending (p-value of 0.1 or lower)			

Overall, the survey responses of the participants who used pre-worship guides are indeed higher than those of the control group participants; however, as the table above shows, only four of the datasets result in statistically significant p-values.

Quantitative Data: Questions 19 - 22

These four questions were short answer questions, the answers of which could be determined to be correct or incorrect. After grading these questions (without knowledge of the corresponding guide use by the respondents), the percentages were calculated and shown in tables for comparison.

Question 19. Around what passage(s) of scripture did the service center?

	Control Group	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Centering Prayer	Order of Worship	Placebo
Question 19 - recalling the scripture passage	22%	81%	33%	48%	59%

This question is about recall. Can the participants remember the passage of scripture without consulting the worship bulletin? As one might expect, the guide that focuses the participant on the scripture passage, the *lectio divina* guide, performed the best, with a correct answer percentage of 81%. This is over 30 percentage points higher than the next best performing guide on this question, which was the placebo guide.

Question 20. In what ways, if any, did you notice themes from the central passage of scripture turning up in other elements of the service?

	Control Group	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Centering Prayer	Order of Worship	Placebo
Question 20 - noticing themes from scripture in the service	62%	57%	71%	48%	67%

This question asked the participants to dig a little deeper than mere scripture passage recall and cite any themes or patterns from the passage that were noticed throughout the service. “Grading” the responses to this question proved difficult, as it relied on subjective impressions of the worshiper, and the range of acceptable answers is too broad; however, in the interest of discerning which guide led to more substantive answers, when deciding which answers qualified as “correct” or “incorrect,” I looked for

the following: a reasonable response, clarity of thought, and a comprehensive view of worship on the part of the participant. At 71%, the centering prayer guide actually drew the highest rate of correct answers for this question, with the other four guides all within 25 percentage points.

Question 21. In a short sentence or phrase, what would you say was the primary theme of the sermon?

	Control Group	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Centering Prayer	Order of Worship	Placebo
Question 21 - identifying the main theme or point of the sermon	49%	67%	58%	78%	63%

Because there were four sermons with different points and with even more ways to understand theological theme, and since implementation of the pre-worship portion of project on the mornings of these services, I was not always present for the actual sermon. Therefore, in an effort to make sure I could accurately assess the correctness of the responses to this question, I consulted Johnny Pierce, the proclaimer for these four Sundays, for the primary themes of his sermons in his own words and included those responses in Appendix D. I then graded each participant's response on a yes/no basis. They either knew the theme well enough to articulate it in a phrase or two, or they didn't. In this case, the order of worship guide performed the best, with a correct percentage rate

of 78%. The scripture based guide (*lectio divina*) resulted in the next highest percentage correct of 67%.

22. Can you recall the sermon title (without consulting the order of worship)?

	Control Group	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Centering Prayer	Order of Worship	Placebo
Question 22 - recalling the sermon title	30%	38%	42%	41%	31%

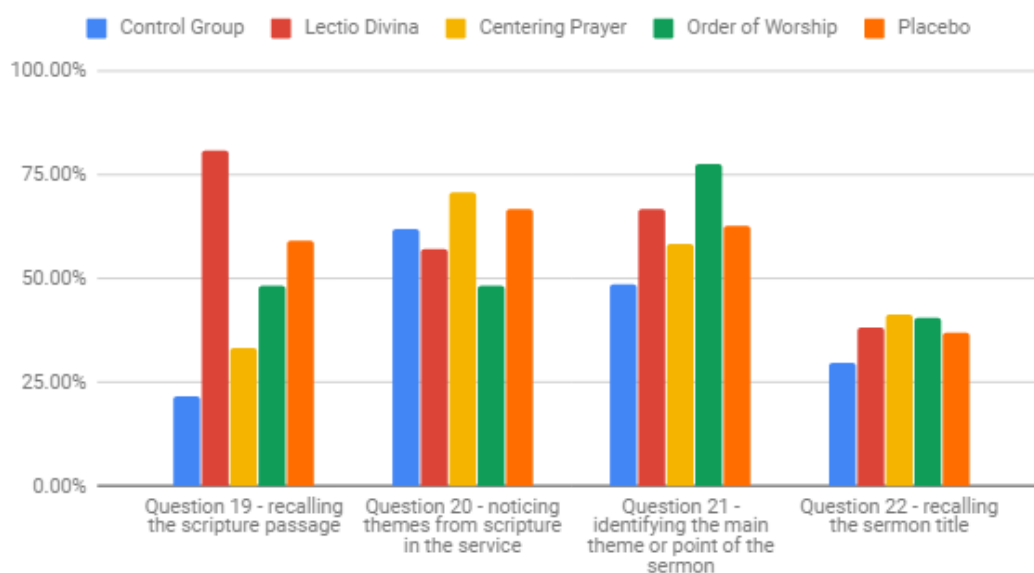
For this question about recalling the sermon title, all of the guides fell within twelve percentage points, with the centering prayer guide performing the best at 42% and the control group performing worst at 30%. The *lectio divina* guide, the order of worship guide and the placebo guide are all within a few percentage points of the centering prayer guide.

Hypothesis Evaluation: Questions 19 - 22

Questions 19-22 are right or wrong short answer questions and analyzed by comparing the percent correct. A chart of the percentage of correct answers for questions 19, 20, 21 and 22 is shown below. Since there are three different guides that scored the highest in this set of four questions, it is difficult to declare one of them to have performed the best; however, of these four questions that measure retention, the centering prayer guide scored the highest percentage of correct answers in two out of the four

questions (question 20, which is about noticing scriptural themes throughout the service, and question 22, which asks the participant to recall the sermon title). The order of worship guide fared the best with question 21, which is about identifying the main theme of the sermon, and the *lectio divina* guide is the clear winner of question 19, which simply asks the participant to recall the scripture passage. In this set of questions, neither the placebo guide nor the control group scored the highest on any of these questions, although the placebo guide did place second on questions 19 and 20. The control group placed last in three of the four questions, showing a definite difference between it and the test groups as a whole. In summary, for this group of retention questions, it is fair to state in general that there was improvement for participants who had access to a pre-worship guide. However, it is more difficult to say which guide performed the best since each of the guides placed first in at least one of the questions. Also, even though it is the centering prayer guide that scores highest on two of the four questions, it is not by much in both cases.

Percentage of Correct Responses to Questions 19, 20, 21, and 22



Qualitative Data: Questions 23 - 28

Questions 23-28 are short answer questions that have no wrong answers and can only be evaluated qualitatively. To compare the responses of these questions between the test groups and the control group, I looked for reasonableness of response, clarity of thought, and pattern of repetition from participant to participant. Actual responses from selected respondents are included in Appendix D.

23. How do you measure and/or or evaluate your worship experiences?

24. What does "meaningful worship" mean to you?

25. What role and responsibility as a worshiper in a pew do you believe you play during worship services?

26. How do you feel about being challenged or stretched during worship services?

27. In what ways is corporate worship (with other worshipers) important to your worship experience?

Percentage of Reasonably Appropriate and Thoughtful Answers to Questions 23-27 By Pre-Worship Guide					
	Control Group	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Order of Worship	Centering Prayer	Placebo
Question 23	11/37 (30%)	9/21 (43%)	8/27 (30%)	6/24 (25%)	11/27 (40%)
Question 24	17/37 (46%)	9/21 (43%)	13/27 (48%)	8/24 (33%)	15/27 (56%)

Question 25	19/37 (51%)	14/21 (67%)	17/27 (63%)	14/24 (58%)	21/27 (78%)
Question 26	17/37 (46%)	4/21 (19%)	10/27 (37%)	9/24 (38%)	12/27 (44%)
Question 27	16/37 (43%)	14/21 (67%)	13/27 (48%)	11/24 (46%)	16/27 (59%)

28. Did your participation in this project (attending a pre-worship preparation session immediately before attending a worship service at First Baptist Church Greenville) change your understanding of the nature or purpose of worship? If so, in what way?

This question actually was included in the optional portion of general questions about worship and only given to the participants who used a guide and attended a pre-worship session. Therefore, no control group participants responded to this question. I have included the answers to this question here in the qualitative responses section of the paper because the answers to this question specifically depend on the pre-worship guide experience. Therefore this question can be included in the results as a dependent variable.

This question has two parts: a yes or no section and a free response section for those who answered yes to the first part. I include below a breakdown of how many responded yes vs. no, organized according to guide. Then, as in question 21, I include a selection of answers from each group that show a reasonableness of response, clarity of thought, and pattern of repetition from participant to participant.

By the numbers, the order of worship guide performed the best in the group. Participants who used this guide answered this question in the positive 78% of the time, a

full 17% greater than the centering prayer guide, which was the next best performing guide. The *lectio divina* guide received 53% of its responses as positive, not much better than a coin flip. Lastly, the placebo guide, with 30% positive responses, performed the worst. This, of course, was expected since the placebo guide was a random Sunday School lesson with no relationship to the worship service.

Percentage of Positive and Negative Responses to Question 28 by Pre-Worship Guide				
	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Centering Prayer	Order of Worship	Placebo
Yes	53% (11 out of 21)	61% (14 out of 23)	78% (21 out of 27)	30% (8 out of 27)
No	43% (9 out of 21)	30% (7 out of 23)	15% (4 out of 27)	67% (18 out of 27)

Hypothesis Evaluation: Questions 23-28

The results of these questions do not show any pattern at all. All five groups have a wide range of percentage of correct or positive responses, with no apparent relationship to the question asked. Therefore, I conclude that my hypothesis was not confirmed for this set of questions. Going through a pre-worship guide before worship did not have any noticeable effects on the responses given. One reason for this certainly has to do with the way the questions were asked. They focused more on the participants' understanding of worship in general and how they view their worship life, whereas the earlier scaled survey questions (questions 7 through 18) asked questions specifically related to the

worship service they had just attended. This shift in line of questioning is discussed in more depth later in this paper.

Self-assessment: Questions 30 and 31

The final questions on the survey asked the participants to provide feedback about their experience as participants in my project. Structured in a linear scale format from 1 to 10, the questions asked about their impressions of the pre-worship session itself and about my presence and role as administrator of the project.

Question 30: To what extent do you feel this project was implemented smoothly and professionally? Question 31: To what extent were all of your questions answered and expectations made clear by the project lead, Matt Rollins?

Self-assessment Questions				
	Question 30		Question 31	
	Average	Minimum	Average	Minimum
10/7	8.9	4	9.4	8
10/14	9.3	6	9.5	6
10/21	9.7	8	9.8	8
10/28	9.4	6	9.6	8

Based on the responses, shown in the table above, most participants were satisfied with both the project's implementation and my role as administrator. The average score never drops below 8.9 for either question; however, individual responses do go as low as 4 in the first week, and 6 in the second week. In general, despite my attempts to provide

the same instructions and environment for the sessions, the scores tend to increase as the weeks go by. Overall, the responses to these questions tell me exactly what I wanted to hear from participants: that their participation in the project made sense to them and that my role as administrator seemed appropriately competent to that end.

CHAPTER 5

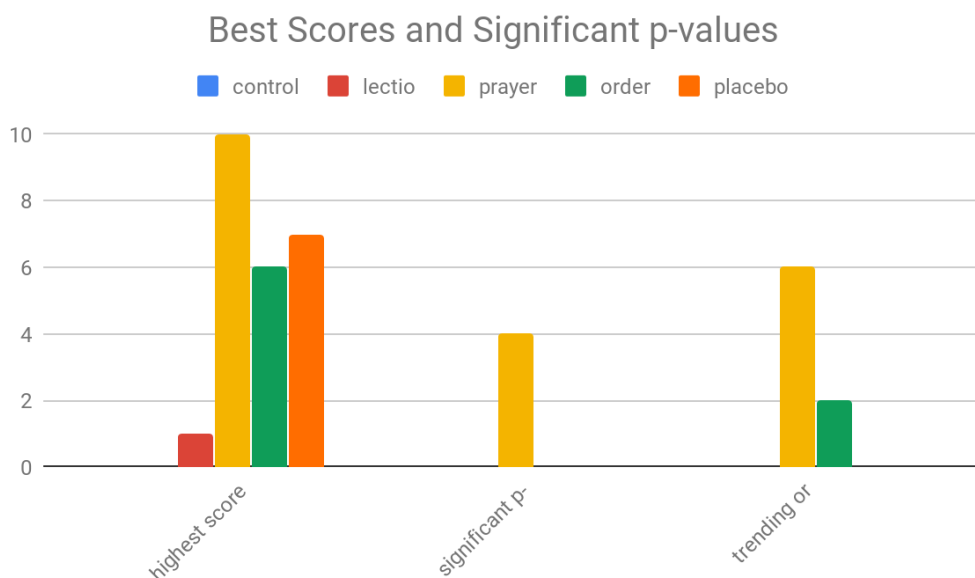
Conclusion

The primary purpose of this project was to answer the ministry question I posed in the introduction: would an intentional time of preparation for worship, offered to worshipers before the service in the form of a written guide, lead to a more meaningful worship experience? To do that, I formulated a hypothesis that summarized the ministry question in a format that could either be statistically proven correct or rejected. The experiment I designed and implemented is the process by which I was able to test that hypothesis, the results of which were evaluated in the previous section. After having measured those results against my experiment hypothesis, I now interpret that information in light of this project's ministry question.

Answering the ministry question from a quantitative standpoint, it is my conclusion that yes it is beneficial for a worshiper to prepare for worship with a pre-worship guide. The test group responses are consistently higher on the linear scale questions (7-18, 29) and the yes or no retention questions (19-22). Although statistical significance was not demonstrated for a majority of the quantitative questions, a consistent gap in the survey responses between the test and control groups was. The control group did not outperform the test group as a whole on any of the quantitative questions (7-22, 29).

Specifically, within the context of this project, the most effective option was the centering prayer guide, followed by the order of worship guide. For questions 7-18, and 29, the centering prayer guide was the only option to show statistical significance in the Wilcoxon Rank Sum test comparisons with the control group. In addition it trended

toward significance on two other questions. No other pre-worship guide performed as well in the quantitative section of these results.



Unforeseen Variables and What I Would Do Differently

Looking back at both the design and the implementation of this project, I can identify surprise uncontrolled variables as well as the elements or procedures that I would probably choose to do differently were I to embark on this journey again. These surprises and potential changes involve the post-worship survey, the experiment process, and the qualitative feedback schedule.

Quantitative

From a qualitative data gathering standpoint, my short answer survey questions (questions 23-28) were not as effective as the quantitative ones (questions 7-18 and 19-22). These open ended questions did not elicit responses that would help identify the

value of the guides themselves and potentially create separation between them and the control group. Instead they were more general in nature and asked about the participants' approaches and understandings of worship, viewpoints they already held when reporting for the pre-worship sessions. Perhaps having these types of questions in the post-worship survey itself would have helped keep their experiences with the guides fresh in their minds, instead of needing to recall it at a later date.

Another variable that I attempted to eliminate, yet was certainly present in this study, was the bias of the population in the study. This bias was not one toward a particular guide or to a particular understanding of worship. Rather, the biases I feel most certainly played a part in participant selection and volunteering had to do with 1) the worship lives of the participants, and with 2) their relationship with me. The first has to do with the importance of getting a representative sample of the population at First Baptist. This project did not set out to study the effects of pre-worship preparation might have on church members who already have healthy and vibrant worship lives; however, knowing my congregation and those who showed up to the pre-worship sessions, it is apparent that a high percentage of participants tended to be understood by me as very active in the church. This does not mean that their worship life is necessarily healthier than those who did not answer my call for volunteers, but I would say that it is more likely than not. And while their responses remained anonymous, I obviously was aware of who participated. In addition, the second factor points to the motivation of those who participated, namely that many of them wanted to support me in this endeavor, thus perhaps resulting in a sample of participants who arrived to the sessions eager to see me succeed. Despite my request of them to be completely honest on all responses, I imagine

there remained an element of inherent bias in favor of my project's success, which could have the effect of skewing responses higher. Of course, this bias would be present across the board for all participants, not necessarily skewing the results of any one particular guide or group.

When collecting the post-worship survey responses into data sets, I noticed several things I would do differently next time. First, I would improve the linear scale for questions 7-18, and 29. I would do this by providing a verbal cue for responses other than 1 and 10. For instance, assigning a response of 5 to a neutral response of "neither yes nor no" might allow respondents to move away from the upper register of the scale (7-10) and toward a median that is more middle of the road. Another change I would make to the post-worship survey is to design the retention questions to be more easily "gradable." The short answer questions that I designed required more time and energy to discern correct and incorrect answers than I had wanted to spend.

A second change I would make is the testing schedule. Overall, the experiment phase of the project was very smooth, and the implementation of it brought very few surprises and hiccups; however, the one change I would make in a future run of this experiment is to only test one pre-worship guide per Sunday. In an effort to minimize variability between worship service elements, I spread the testing of all three guides and the placebo guide across each of the four Sundays. I didn't want one guide to appear to be more effective if it had happened to have been implemented on a Sunday with a particularly well attended or more powerful theme of the service. In my mind, this would allow each participant an equal random chance of being exposed to any of the guides as well. While doing this did indeed account for worship variability in that regard, it also

introduced uncontrolled variables when gathering the responses of each guide from all four Sundays into one data set. The variability between worship services I sought to eliminate was still there, only in a different place. A better method would be to test one guide against the control group each Sunday, acknowledging that each week's control group would also be exposed to the variability between Sundays, thereby canceling it out overall.

The last major change I would make for future implementations of this project would be to hold a feedback session to collect some additional qualitative responses from participants about their impression of the effectiveness of the guide. In this study, I relied on the free response questions for this, but the questions tended to elicit more responses about their current or ongoing understanding of the nature of worship rather than on how that understanding might have been changed or affected by their use of a pre-worship guide.

Future Considerations and Ministry Potential

Between the proposal phase and implementation phase of this project, I did quite a bit of narrowing down of the focus. Some of the elements sacrificed to efficiency were worthy questions and variables that I still would like to answer and test. One such element was time. If I were to have an opportunity to explore this subject further, one independent variable that I would introduce to the experiment is length of time between the preparation session and the worship service. I originally proposed to test the effectiveness of the pre-worship guides with respect to when they were used. For instance, is pre-worship preparation like this only effective if done immediately before the worship service begins, or could an individual go through the preparation process

with a guide a few days before, perhaps on Wednesday? In this experiment, I would only use one guide, and the control group would be those participants who go through the preparation process on Sunday mornings, while the test group would be those who go through it on Wednesday.

Another avenue I would explore if I had another opportunity for this project is to build on the results of this project to move forward with the guide that performed the best in this experiment (the centering prayer guide), and add elements of the the guide that clearly performed well also (the order of worship guide). This new guide, containing elements of both of those two high performing guides, would then be exposed to the rigors of a new test against a new control group.

In the likely event that I am not able to run a new experiment, I plan to provide pre-worship guides for the congregation at First Baptist to use whenever it might be helpful for them to have an extra opportunity to prepare for worship. There are two ways I would go about deciding what I would provide. One option a hybrid of the centering prayer guide and the order of worship guide - basically the substantive elements of the centering prayer guide, but structured in a way that is similar to the order of worship guide. This combination would both facilitate the opening of the heart to an experience with God and familiarize the worshiper with the flow and rhythm of worship service that has been planned by the First Baptist worship team.

This project has had a very positive effect on me and on the the congregation at First Baptist, especially on those who were able to participate. Although the type of experiment that I designed and implemented was one that tested effectiveness of guides as tools for worship preparation, not one that measured growth or understanding of a

group of people over a period of time, the results of the project have indeed had an effect of growth and increased understanding - by me and by the participants. Those who participated responded with increased openness for the idea of taking time to prepare for worship. They noted new found appreciation for the care and planning that goes into providing worship. They commented on their new awareness of themes and motifs that run through services, and how that allows for deeper and more meaningful experiences as well.

In addition to the benefit to the church, I personally am thankful for what I have learned through this process as well. As I think back to my original Life-Long Learning Goals from my first seminar, my work and research on this project involved heavy lifting and growth in three out of four of them. The four learning goals I originally set for myself were in the areas of worship (“a deeper feel for worship’s rhythm of themes across the life and ministry of Jesus and how that can be translated into the life of the church through worship”), biblical interpretation (“applying and connecting biblical themes and stories to today’s church and community”), inreach and outreach (new insights and tools to encourage engagement in worship and in the life of the church), and preaching. Each of these areas of ministry, with the exception of preaching, played a major part in the purpose, implementation, and success of this project. I grew, learned, and developed a greater appreciation for each area.

I have been asked to present my findings to several groups within the church, where I will have the opportunity to share both the results of the original project goals as well as the unanticipated wisdom about engaging in worship that I absorbed along the way. As history has shown us and as we all know from personal experience, temptations

to take worship for granted and trends or movements that discourage people from participating fully will always exist. I look forward to taking the wisdom, the growth, and a renewed appreciation for worship participation with me as I continue to serve First Baptist Church Greenville as a minister and as I continue to serve the world as one of God's faithful followers.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a ministry project for my Doctor of Ministry degree at Gardner-Webb University. If you agree to participate, please read the terms and sign below. Thank you for your time and for your willingness to support me in the pursuit of my D Min degree.

Matt

- Your participation is voluntary, and you may opt out at any time.
- Any personal information you share will be anonymously collected and kept confidential; no personal information will be published.
- Participating in this project will include, at most, the following:
 - Attending this morning's pre-worship assessment session during the Sunday School hour (9:30 to 10:15)
 - Attending the subsequent worship service (10:30 to 11:30)
 - Completing a post-worship survey (hard copy or online)
- Findings and conclusions of the project (excluding any personal information) will be shared with the congregation after results have been analyzed and compiled.
- Benefits of this project may include an enhancement of the life and spiritual health of First Baptist and its members.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that as of the date below, I am at least 18 years old, that I have read the terms and description above and that I agree to participate in Matt Rollins's ministry project, which is called THE EFFECT OF GUIDED

**PREPARATION ON THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AT First Baptist Church
Greenville, SC, and which will be held at First Baptist Church Greenville in
October, 2018.**

Printed Name

Email address

Signature

Today's Date

APPENDIX B

Orders of Worship from the Four October Services

October 7, 2018

World Communion Sunday

Ten Thirty O'clock

Words of Welcome

Prelude Chorale for a New Organ Samuel Barber

Call to Worship “How Can I Keep from Singing?” Gwyneth Walker

*Opening Sentences Mary Carol Anderson

Let us love one another as Christ has loved us.

We do this remembering Jesus.

Let us serve one another as Christ has served us.

We do this remembering Jesus.

(John 13:14, 34; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

*Processional Hymn “We Are One in Christ” THAXTED

(Hymn is printed on the insert.)

Welcome to Worshipers

Words of Faith

Scripture Lesson 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Vivian Hamilton

page 933 of the Bible in the pew rack

Call to Prayer “Lamb of God” Anonymous

Pastoral Prayer

*Children's Hymn 363

UNION SEMINARY

“Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether”

All children through 5th grade are invited to the front for the children's sermon during the singing of the last two stanzas of the hymn.

Children's Sermon

Kyle Matthews

Choral Worship

“The Music of Creation”

Shelton Ridge Love

For the music of creation,

For the song your Spirit sings,

For your sound's divine expression,

Burst of joy in living things:

God, our God, the world's composer,

Hear us, echoes of your voice.

Music is your art, your glory;

Let the human heart rejoice!

All creation will rejoice!

Psalms and symphonies exalt you –

Drum and trumpet, string and reed.

Simple melodies acclaim you –

Tunes that rise from deepest need,

Hymns of longing and belonging,

Carols from a cheerful throat,

Lilt of lullaby and love song

Catching heaven with a note.

All the voices of the ages

*In transcendent chorus meet;
 Worship lifting up the senses;
 Hands that praise and dancing feet.
 Over discord and division
 Music speaks your joy and peace.
 Harmony of earth and heaven –
 Song of God that cannot cease.
 All creation joins to sing! Amen!*

– Shirley Erena Murray

Sermon

Memorial Gifts

Johnny Pierce

Words of Communion

Invitation to the Table

The table of bread is now to be made ready. It is the table of company with Jesus and all who love him.

It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world with whom Jesus identified himself. It is the table of communion with the earth in which Christ became incarnate.

So come to this table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more, you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time; you who have tried to follow Jesus and you who have failed; come.

It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.

Prayer for Communion

Loving God, through your goodness we have this bread and wine to offer, which has come forth from the earth and human hands have made. May we know your presence in the sharing, so that we may know your touch and presence in all things. We celebrate the life that Jesus has shared among his community through the centuries and shares with us now. Made one in Christ

and one with each other, we offer these gifts and with them ourselves, a single, living act of praise. Amen.

The Lord's Supper

"Jesus Invites" Kyle Matthews

"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" arr. Moses Hogan

Words of Commitment

*Invitation Hymn 366

BREAD OF LIFE

"Here at Thy Table, Lord"

*Invitation to Offering

Tony McDade

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

(John 13:34)

Musical Offering

arr. Shelton Ridge Love

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"

Introduction of New Members

Service and Fellowship of the Church

Words of Blessing

*Doxology (Hymn 32)

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*Benediction

*Congregational Benediction Response

TOMER

“God Be with You”

God be with you til we meet again!

By his counsels guide, uphold you,

With his sheep securely fold you,

God be with you til we meet again!

Postlude

Toccata (from Symphony V) Charles-Marie Widor

Our Service of Worship has ended.

Our Worship through Service begins.

October 14, 2018

Ten Thirty O'clock

Words of Welcome

Prelude "Children of the Heavenly Father" arr. Dan Forrest

Greeting Tigist Campbell

Max Richards

Call to Worship "Follow Jesus" arr. Dennis Allen

Archangel, Treble, Melody/Harmony and Junior Choirs

Prayer for Worship Leira Johnson

Tender God, by your Spirit help us calm and quiet our souls like a child with its mother, so that we may hear your word to us this day and respond in faith. Amen.

Introit "God Made My Feet" Dora Ann Purdy and

Terry D. Taylor

Archangel and Treble Choirs

*Processional Hymn 234 FOOTSTEPS

"Footsteps of Jesus"

Welcome to Worshipers Becky Ramsey

Words of Faith

Scripture Lesson John 20:24-29

page 883 of the Bible in the pew rack

Narrator: Wesa Good

Thomas: Collin Jones

Jesus: William Austin

Disciples: Ella Burns, Tigist Campbell, Catharine Easterling,

Molly Gilbert, Leira Johnson, Henry Restine,

Max Richards

Call to Prayer “Lamb of God” Anonymous

Pastoral Prayer Ella Burns

*Children’s Hymn 253 PROMISE

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower”

All children through 5th grade are invited to the front for the children’s sermon during the singing of the last two stanzas of the hymn.

Children’s Sermon

Choral Worship “Sing with Joy, Children of God” Lynn Shaw Bailey

Melody/Harmony Choir

Sermon Living between Miracles and the Mundane Johnny Pierce

Words of Commitment

*Invitation Hymn 282 BRADBURY

“Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

*Invitation to Offering Catharine Easterling

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Matthew 19:21)

*Offertory Prayer Molly Gilbert

Musical Offering “Teach Me Your Way” Timothy Shaw

Junior Choir

Pam Kenney-McIntyre, Flute

Introduction of New Members Becky Ramsey and Tigist Campbell

Service and Fellowship of the Church

Words of Blessing

*Doxology (Hymn 32)

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*Benediction

Max Richards

*Choral Benediction Response

Amy Joye

“God Be with You”

Melody/Harmony and Junior Choirs

Postlude

Menuet Gothique

Leon Boëllmann

Our Service of Worship has ended.

Our Worship through Service begins.

October 21, 2018

Ten Thirty O'clock

Words of Welcome

Prelude

Call to Worship

Dylan Rigg

From near and far we gather;

The house of God is our home.

Here we are no longer strangers;

In the body of Christ we are one.

Prayer for Worship

Holy God, in this time of worship, center our thoughts. Teach us by your Spirit of wisdom and feed us through your holy Word, so that the weary may find rest, the strangers may find welcome, and the sick may be made whole, through Christ Jesus our peace. Amen.

*Processional Hymn 168

FOREST GREEN

“I Sing the Mighty Power of God”

Welcome to Worshipers

Words of Faith

Music for Illumination

“Gabriel’s Oboe”

Ennio Morricone

Scripture Lesson

Mark 6:30-44

Mary Carol Anderson

page 818 of the Bible in the pew rack

Call to Prayer

“Lamb of God”

Anonymous

Pastoral Prayer

*Children's Hymn 272

RESIGNATION

"My Shepherd Will Supply My Need"

All children through 5th grade are invited to the front for the children's sermon during the singing of the last two stanzas of the hymn.

Children's Sermon

Kyle Matthews

Choral Worship

"Sing to the Lord a Joyful Song"

Noel Goemanne

Sermon

Compassion beyond Convenience

Johnny Pierce

Words of Commitment

*Invitation Hymn 324

BEACH SPRING

"Lord, Whose Love through Humble Service"

*Invitation to Offering

Rob Pyett

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Musical Offering

"O Quam Suavis"

Riccardo Giavina

Introduction of New Members

Service and Fellowship of the Church

Words of Blessing

*Doxology (Hymn 32)

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*Benediction

*Choral Benediction Response

Dan Goeller

“Let the World Hear Our Songs”

Postlude

Our Service of Worship has ended.

Our Worship through Service begins.

October 28, 2018

Reformation Sunday

Ten Thirty O'clock

Words of Welcome

Prelude

Call to Worship “Batid las Manos!” Mark Burrows

Translation: Clap your hands, all you people!

Shout to God with a joyful voice!

– Psalm 47:1

Opening Sentences

Will Raybon

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

My head is lifted up, and I offer a sacrifice of praise.

I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

*Processional Hymn 147

EIN' FESTE BURG

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

Welcome to Worshipers

Words of Faith

Music for Illumination “Softly and Tenderly” arr. Gilbert M. Martin

Scripture Lesson Matthew 4:18-22 Kendra Plating

page 785 of the Bible in the pew rack

Call to Prayer “Lamb of God” Anonymous

Prayer of Confession

O God our light and salvation, we confess that we have chosen to live in darkness. You call to us to follow Jesus, but we are afraid to walk in faith. You call us to be one, but we cling to our divisions. Forgive us. Give us courage to follow in the way of Jesus that we may draw all people to your salvation. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Our righteousness is found in Christ alone, a gift of God by faith. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

Pastoral Prayer

*Children's Hymn 217

ALL THE WAY

“All the Way My Savior Leads Me”

All children through 5th grade are invited to the front for the children's sermon during the singing of the last two stanzas of the hymn.

Children's Sermon

Becky Ramsey

Choral Worship

“How Firm a Foundation”

FOUNDATION

arr. Emma Lou Diemer

Sermon

The Jesus Priority

Johnny Pierce

Words of Commitment

*Invitation Hymn 280

“Purer in Heart”

PURER IN HEART

*Invitation to Offering

Jason Richards

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

Musical Offering

Introduction of New Members

Service and Fellowship of the Church

Words of Blessing

*Doxology (Hymn 32)

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*Benediction

*Choral Benediction Response

Dan Goeller

“Let the World Hear Our Songs”

Postlude

Our Service of Worship has ended.

Our Worship through Service begins.

APPENDIX C

The Post-Worship Survey

Please fill out this survey after worship. It will also be available in paper form to be filled out and turned into the front desk after worship.

General Information (required)

1. Did you worship at First Baptist Church Greenville this morning? * Yes/No
2. Did you attend the pre-worship session in the Chapel, led by Matt Rollins? * Yes/No

If yes, please enter your survey code (printed at the top of your handout).

3. If you did not attend the pre-worship session and only attended worship, simply enter "none." *

4. How would you describe yourself in relation to First Baptist Church Greenville? *

Member/Non-member

5. Is this your first time taking this survey? * Yes/ No

6. Today's date * _____

Questions Related to Worship (required)

7. Please answer the following on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being "not at all" and 10 being

"completely").

On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel prepared to worship God? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel a sense of summons or call to worship at or before the beginning of the service? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel a connection to the hymns and music?

*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel like an active participant in the worship service? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did the sermon help you identify God's activity in the world through the scripture passage? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did the sermon help you understand the church's role in the community? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel stretched or challenged during the service? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel the presence of God in worship? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel a sense of Christian community and connection with other worshipers? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent do you feel you heard a word from God in the worship service? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you feel prepared to go back out into the world at the end of worship? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. On a scale of 1 to 10, to what extent did you respond in some way to God during worship? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

More Worship Related Questions (required)

Short answer. Please answer as best you can without consulting the order of worship.

19. Around what passage(s) of scripture did the service center? *

20. In what ways, if any, did you notice themes from the central passage of scripture turning up in other elements of the service? *

21. In a short sentence or phrase, what would you say was the primary theme of the sermon? *

22. Can you recall the sermon title (without consulting the order of worship)? *

General Questions About Your Worship Life

All questions below are OPTIONAL

23. How do you measure and/or or evaluate your worship experiences?

24. What does "meaningful worship" mean to you?

25. What role and responsibility as a worshiper in a pew do you believe you play during worship services?

26. How do you feel about being challenged or stretched during worship services?

27. In what ways is corporate worship (with other worshipers) important to your worship experience?

Worship Project Feedback

For those who attended a pre-worship preparation session in the chapel.

28. Did your participation in this project (attending a pre-worship preparation session immediately before attending a worship service at First Baptist Church Greenville) change your understanding of the nature or purpose of worship? If so, in what way?

29. To what extent do you feel that using a worship preparation guide helped you have a more meaningful worship experience?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

30. To what extent do you feel this project was implemented smoothly and professionally?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

31. To what extent were all of your questions answered and expectations made clear by the project lead, Matt Rollins?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX D

Qualitative Responses to Selected Survey Questions

Question 21. In a short sentence or phrase, what would you say was the primary theme of the sermon?

Control Group:

“as we remember gifts of Jesus and share them, we keep him alive - his influence in world.” - week 1

“Focus on what God expects from us rather than what we expect from Him. Keep our eyes/ heart open so we can witness the way God is working for good in our lives.” - week 2

“Inconvenient Compassion.” - week 3

“Answer Jesus' call by following him.” - week 4

Lectio Divina Group:

“Stewardship with our lives and money, even though sometimes our responses to that challenge leak like the communion cups of olive wood.” - week 1

“Recognize and look for God's miracles in every day life and have faith that they occur.”
- weeks 2

“Primary theme was that Jesus called his disciples to serve others even when they don't feel like it, even when it feels inconvenient.” - week 3

“Christianity requires being “all about Jesus” rather than about dogma.” - week 4

Centering Prayer Group:

“everyone needs communion to ask forgiveness and receive God's gifts.” - week 1

“The primary theme of the sermon was to show that God’s nature in miracles is not the supernatural bending of the universe for our convenience but it’s the small stuff like nature and how interconnected we are.” - week 2

“Show compassion toward others even if it might be inconvenient in your own life to do so.” - week 3

“Finding Jesus is more important than being a Christian.” - week 4

Order of Worship Group:

“Jesus gift to us, our gift to others.” - week 1

“There can be miracles in the ordinary if only we leave a window to our soul open to them.” - week 2

“Being compassionate even if it is inconvenient.” - week 3

“Following Jesus and not being distracted by other beliefs/biases/rules that we may be clinging to.” - week 4

Placebo Group:

“Even though we are imperfect vessels, God gives us Himself.” - week 1

“God is active in our lives in both the miraculous and the everyday.” - week 2

“Be compassionate to others even when it is not convenient is the way of Christ.” - week 3

“being a Christian is simply following Jesus' example.” - week 4

	Sermon Title	Scripture Passage	Sermon Theme (as given by the
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			proclaimer, Johnny Pierce)
Sunday, Oct. 7	Memorial Gifts	1 Corinthians 11:23-26	<p>“Twice in these “words of institution” Jesus calls for participants to “do this in memory of me.” We often remember those who died with “memorial gifts” that serve two purposes: to honor the life of that person but also to extend their influence. The “memorial gifts” of Jesus call us to do both as well — to remember Jesus and to carry out his mission in our own lives.”</p>
Sunday, Oct. 14	Living Between Miracles and the Mundane	John 20:24-29	<p>“Our inexperience with miracles like those in the Bible may shape our expectations of God. Most often we live somewhere between the miraculous and the mundane. It is important to not expect God to do everything for us in a magical way, yet to “keep open the east windows of our souls for divine surprise.” Most importantly, perhaps, is learning to see</p>

			the miraculous in what others might consider mundane.”
Sunday, Oct. 21	Compassion Beyond Convenience	Mark 6:30-44	“Jesus was tired and grieving when he and his disciples took a boat to get away. Yet a crowd formed and Jesus minister to them. Likewise we should offer compassion even when it’s inconvenient.”
Sunday, Oct. 28	The Jesus Priority	Matthew 4:18-22	“Misuses of the terms “biblical worldview” and “Christian worldview” are refining Christianity as a narrow theological/political ideology that downplays or ignores the life and teachings of Jesus. The Christian priority should be on responding faithfully to Jesus’ call to Follow me.”

Question 23. How do you measure and/or or evaluate your worship experiences?

Control Group:

“If I can relate and understand the worship and feel moved by it with respect to my life.”

“How the message lingers in my mind or changes my perspective.”

Centering Prayer:

“How I connect to the service, the community and being about to feel the Holy Spirit.”

“Peace and calmness felt during or after the service; leaving with thoughts to ponder.”

Lectio Divinia:

“By whether my attention is drawn to God in praise, reverence, and feeling a response in my heart to act upon it.”

“I usually feel when truth resonates for me. I usually have an emotional response. I often feel deep gratitude.”

Order of Worship:

“Did I feel the presence of God, either through message or music?”

“If I feel moved, like when words, stories, experiences are relevant to me.”

Placebo:

“Feeling the presence of God. Seeing or feeling the cares of fellow worshippers.”

“If it maintains my attention.”

Question 24. What does "meaningful worship" mean to you?

Control Group:

“Listening for a word from God, or learning how to serve God better in relationship to others.”

“Worshiping God no matter what the service involves. It also means that I have become more knowledgeable of God or feel the Holy Spirit.”

Centering Prayer:

“Words and music that raise me up in praise of God and connect me firmly to his love.
Joining in spirit with my church community.”

“A chance to grow closer to God, the people in our church and community.”

Lectio Divina:

“Being immersed in and challenged by God’s love.”

“Worship that leaves me thinking and that gives me a challenge as I move forward.”

Order of Worship:

“Feeling close to God and those around me. Being challenged or motivated to be a better person.”

“1) That I praise God. 2) That I hear and follow God’s direction.”

Placebo:

“Worship that helps me feel more connected to God and to those worshiping with me.”

Learning something new or getting a new insight, connecting with God during that time, feeling that the congregation was connected.”

Question 25. What role and responsibility as a worshiper in a pew do you believe you play during worship services?

Control Group:

“Being engaged in the service and being open to God’s word and tugs by the Holy Spirit.”

“To be present.”

Centering Prayer:

“To listen carefully to the message and understand the sermon to the best of my ability, and to be Christ-like to my fellow congregants.”

“Listen and be a part of the community.”

Lectio Divina:

“To actively participate in readings, singing hymns, and listening to the sermon. To stop talking as soon as the prelude begins.”

“To be completely present.”

Order of Worship:

“To think, to respond, to act upon my response.”

“To come with an open heart and mind; to try to be present to receive the message.”

Placebo:

“Pay attention to our leaders; participate in singing and praying.”

“Active listener and participant.”

26. How do you feel about being challenged or stretched during worship services?

Control Group:

“I believe this is the best that can happen in worship if it brings us closer to understanding our relationship with God through service to him.”

“It’s good for my heart and soul. Opens my mind to being better at being a child of God and living it.”

Centering Prayer:

“I need to be challenged.”

“I love it. I want to leave thinking and with my mind open.”

Lectio Divina:

“That is the main purpose of my attendance.”

“I count on it.”

Order of Worship:

“The challenges strengthen my faith and promote growth in my life and the body of Christ.”

“I think it can be uncomfortable but necessary work.”

Placebo:

“It is a must for worship to have meaning to me.”

“Hoping to walk the path I should and needing loving reminders along the way.”

27. In what ways is corporate worship (with other worshipers) important to your worship experience?

Control Group:

“It strengthens the sense of power of worship.”

“I need the experience of having a community to worship with and to serve with.”

Centering Prayer:

“It is important because it helps create a community and can give you an avenue to actually discuss what is being taught and apply it.”

“It is meaningful and important so I can worship in community and interact with others.”

Lectio Divina:

“I’m not sure, but coming together as a group and as a fellowship of individuals striving towards a similar goal is very important and comforting to me.”

“Being with my church family is critical to most of my worship experience.”

Order of Worship:

“I think I get more of a sense of being part of the bigger world. Things beyond just myself and my family.”

“Corporate worship helps to engender a feeling of belonging, of feeling that you’re a part of something larger than yourself.”

Placebo:

“It helps me feel connected to others who are also seeking God and to focus on the presence of God.”

“It gives us a feeling of community and opens the door to later discussion and growth.”

28. Did your participation in this project (attending a pre-worship preparation session immediately before attending a worship service at First Baptist Church Greenville) change your understanding of the nature or purpose of worship? If so, in what way?

Lectio Divina Group:

“Not in any major way, though it did help with scripture analysis.”

“I don’t remember ever being as prepared for worship as I was today, and it was because of the pre-worship session.”

“The diligent thought around the gospel lesson greatly improved my ability to process and consider the message throughout the service. It provided for a much better experience.”

“It made me more aware of how the bible passage fit into the overall worship service (hymns, childrens service, sermon, music, offertory prayer, benedictions, etc).”

Centering Prayer Group:

“Yes-It helped me to prepare for the service and other components.”

“It made me think about being more intentional.”

“I was trying to experience a deeper understanding of my sacred word; had more focus during worship.”

“It provided more focus.”

“Yes, it helped me concentrate on the worship more, made it less like listening to good advice and helped put some weight on the message.”

Order of Worship Group:

“Yes I liked having the pre worship structure and framework.”

“The brief moment provided me an opportunity to quiet my spirit, disconnect from the world of distractions, and focus a corporate level of attention on God.”

“Not so much the nature or purpose of worship, but it did help me have a more meaningful experience. I payed more attention to the words of the hymns; compared the sermon topic to what I would have preached on; and, at the invitation, prayed for those who might be making a decision today.

“Yes, I knew there was work into setting up a weekly worship session but it made me realize there are so many moving parts. Everyone has a part in it. No matter how big or small, every task matters.”

“It made me think about how I should prepare for worship each week. When I go in I usually write all the events down on my calendar and don't really think about the worship part until the service starts. This helped me remember to focus on the most important part which is the worship element. Preparing before the service starts can help me get ready to really get the most out of the service. And to connect with God.”

“It did make me prepare myself for worship in a way I don't normally do--hardly ever do, honestly--and I welcomed that.”

Placebo Group:

“It did make me more aware of the parts of the service and made me look for references to my preparation material.”

“I listened more attentively.”

“No (Sunday school usually does this).”

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